

Children and Armed Conflict
12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Viinanen, Permanent Representative to Finland

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): I have the honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Nordic countries, namely, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which all sponsored resolution 1998 (2011), which the Council adopted this morning.

We are particularly pleased, Mr. President, with your effective approach to turning country situation reports into timely Security Council recommendations. This is crucial for the recommendations to have real impact. Good examples in that regard are the country conclusions regarding Afghanistan and Chad, which were approved in March and in April. As a positive follow-up, in the past few months both countries committed themselves to action programmes to end the use of child soldiers. All in all, this shows that the monitoring and reporting mechanism can be a powerful tool for ensuring that all rights of all children are respected. We should use it and related resolutions to provide the widest possible protection to children affected by armed conflicts. In that regard, the increased attacks against hospitals and schools and their personnel are of extreme concern to us. It is our view that both institutions should be equally respected as humanitarian space, including during conflict.

This is a fundamental prerequisite for fulfilling the right of all girls and boys to education, as well as a basic requirement for promoting schools and hospitals as zones of peace and as vehicles for psycho-social support and recovery for children in unstable situations. In that regard, the increased attacks against hospitals and schools and their personnel are of extreme concern to us. It is our view that both institutions should be equally respected as humanitarian space, including during conflict.

This is a fundamental prerequisite for fulfilling the right of all girls and boys to education, as well as a basic requirement for promoting schools and hospitals as zones of peace and as vehicles for psycho-social support and recovery for children in unstable situations. Finally, access to health care and education, especially for children, is a fundamental building block of lasting peace and sustainable development. Attacks on schools and hospitals, the denial of or restrictions on safe access to those facilities by armed groups, using them as shields, for military purposes or as recruitment grounds, and other disruptions to educational and medical facilities should trigger listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict. Relevant sanctions committees are increasingly engaged in the agenda of children and armed conflict. We commend the efforts of the Special Representative in this regard. We urge the Council to continue to find ways to hold perpetrators to account through existing sanctions regimes and to explore new ways of ensuring accountability for violations committed in conflicts.

In order to acquire the necessary information on attacks and threats, the Security Council should ensure that all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions and peacebuilding missions include specific provisions on monitoring and reporting violations by child protection advisers.