

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict 19th of September 2012,
Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Osorio, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations

(spoke in Spanish): Allow me, at the outset, to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. I commend your particular devotion to this issue and your preparation of the concept note (S/2012/685, annex), on the basis of which we carried out arduous negotiations.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for issuing his annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2012/261). I am also grateful for the briefings by Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Mr. Anthony Lake and Mr. David Tolbert. I wish to again welcome Ms. Zerrougui as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as to assure her of my Government's commitment and readiness to work with her off ice in order to strengthen protection for children affected by armed conflict in various parts of the world.

As I said in explaining Colombia's vote, my delegation would like to again draw attention to the series of existing norms on the protection of children in armed conflict. It is therefore necessary to examine the ways they have been implemented and how they are functioning and to carefully consider whether or not it is necessary to adopt new instruments.

When considering this matter, it is important to continuously bear in mind that the Council must assess and focus on situations of armed conflict that represent a serious threat to inter national peace and security. It must draw a clear distinction between such situations and others not on its agenda. Each case must be individually analysed to determine appropriate responses to the specific circumstances and contexts of each situation.

Moreover, I think that it is important to emphasize in our discussion on this issue that the Council and other United Nations entities must strictly adhere to the agreed mandate, which has been formulated in absolutely clear terms. We must deal with the protection of children in armed conflict, which would exclude any situation that could not be defined as such a conflict. For those cases there are other bodies and others ways of dealing with the issue. When the Council decided that the report of the Secretary-General should include a second annex referring to situations not on its agenda, namely, "other situations", it did so clearly with the understanding that these would, in all cases, refer to parties to an armed conflict as determined by the applicable standards of inter national law.

In order to improve its consideration of the issue of children and armed conflict, it would be appropriate for the Council to consider strengthening national capacities for the protection of boys and girls. Reporting and monitoring tools can prove useful, yet not definitive. In that context, the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict must evaluate the efficiency of existing mechanisms in order to help to strengthen States' national capacities. That has been a core concern of the Colombian Government, for which the defence of children is not only an obligatory constitutional tenet but also an ethical and moral imperative for any civilization. Colombia has established an intersectoral commission with that goal in mind, which works under the mandate of a document created by our country's economic and social council. State bodies bearing responsibility on the matter work in harmony to achieve a comprehensive policy to prevent the recruitment of children and other violations against them throughout Colombia, with special emphasis on areas and locations where the greatest challenges in relation to the issue have been identified. In that regard, I would like to refer to the "My rights first" programme, which is a comprehensive prevention plan that aims to provide children opportunities to develop freely and to be able to use their free time for games and leisure activities.

Taking into account the context of this debate, I should like to point out that sanctions only make sense when a Government fails to heed appeals by the international community. However, applying sanctions to armed non-State actors in situations not on the Council's agenda pose a panoply of complications, starting with the fact that clearly this can have a bearing on fundamental interests of the country involved, as well as on matters of national security. Similarly, the targeted sanctions mechanism is applicable only in those situations on the Council's agenda, where the Council has determined, pursuant to Article 39 of the Charter of the United Nations, that such situations constitute a threat to international peace and security. The Council's readiness to adopt this sort of measure when it comes to persistent perpetrators cannot therefore be considered as applicable to situations referred to in annex II of the annual report of the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, we believe that the issue of the protection of children in armed conflict requires improved dialogue and continuous consultation between the United Nations system and Governments, which bear primary responsibility on the issue. For our part, our Government remains ready to work and to cooperate jointly on this issue.