

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

Statement by Mr. Barriga, Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations

At the outset, I would like to thank Luxembourg for holding this debate and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the other briefers, for providing the Security Council with timely information and analysis on the impact of armed conflicts on children around the world. We especially commend Mr. Sawaneh for his inspiring words and the courage to share his experiences with us here today.

Liechtenstein strongly condemns the widespread intentional attacks on children and teachers at schools. We also deplore the military use of schools, which gravely endangers civilians and deprives children of their education. Those are clear violations of international humanitarian law, and we urge States to take all the necessary steps to end those practices and to protect children's right to education. In that context, we particularly welcome the draft Lucens guidelines and we hope for their widespread endorsement.

Liechtenstein reiterates its firm support for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and welcomes the "Children, not soldiers" campaign. We are happy to see the willingness of Governments to sign national action plans and end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. But most of the parties listed in the annex to the Secretary General's report (S/2113/245) are non-State actors. Of the 11 persistent perpetrators, 10 are non-State actors. We therefore fully support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's efforts to engage with all the relevant parties to conclude action plans and promote their implementation. The early conclusion of such action plans is also in the interest of the States concerned. They should therefore allow unconditional access for and facilitate the United Nations important work in that regard.

Liechtenstein was shocked by the findings of the Secretary-General's recent report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2014/31), which listed a number of horrendous violations and abuses against children. We are deeply concerned about those ongoing violations and abuses by both parties to the conflict and ask them to immediately put an end to them. The recent adoption of resolution 2139 (2014) is of particular importance for the situation of children, who suffer disproportionately from the armed conflict in Syria. We were relieved to see the Council take meaningful, albeit long overdue, action on the humanitarian situation in Syria. We hope that the Council will continue acting with resolve and impose appropriate sanctions should the parties fail to comply with the resolution. In addition, the Council should finally live up to its responsibility to ensure that those committing atrocity crimes in Syria, in particular crimes against children, are brought to justice. In the current circumstances, only a referral to the International Criminal Court could jump-start accountability efforts in Syria.

Let me conclude by drawing the Council's attention to the outcome of a workshop on strengthening the children and armed conflict agenda, which we convened together with our non-governmental organization partner Watchlist and the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination in December last year. The report was recently published as an official document and it contains a number of useful recommendations that we recommend for all stakeholders in the field of children and armed conflict.

