

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

Statement by Mr. Bamrungphong, Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Luxembourg for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March as well as to thank you, Sir, for convening this important debate and for the informative concept note (S/2014/144, annex).

My delegation would like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their important statements and valuable perspectives.

As a member of the Human Security Network, Thailand aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the delegation of Greece on behalf of the Network.

Children should joyfully play on playgrounds, not fearfully take cover on battlefields. Thailand therefore commends and fully supports the “Children, not soldiers” campaign initiated by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict together with UNICEF.

As a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which prohibits the recruitment or use of children as soldiers, Thailand has clear rules and regulations to ensure that children under 18 years of age are not conscripted, recruited or involved in combat. The Royal Thai Government is also in the process of amending its child protection act to explicitly criminalize the involvement of children in armed forces or armed groups.

Let me turn to the issue of mainstreaming child protection into the relevant United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions. In armed conflict situations, peacekeepers are often at the forefront in protecting children. We underscore the importance of having clear mandates and guidelines in order for them to operate effectively. Peacekeepers and peacebuilders also need specific predeployment and in-mission training on issues concerning children affected by armed conflict.

We also envisage a growing role for female peacekeepers in child protection and rehabilitation during and after armed conflicts. Thailand has intensified its national efforts to increase its numbers of female peacekeepers. They will be specifically trained in international law and international humanitarian law on the rights and protection of women and children. It is our earnest hope that Thai female peacekeepers will be able to make an ongoing contribution, particularly in cases involving violence against women and children, who need special care and treatment.

Next Monday, 10 March, Thailand will organize a side event on increasing women’s contribution to peace and security at the Japan Society here in New York. Participants from Australia, Rwanda and Indonesia will share their views and perspectives on the role of female peacekeepers. In addition, two Thai female peacekeepers will share their experiences from peacekeeping missions in Haiti and Darfur.

In her concept note (S/2014/144, annex), the President raises the question of how to make effective progress on the issue of children and armed conflict. In that regard, Thailand would like to reiterate the views on the subject that it outlined in this Chamber last year.

First, the issue of child protection is multidimensional. Different United Nations agencies have different mandates. Synergies for protecting children can be created by strengthening collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system. To avoid duplication of effort and make the best use of limited resources, each entity's mandate should be strictly adhered to and carried out in a transparent and accountable manner.

Secondly, we have repeatedly stressed the importance of the information that forms the basis of relevant reports and analysis. Thailand recognizes the importance of gathering information from all sources and stakeholders, including civil society. However, such information must be accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable, as stipulated in paragraph 17 of the Security Council's landmark resolution 1998 (2011). Assessments based on false or incorrect information or, even worse, biased analysis, can misdirect future policy and programmes and would be counterproductive.

Thirdly, my delegation has always highlighted the critical importance of working with the consent of concerned Governments and in close cooperation with them. All actions taken by the United Nations should aim to support national efforts and increase the capacities of concerned Governments, not complicate their work or create unintended negative consequences on the ground that could ultimately place children at greater risk.

My delegation notes that resolution 2143 (2014), just adopted, invites the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to brief the Council on the issue of delisting. We welcome such actions. Clear criteria for delisting will enable the countries and parties concerned to understand and take appropriate measures to meet the requirements for delisting. It will allow work to be focused on areas of real armed conflict and those where action is needed to ensure that children are protected. It will also ensure the most efficient use of limited budgets, time and manpower. All mandate holders and desk staff, as well as members of the Secretariat and Member States, will instead be able to devote their time, energy and efforts to situations where they are really needed and where they can make a difference, especially on the ground. We hope earnestly that the Council will take our views into consideration.

In closing, my delegation condemns all grave violations and crimes against children in situations of armed conflict. Let me reiterate Thailand's support for and commitment to the effective implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on this issue and to all mandate holders working for children's best interests.