

Children and Armed Conflict

12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Westerwelle, Foreign Minister of Germany and This Month's President of the Security Council

The President: I wish to welcome the presence at this meeting of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as well as that of ministers. Their presence is an affirmation of the importance of the subject being discussed.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. Members of the Council have before them document S/2011/425, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2011/250 and S/2011/409, containing, respectively, the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and a letter dated 1 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

With the Council's permission, I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany. Let me seize this opportunity to warmly welcome the cooperation of all present on this topic. The protection of children in armed conflict is of great importance to all of us. This was evident also during the negotiations leading to the draft resolution before us. We are honoured by the presence of the Secretary-General today, and let me also thank Mr. Lake and Ms. Coomaraswamy for their presence here.

I am confident that I speak for all those present here today in saying that we do not want to see children being used in conflicts. We do not want them to be forced to fight. We do not want them to be injured, abused or killed. We want children to grow up knowing that their schools are safe places. Schools should be places of learning and playing where children can grow and thrive. Attacks on schools and hospitals are barbaric acts. We want children to feel safe when they are in need of physical help, when they are weak, sick or wounded. Hospitals should therefore also be safe and protected places.

Consequently, I am very hopeful that the Council is about to take the important decision to expand the triggers for listing parties that commit serious violations against children. Attacks on schools and hospitals will then be among those triggers. This is a big step forward.

We are also convinced of the importance of actions plans between the United Nations and parties to conflict. Implementing action plans is the only way to get off those lists. In future, actions plans can also include countering attacks on schools and hospitals.

There has been progress, and this progress is encouraging. But we all know that we have to do more. Persistent perpetrators need to face credible consequences. If they do not change their behaviour, they should face measures through sanctions regimes. That is why it is important that today's draft resolution also increases the possibility of targeted sanctions against perpetrators listed in the report of the Secretary-General.

Societies should be judged by the way in which they treat their children. Our attitude towards our children is a testament to our attitude towards our future. We will continue to try to protect children from the effects of war and conflict. We will continue to listen to their stories for as long as it takes. I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council. It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall now put the draft resolution to the vote.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America