

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

Statement by Mr. Heller, Representative of Mexico

I would like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Mr. Guido Westerwelle, for convening this important debate, and to congratulate his delegation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council during the month of July and the chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Mexico had the honour of chairing the Working Group during its term as non-permanent member of the Security Council in the biennium 2009-2010. We are well aware of the responsibilities involved.

Resolution 1998 (2011), adopted this morning, represents a positive step, as it gives both the Security Council and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General better tools with which to respond to the serious violations that, regrettably, are committed against thousands of children in armed conflicts in various parts of the world.

Over recent years the Security Council has contributed to improving the United Nations capacities in the comprehensive protection of children in armed conflicts. Resolution 1882 (2009) broadened the criteria whereby parties to a conflict can be listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports to include sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. Resolution 1998 (2011) includes an additional criterion: cases of attacks against schools and hospitals and attacks or threats of attack against protected persons in relation to schools and hospitals.

This new criterion is particularly important, considering that attacks against schools and hospitals not only threaten thousands of children, teachers, doctors and support staff but also represent an attack on the future of societies, depriving boys and girls of the inalienable right to education and health and therefore undermining the development of the country.

The Security Council has reaffirmed today its unequivocal commitment to protect children in situations of armed conflicts and is sending a clear message that the commitments imposed on parties by international law regarding the security and well-being of children must be respected and all abuses of or violence against children avoided.

Nevertheless, such violations will continue to be committed as long as we do not sanction those responsible for those crimes and do not fight impunity at all levels. It is important that national authorities and the parties concerned take the relevant legal measures to bring those responsible to justice.

Combating impunity must go hand-in-hand with the process of reintegrating and caring for children affected by armed conflict. In this context, the Security Council must ensure that the sanctions committees view the protection of children as a core element of their mandates, and the Council must analyze in detail the cases where specific committees do not exist so as to adopt the necessary measures against those who are responsible for systematic violations against children.

Mexico recognizes the importance of bolstering the mechanisms that are available to the Working Group in order to improve its effectiveness and to contribute to the effective implementation of its recommendations. We consider that the Working Group should use all the tools available to it in an efficient way, including regular field visits and emergency or informal meetings in the case of serious violations at the request of the Chairman or any member of the Working Group. Also, the Security Council must continue to strengthen the mandates of peace missions for the protection of children by deploying advisers and establishing reintegration and support programmes for victims of sexual violence.

Finally, I would like to recognize especially the extraordinary work of Special Representative Radhika Coomaraswamy and her team, as well as Mr. Anthony Lake and the officials of UNICEF, who together with civil society are implementing this mechanism and are working tirelessly on this priority issue on the international agenda.