

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, March 7th, 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Rosenthal, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations

We would like to thank the presidency of Luxembourg for convening this open debate on a topic so close to Luxembourg's work in the Council. The personal presence of Deputy Prime Minister Asselborn only underscores that. In that vein, we also express our special appreciation to Luxembourg for its chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as for the concept note (S/2014/144, annex) prepared for this debate. We also thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui and Mr. Anthony Lake for their respective briefings on the item under discussion. We also express our appreciation to Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for sharing his painful experience with us and for encouraging us to continue working to find a better life for all children.

Guatemala continues to give the highest priority to addressing the situation of children caught up in armed conflict, as well as to strengthening the provisions for the protection of boys and girls in all the relevant mandates of the United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, including the deployment of child protection advisers.

Since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), in 1999, the links that have developed among Governments, the United Nations, the international community as a whole and civil society have been invaluable for the effective release of child soldiers, as well as for gathering evidence on serious violations against children set out in resolution 1612 (2005) and required by the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

We believe that the field visits of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict are very illustrative. Our delegation had the privilege of participating in the visit to Myanmar in December 2013, which allowed us to consider the Government's political will to end the recruitment of children into the armed forces as a first step that must be reinforced subsequently through the implementation of mechanisms to verify age at recruitment centres, which requires having a universal registry of birth certificates, especially in remote rural areas.

We therefore believe it is necessary to strengthen national capacities and support the reforms of the justice and security sectors, as well as the creation of specialized tribunals and mixed courts to combat impunity for those who commit serious violations against children's rights, especially persistent perpetrators, who should not be given any amnesty or hold office in their respective Governments or armed forces.

We attach importance to the complementarity of international justice to national mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, in bringing to justice those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, especially as committed against children. In addition, our policies must evolve in accordance with changing circumstances. It is alarming that schools continue to be used for military purposes, such as for barracks or weapons caches or as command, detention and interrogation centres.

That is why we enthusiastically support the "Children, not soldiers" campaign, launched yesterday by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, in collaboration with other agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, which seeks to end by 2016 the recruitment and use of children as soldiers for armed forces on the part of those Government security forces listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual reports.

In conclusion, we welcome the adoption this morning of resolution 2143 (2014), which addresses the concerns we have expressed earlier, carrying the votes that enable us to advance in the protection of children so that they will not be the most vulnerable group in armed conflicts.