

**OPEN DEBATE OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL:
CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and her office, for their dedication to advance the work of the United Nations on this topic. Her report makes again for disturbing reading. We are alarmed by the escalating number of systematic and deliberate attacks on schools, by the use of weapons with indiscriminate effects, such as cluster munitions, as well as by evidence suggesting that IDP camps are one of the prime recruiting grounds for child soldiers.

Mr. President

SCR 1612 established a monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) on serious violations of the rights of the child at the field level as well as a Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict here in New York. As this decision has proven to have a positive effect on the ground, we believe it important to keep the momentum to further develop and enhance tools aimed at improving the safety and security of children affected by armed conflicts.

Mr. President

In accordance with SCR 1612, the MRM provides reliable information on situations listed in Annex I and II of the report, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, illicit exploitation of natural resources, abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access. However, only one out of these six grave violations – the recruitment and use of child soldiers – currently triggers the inclusion of countries in Annex I of the SG report. We believe that the role of the MRM could be significantly enhanced if other violations would be accorded the same effect, and if all types of violations would be given equal weight.

It is, in fact, difficult to understand how a differential treatment of grave violations of children's rights in various conflicts can be compatible with the universality of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law. Political considerations must not override the fundamental rules of protection for the most vulnerable members of society. To further strengthen the MRM, we welcome the information provided by NGO's and call for the inclusion of a child protection adviser in the mandate of all future peacekeeping missions and, where appropriate, political missions.

Mr. President

Any measures taken by the Working Group in response to grave violations of the rights of the child have to be complemented by the effective enforcement. An option in this regard is the expansion of the Working Group's mandate to recommend targeted measures including arms embargos, bans on military assistance as well as the imposition of travel restrictions on individuals. Moreover, we support the recommendation in the SG's report for the Security Council to refer to the International Criminal Court (ICC), for investigation and prosecution, violations of the rights of children that fall within the Court's jurisdiction.

Mr. President,

Liechtenstein has been actively involved in the development of the UN mechanism to address the plight of children affected by armed conflicts since its inception. As member of the "Group of friends of children affected by armed conflicts" we will continue to do so and hope that this open debate will lead to the expansion of the criteria for the inclusion of situations in Annex I of the SG's report, thereby improving the situation of children in armed conflicts worldwide.

I thank you.