



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

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SECURITY COUNCIL – OPEN DEBATE

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me join others in thanking you for organizing this timely debate your Mission has organized. We also appreciated the opportunity given to non-members of the Council to express their position on the topic before us during the side-event on “Attacks on Schools and Hospitals in Armed Conflict” on 30th of June 2011. We would like to encourage future Council Presidencies to provide such opportunities as appropriate. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, but also wishes to make a few points on its own. We welcome the Annual Report of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict, and commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and her office for their highly dedicated work on this topic.

Mr. President,

We are alarmed by UNESCO’s recent report entitled “*Education under Attack*”, which reports recurrence of attacks on students, teachers, education staff and institutions in situations of armed conflict around the world. The Secretary-General’s report also documents increasing attacks on schools, which are highlighted in 14 out of the 22 country situations covered by the report and are perpetrated by State and non-State actors. It must be recalled that in almost all circumstances, attacks on schools violate international humanitarian law and that they may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity as

set out in the 1907 Hague Regulations, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and customary international humanitarian law. According to the Rome Statute, intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to education - provided they are not military objectives - is a war crime. We are therefore deeply concerned by reports of the widespread dual use of school buildings as both teaching facilities and military sites. We urge all parties to conflicts to refrain from blurring the lines between civilian and military activities and institutions. Using school buildings for military purposes may also violate children's fundamental right to education, a right that is enshrined in key international human rights treaties and non-derogable during times of armed conflict. We commend the Security Council for taking concrete action on this important issue through the adoption of today's resolution. Conflict parties that attack schools and hospitals in contravention of applicable international law will now also trigger the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). While this is an important step in the right direction, however, we believe that equal weight must be given to all six grave violations as triggers for the MRM. It is difficult to understand how a differential treatment of grave violations of children's rights in various conflicts can be squared with the universality and interdependence of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law. We therefore encourage the Council to continue to develop this mechanism.

Mr. President,

We are deeply worried about reports of increased recruitment and use of children in various armed conflicts. To respond to those incidents in due time, the Working Group should make better use of all its tools available, including emergency meetings and field visits. We welcome the initiative of your delegation as the current chair of the Working Group to conduct more frequent field visits. We are disappointed, though, that other Council members have shown little enthusiasm for this approach. Such field visits send an important signal to affected populations and political and military leaders that the Security Council is present, cares and interacts. We hope that in the future, the Working Group will make more effective use of this important tool.

Mr. President

Sixteen conflict parties have been listed in the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General for more than five years for having committed serious violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. These

persistent violators must be subject to the Council's strongest and urgent action. Measures taken by the Working Group should be complemented by effective enforcement measures, such as sanctions, including arms embargoes, bans on military assistance as well as the imposition of travel restrictions. We therefore call on the Security Council to consider taking such measures when establishing or renewing the mandate of relevant Sanctions Committees, as agreed in the Security Council's Presidential Statement of June 2010. Where no designated sanctions committee is in place, the Security Council should consider the use of a thematic sanctions committee. Furthermore, the Council should bear in mind the option of referring situations to relevant national and international justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). Ultimately, however, the responsibility to respect the rights of children in armed conflict rests with the parties themselves. We call on all persistent violators to develop and implement an action plan that may eventually lead to their delisting. To this end, the States concerned should allow direct contacts between the office of the SRSG and relevant non-State actors.

I thank you.