

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

Statement by Mr. Salam, Representative of Lebanon

Allow me at the outset to thank Minister Westerwelle for his presence here to preside over this important meeting. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Lake, for their comprehensive briefings.

Confronted with the dehumanizing effect of force, children are too often robbed of their childhood. The front lines of conflict bring them face to face with the absurd horrors of war and threaten their education, health care and the most basic human right — the right to life.

Though notable progress has been made at the normative level and in some specific contexts, the overall situation of children in armed conflicts remains troubling, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/250). We condemn all indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against children, and we call on all parties in situations of armed conflict to strictly adhere to international humanitarian law.

Attacks against schools and hospitals are a growing trend, as evidenced in the Secretary-General's report. Lebanon had first-hand experience of attacks on its schools and hospitals during the last war waged by Israel, in 2006. By introducing a new criterion — attacks on hospitals and schools — for listing parties to armed conflicts in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual reports, the resolution before us makes critical progress in the protection of children in armed conflict. It sends a clear warning to perpetrators about the serious consequences of committing such violations.

Targeting schools also has far-reaching and damaging repercussions on development. Indeed, the World Bank, in its report on education in the Middle East and North Africa, argued that the provision of education, particularly for girls, is the single most effective intervention that countries can make to improve human development and to tackle conditions of fragility.

In a more comprehensive manner, we believe that the six grave violations enumerated in resolution 1612 (2005) are of equal gravity and should be accorded the same attention by the Working Group. These are: killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, abduction of children, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children. We look forward to the day when the criteria for listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report will be extended to all these six violations.

Looking ahead, we wish to stress first that the introduction of new listing criteria will require the provision of accurate and verifiable information to the Council — which will further strengthen the reporting and monitoring mechanism already in place — in close cooperation with the local authorities. Secondly, we underscore the importance of a more effective followup to the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group and the Group's swift response to urgent situations in which children are affected on a large scale. Thirdly, accountability relating to crimes against children in armed conflicts remains the exception. The United Nations could play a crucial role in that respect through providing capacity-building and coordinated support to fragile States in the field of the rule of law.

I wish to conclude by recognizing the role that education can play in fostering the value of peace, tolerance and inclusiveness as the most effective way to prevent conflict, protect children and heal them of the traumas of war.