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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Westerwelle	(Germany)
<i>Members:</i>	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Alkalaj
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Ms. Holguín Cuéllar
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. MOUNGARA MOUSSOTSI
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mrs. OGWU
	Portugal	Mr. Brites Pereira
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Radebe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250)

Letter dated 1 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2011/409)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250)

Letter dated 1 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2011/409)

The President: I wish to welcome the presence at this meeting of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, as well as that of ministers. Their presence is an affirmation of the importance of the subject being discussed.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the Acting Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2011/425, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2011/250 and S/2011/409, containing, respectively, the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and a letter dated 1 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

With the Council's permission, I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Let me seize this opportunity to warmly welcome the cooperation of all present on this topic. The protection of children in armed conflict is of great importance to all of us. This was evident also during the negotiations leading to the draft resolution before us. We are honoured by the presence of the Secretary-General today, and let me also thank Mr. Lake and Ms. Coomaraswamy for their presence here.

I am confident that I speak for all those present here today in saying that we do not want to see children being used in conflicts. We do not want them to be forced to fight. We do not want them to be injured, abused or killed. We want children to grow up knowing that their schools are safe places. Schools should be places of learning and playing where children can grow and thrive. Attacks on schools and hospitals are barbaric acts. We want children to feel safe when they are in need of physical help, when they are weak, sick or wounded. Hospitals should therefore also be safe and protected places.

Consequently, I am very hopeful that the Council is about to take the important decision to expand the triggers for listing parties that commit serious violations against children. Attacks on schools and hospitals will then be among those triggers. This is a big step forward.

We are also convinced of the importance of actions plans between the United Nations and parties to conflict. Implementing action plans is the only way to get off those lists. In future, actions plans can also include countering attacks on schools and hospitals.

There has been progress, and this progress is encouraging. But we all know that we have to do more. Persistent perpetrators need to face credible consequences. If they do not change their behaviour, they should face measures through sanctions regimes. That is why it is important that today's draft resolution also increases the possibility of targeted sanctions against perpetrators listed in the report of the Secretary-General.

Societies should be judged by the way in which they treat their children. Our attitude towards our children is a testament to our attitude towards our future. We will continue to try to protect children from the effects of war and conflict. We will continue to listen to their stories for as long as it takes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it.

I shall now put the draft resolution to the vote.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1998 (2011).

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I thank Germany for having organized this open debate, and I thank the Council for its sustained commitment to the protection

of children affected by armed conflict. I should like to thank in particular the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany for taking the time to preside over this meeting and for his leadership.

Since 1998, the Council has adopted eight resolutions on this issue. It has asked me to report on the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to armed conflict. It has sent a consistent and clear message: the protection of children in armed conflict is a peace and security issue, and the international community will not tolerate grave violations of this principle.

Today's resolution takes us one step further. It not only emphasizes that schools and hospitals should be zones of peace respected by all parties to conflict; it adds attacks on schools and hospitals as listing criteria in my annual reports on children in armed conflict. I welcome this advance. Places of learning and places of healing should never be places of war.

Our proactive efforts on previously listed violations, such as the recruitment and use of child soldiers, have yielded positive results. I thank Governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations for their work. These efforts and the action plan concept — laid out in resolution 1539 (2004) and later resolutions — have led to the signing of 15 action plans covering nine conflict arenas. Two more action plans are expected this year.

These successes show the value of naming and shaming. Last year alone, around 10,000 children associated with armed groups were released. We must now secure longer-term international support for their full reintegration into their communities. This is an essential component of peacebuilding and development.

The United Nations system is fully committed to protecting children in armed conflict. My Special Representative on this issue, Ms. Coomaraswamy, is working with dedication and courage. The work of my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Wallström, is also helping to combat impunity. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, too, is playing an important role. It has deployed child protection advisers in at least 13 missions since 2001, and today has advisers in seven peacekeeping missions

and three political missions. They are working to help missions support the implementation of Security Council resolutions. United Nations country teams, too, are making an important contribution, not only in monitoring and reporting under resolution 1612 (2005), but also in supporting reintegration and other humanitarian interventions. UNICEF, in particular, plays a key role here.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, of which Germany is the Chair. With the innovative and steadfast engagement of many partners, the Council has demonstrated that protecting children in armed conflict is both a moral and a security imperative. Let us keep working together to ensure that children everywhere can grow up safe, healthy and educated so that they can help to build a secure and sustainable future for themselves, their families and their societies.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: Thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. Your presence signals a commitment at the highest level to the protection of children during war. I would also like to commend the dedication of Ambassador Peter Wittig and his staff for their effective engagement as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Their dedication must be truly commended and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them.

I also want to thank the Secretary-General for honouring us with his presence and his unwavering support for the cause of women and children. I also want to thank all the ministers who have come from afar to be with us today.

The Security Council has before it the tenth annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250). In 15 of the 22 situations covered in the report, we found evidence of attacks on schools and hospitals. During my visits to conflict areas, I have personally seen the devastation — schools completely destroyed, bombed or burnt to the ground. I have also seen schools with broken window panes and empty classrooms where children have been recruited

as child soldiers. I have met girls whose colleagues stay away from school because, as female students, they may be the victims of acid attacks.

These images stay in my mind and remind me of how important it is to ensure that schools are zones of peace for children. Half of all the children who do not go to primary school in the world live in conflict areas. They do not go to school because their schools have become part of the tragedy of conflict. Schools are increasingly under physical attack, resulting in either full or partial destruction, oftentimes in violation of international humanitarian law. Schools are also closed as a result of threats and intimidation. Teachers and students are also killed and maimed in targeted attacks. Military use of schools is also a concern, as such use can put children in clear danger. To deprive children of an education is to destroy their future. A future destroyed — a future without hope — will only sow the seeds of further conflict.

Hospitals are also vital to children, especially in war. Attacks on hospitals are two-fold atrocities; not only do they kill and wound girls and boys, but they also leave them without access to treatment. Attacks on hospitals and hospital personnel deprive the community of a much-needed lifeline. In fact, protecting hospitals and its personnel was the founding element of modern humanitarian law.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly called for strengthened attention to and focus on the need to protect schools and hospitals from attack. Germany's initiative to bring today's resolution 1998 (2011) forward demonstrates the Council's resolve to expand the protection of girls and boys. The resolution provides for the listing of parties who attack schools and hospitals and those who use intimidation to force their closure. It also reaffirms the need for the enhanced monitoring and reporting of incidents where there are violations that deprive children of their right to go to school or be treated in hospitals. The resolution gives concrete impetus for action on the ground to protect these facilities.

The promise of the resolution is very real. I know this because we have achieved so much since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). What I would like to highlight today are a few successes we have had, and thereby to thank the Council for being steadfast and committed to children.

First, in February this year, the Afghan Government signed an action plan for the prevention of underage recruitment into the Afghan security forces, including the police. The United Nations country task force on children and armed conflict, with access to military and police installations, has sent to my Office progress reports about the effective implementation of the plan. Further, the Ulema Shura, the highest religious body, has proclaimed a fatwa on violations committed against children in conflict.

Secondly, last year in Nepal, 2,973 minors were discharged. Despite a few concerns about reintegration, the United Nations country team has risen to the challenge, offering programmes and following up on the children once they returned to the community.

Thirdly, in the Philippines in January 2010, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed an action plan with the United Nations with the full support of the Government. Further, MILF issued a supplemental general order warning its commanders of sanctions for recruiting and using children and created child protection units. Children are now being registered and released, and UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have stepped up their presence to provide these children with education and vocational skills.

Fourthly, in the Central African Republic during the course of 2010, 525 children were separated from the ranks of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie following the commitment made by their commander during my visit to the Central African Republic a few years ago.

Fifthly, in Sri Lanka, 562 children, including 201 identified at the end of the conflict as formerly associated with armed groups, were released after one year of rehabilitation. They were reunited with their families by a magistrate's order. This was done in close cooperation with UNICEF and my Special Envoy.

Lastly, I also visited Chad in June to witness the action plan signed between the Government of Chad and the United Nations for the release of children. Again, they have given the United Nations access to military installations and have requested our assistance in the reintegration of the children into the community. Moving forward, I am hopeful that I will be able to witness the signing of an action plan with the Government of Myanmar, which acknowledges the key

role of the country task force, including UNICEF and ILO, in the coming months.

Yet, great challenges remain. Persistent violators of children are on the list of the Secretary-General with little action taken against them. Their impunity remains a blot on justice systems, both national and international. In time, the Council must deal with this issue in a comprehensive manner and find ways and means of dealing with perpetrators. As a testimony to that, a list of persistent violators is attached to my statement. The reintegration of children often left at the doorstep of UNICEF and its partners also requires the commitment of resources and personnel.

While we work with these issues of accountability, we must also attempt to understand the root causes of violations against children. Without prevention and understanding, long-term solutions will not be sustainable.

In 1999, the Council began a journey of great promise. There have been important landmarks along the way, including the Council's demand for clear monitoring of violations, the proper implementation of action plans and accountability. Governments and non-State actors have begun to respond to the Council's call for action. When I meet them in the field they display great respect for the power and authority of the Security Council. In addition, the Council's commitment has real and positive effects on the lives of thousands of children. As Council members have just heard from the Secretary-General, only last year 10,000 children were released from armed forces and groups and reintegrated into their communities. Today, at this open debate, I bring the Council their message of thanks.

When I was in Chad recently, I met with many children in a refugee camp. One girl grabbed my hand, curled her fingers around my wrist and whispered, "Madame, I want to go to school." Today, with the Council's adoption of resolution 1998 (2011), we have acknowledged the importance of schools and education to children all over the world, especially in conflict areas. We hope it will usher in an era where children can study, play and learn in an atmosphere of safety and dignity.

The President: I thank Ms. Coomaraswamy for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Anthony Lake.

Mr. Lake: On behalf of UNICEF and the children whom all of us here serve, I thank the Council for convening this debate on a subject of urgency, and especially for adopting this important resolution (resolution 1998 (2011)) this morning.

A few months ago, I met a 16-year-old boy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. “Years earlier”, he told me, “they came to my village and took me away and, from that day on, I was a soldier”. That was literally true. But looked at another way, on that day he lost his childhood. His childhood was taken from him at the point of a gun.

On the same visit, I met a young girl who had lived through the horror of rape by an armed soldier. She, too, was violently robbed of her childhood, and of so much more. As we have heard today, and as the Secretary-General’s report (S/2011/250) describes in grim detail, their stories are painfully repeated in conflict areas around the world. Millions of children bear the brunt of war. They are killed, maimed, orphaned, forced to flee their homes, sexually assaulted, pressed into the service of armed groups and exposed to unspeakable violence. Those horrific acts are not only violations of international and humanitarian law; they are violations of our common humanity. Today, the Council has affirmed that attacks on schools and hospitals are attacks on children and must be treated as such, for these grave violations are alarmingly common.

As has been described, schools have been burned and bombed, classrooms used to billet soldiers and schoolyards used to bury the dead. Unexploded ammunition and mines litter playgrounds, threatening life and limb. Hospitals have been looted and immunization campaigns interrupted. Children have been taken, literally, from their classrooms to the battlefield.

The human costs of these attacks are beyond statistical calculation. The economic costs are also very high, forcing communities to rebuild schools and replace stolen supplies and equipment when conflicts come to an end — a cost that most can little afford, few budgets provide for and humanitarian aid rarely covers. The costs to society are also staggering. As Radhika Coomaraswamy just noted, almost one half of all children out of primary school in the world today live in conflict areas in countries that are often among the world’s poorest places. Those same children are less

likely to see a doctor or visit a health clinic and are more likely to be deprived of their most basic needs.

The great educator Maria Montessori once said that education is the most effective way of opposing war. It is also an indispensable foundation for peace and prosperity. And it is at the very heart of equity. In times of peace, education gives disadvantaged children the chance to break the cycle of poverty and to contribute to their societies. It is no different in times of war, and may be even more important then.

Schools restore a sense of normalcy and teach children the skills they need to survive and thrive, helping them rise above the horrors that they have witnessed. Without those skills, they are more vulnerable to violence. And so the vicious circle of poverty, despair and conflict continues. We must not fail these children. It is up to all of us to take action to protect the schools where they learn and the hospitals where they heal. To do so is to protect their individual futures and the futures of their societies.

We are making progress in meeting this challenge thanks to the commitment of the Secretary-General, the strong resolve of the Council and the ceaseless efforts of so many. In particular, all of us owe so much to the tireless and admirable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Radhika Coomaraswamy, as well as to Ambassador Peter Wittig and the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and, increasingly, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) as more children are swept up in violent conflicts.

Today, the Council has acted on that progress and is building upon it. Adding attacks on schools and hospitals as a trigger for listing parties in the Secretary-General’s annual report will heighten awareness of these grave violations and the terrible impact they have on the lives of children. We hope that this will spur Governments and groups to do more to prevent attacks on schools and hospitals through defining concrete plans to end those violations. If they do not, creating clearer links to sanctions committees will strengthen the Council’s ability to take action. Impunity is as intolerable in a civilized society as justice is indispensable.

Our purpose today is one of principle, but it must also be one of practicality. Monitoring, reporting and listing alone are not enough. Sanctions alone are not silver bullets. While denunciation gives expression to

the outrage we all feel, it alone will not move Governments. Those are necessary conditions, but insufficient to achieve lasting change. To do that, we must also find practical new ways to prevent these acts from occurring. Action plans are an important part of this. The United Nations should have access to all Governments and groups that want to pursue them.

Furthermore, today's resolution should lead to necessary discussion on the military use of schools and hospitals, thus encouraging more Governments to follow the lead of Nepal and the Philippines in protecting schools as zones of peace.

Finally, even as we strengthen the legal framework to increase our response to these abuses, we must never lose sight of the children who have been abused and those who are at risk. Too often, I believe, we refer to the children caught in conflict simply as victims to be pitied. But as so many of us have seen, they are remarkably and poignantly resilient, and brave beyond imagining. They deserve our admiration, perhaps even our awe. They have hopes and dreams like children everywhere, even when virtually everything has been taken from them. They do not need our pity. They need practical support and programmes designed to help them make the most of their potential and a positive contribution to their societies.

The young boy whom I met in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had returned to his life as a soldier twice and then been released. He continues to be at risk of recruitment because he lacks the skills and resources to withstand it. He intends to find another community in which to live and he is receiving more training for civilian life. But his future is very uncertain.

On the same trip, I met another young man who was kidnapped at the age of 11 and forced to fight for years before he escaped. Fortunately, he found a way to use his training. Today he operates a carpentry shop, is married and has a child of his own. I will never forget his pride as he told me that he had made the chair I was sitting on, or the hope his example has inspired in others at the training centre where he was trained, who now go to visit him as a symbol of their hope for the future.

In 2009 we commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it has been more than a decade since the adoption of the Optional Protocols, which ban some of

the worst forms of exploitation and abuse against children. I urge those Member States that have not done so to sign, ratify and implement those indispensable instruments.

Let us never forget, however, that human rights are not an end in themselves. The lives of people, of children, are our purpose. Rights are a context for upholding human dignity and for creating the conditions for human progress. It is the practical steps we take to protect these rights — and the impact of our actions — that can change the world. Today, we are taking another step forward, and I cannot thank the Council enough for its commitment to children affected by armed conflict and for making this critical issue a priority.

The President: I thank Mr. Lake for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I will now give the floor to the representatives of the Security Council.

Ms. Holguin Cuéllar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset I would like to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her briefing and report and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF.

It is a pleasure for my delegation to join the Council in this important debate. We are grateful for the opportunity to share with the Member States of the United Nations our vision of this problem, which we know close up. Therefore we believe we can contribute to a better understanding of this matter, given our experience and the measures we have undertaken. We know that the decisions the Council makes, if focused correctly, have an effect on the solutions that States are able to provide.

The welfare of children affected by conflict must be the central motivation that brings us together to find definitive solutions. Policies of prevention and cooperation undoubtedly are more effective than finger-pointing and excluding Governments from the

debate, from the exchange of information and from the search for solutions.

Since resolution 1612 (2005) of July 2005, it has been recognized that the monitoring and reporting mechanism must operate with the participation of and in cooperation with national Governments and relevant United Nations and civil society actors. In this instance, the Council has once more reiterated the primary role of Governments in the protection and rehabilitation of children and has reaffirmed that all actions undertaken by United Nations entities must be designed to support and supplement the efforts of national Governments.

What has happened in recent years is that the Governments of affected countries have been excluded from the debate and the working mechanisms. This trend takes us farther away from definitive solutions with regard to the protection of affected children, because it is Governments that must take corrective actions. In this context, we would like to underline that, as stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250), the results so far obtained are the product of actions by Governments, peace processes or the end of conflicts.

Resolution 1612 (2005) indicates that the monitoring and reporting mechanism must support and complement the capacity of national Governments for the protection and rehabilitation of children. Since 2005, when the mechanism was created, there has not been much progress towards solutions, but there has been an increase in blaming. We believe that strengthening each country's capacities — an fundamental principle of the United Nations response to this problem — has been insufficient. The United Nations must go further than denouncing; it must use its experience, working more decisively with States in the search for solutions.

Allow me to speak in a blunt and realistic way. It is entirely naive to think that the United Nations or any other multilateral organization can change the minds of terrorist organizations that for decades have struck fear in civilian populations, that profit from illicit activities, that utilize terror as a modus operandi, that use children as their tools to those ends and that have always ignored national and international norms. For that reason Colombia believes that the stated intention of agencies of the United Nations system to attempt to

talk to those groups directly and without the consent of Governments is inadmissible and unacceptable.

Colombia is a State where the rule of law prevails, a solid democracy where we fight to have a peaceful country, and to spare our population the nightmare of illegal armed groups financed by drug trafficking. I reiterate this point today because this year it was discussed by the Group of Experts.

We are convinced that we would have more results if the United Nations realized that it could strengthen the goal of protecting children affected by recruitment if it maintained its commitment to national Governments. That commitment is fulfilled through the cooperation and participation of the Governments. In this context, we do not share the generalities of these resolutions, since every situation is different and particular. Developing lists creates difficulties and complicates the search for solutions for each country. We stated this in 2005, and time and the state of this debate today have proven us right. Progress is made through concrete projects fitted to the realities of each society and each situation.

Without a doubt, changing the focus to emphasize cooperation and dialogue among the Members of this Organization, working in countries in a way that respects the guiding principles of the United Nations, and turning Governments into allies in the promotion and protection of the rights of children affected by this plague is the way to achieve results and to have no more children deprived of freedom. We hope for greater understanding that we, the Member States and the United Nations, can work together on the same path. Only in this way will their work be strengthened.

Colombia has implemented a prevention plan. We have always believed that prevention should guide the actions of the Council and the United Nations. Unfortunately, neither this resolution nor the other ones on the matter have considered prevention as a strategy in its central policies, missing the opportunity to carry out actions so that children may truly have a different life with opportunities and a future.

For many years we have been promoting the issue of the rights of children in local and regional policies. We receive our greatest support from the International Organization for Migration, to whom we extend once again our gratitude for the way in which it has, over the years, made the effort to work on this issue with our Government. That is why we have proposed to the

United Nations system that it work under one single plan in a comprehensive manner and to focus on 29 municipalities that are especially vulnerable to recruitment by illegal armed groups. I appreciate the support of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whose help has been essential to getting the system in Colombia to commit to carrying out this project. In the coming months, several projects will be running with a social, educational, recreational and training focus to provide opportunities for children and young people in at-risk areas.

With that in mind, and considering the best way to attain results, we propose that a serious and unpoliticized evaluation of the effect and implementation of the resolutions on this matter be carried out. Such an evaluation must include a review of the mechanism in order to assess its effectiveness. We consider a review imperative, because we have been discussing this issue for a decade with few results. Colombia, whose children have been the victims of these practices and who has combated them for many years, considers that an in-depth reflection concerning this painful subject is in order.

Mr. Alkalaj (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to you, Minister Westerwelle, for presiding over this important debate. Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes and commends the efforts of your country as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Our thanks also go to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement and to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their comprehensive briefings.

Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches the utmost importance to the protection of children affected by armed conflict, and strongly condemns all violations of international law committed against children in conflict situations, including recruitment, killing, maiming, rape and other sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. We wish to emphasize the primary responsibility of States to respect and assure the human rights of all individuals within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction, as provided for by relevant international law. In addition, we stress that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as the Geneva

Conventions and their Additional Protocols, constitute the standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in armed conflict.

However, bearing in mind that all parties to armed conflict should comply strictly with international obligations, we are deeply concerned over the continued violation, with impunity, of the relevant provisions of international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict. All available tools should be used to end impunity for violations committed against children. The perpetrators must be brought to justice and held accountable. This will send a clear signal that violations and abuses against children in situations of armed conflict will not be tolerated and will not go unpunished.

In particular, more vigorous and targeted measures against persistent offenders must be applied when appropriate. We call on the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to continue the established practice of briefing the sanctions committees and, in particular, providing concrete recommendations from the Secretary-General's reports and from the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for country-specific situations.

We are also confident that resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1960 (2010) have contributed to establishing practical means to bridge the difficulty of collecting, systematizing and verifying information on sexual violence in conflict situations, while retaining the separate focus of each mandate. In that regard, we also fully support the cooperation between the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and for Sexual Violence in Conflict regarding parties responsible for rape and sexual violence. We also support and emphasize the importance of the work of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts.

While we welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/250), we call on all parties listed in its annexes to respect their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, to halt violations, to enter into dialogue with the United Nations, and to commit to preparing and implementing time-bound action plans. That dialogue needs to be facilitated in close cooperation and with the consent of the host Government. In the same vein, preparation and implementation of time-bound action plans should be carried out and coordinated efficiently with all relevant

actors in the field, including the host Government, United Nations entities, civil society organizations and donors. It is essential that such efforts be provided with proper resources and funding in the countries where monitoring and reporting mechanisms are being implemented.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is encouraged that a number of parties have signed action plans with the United Nations aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children in conflicts. We also welcome the development of guidance on resolution 1882 (2009) and subsequent action plans. Furthermore, we wish to stress that effective reintegration programmes for children recruited by armed forces are a critical element in sustainable peace and security, and, more importantly, in ensuring the welfare of those children.

Last year, Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the main sponsors of General Assembly resolution 64/290, entitled "The right to education in emergency situations". We would like to recall that the resolution — which emphasizes that all possible measures must be taken to ensure the right to education in all phases of emergency situations, and calls for the criminalization under domestic laws of attacks on schools — was adopted in the General Assembly by consensus. We are deeply concerned about the number of attacks, as well as of threatened attacks and closures of schools and hospitals in situations of armed conflict, and about military use of schools and hospitals contrary to international humanitarian law. We are convinced that effectively addressing issues related to attacks on schools and hospitals will ensure that children are not denied their right to education during or after a conflict.

In addition, I would like to discuss some elements and facts derived from Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience, reminding the Council that among the more than 10,000 people who were killed in the besieged city of Sarajevo were 1,500 children, as well as many other children throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were innocent children who will never attend school or play again. Related to that was the reburial yesterday, on the sixteenth anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, of an 11-year-old boy, Nesib Muhić, and his 15-year-old brother Hasib, who were among the 613 newly identified bodies. And they were not the only ones. Let us, from this Chamber, send a strong message that such crimes against

children will be firmly condemned and punished, and will not be tolerated.

We therefore firmly believe that the Security Council should remain committed to protecting children in armed conflict, including through determination to ensure the full implementation of and respect for its resolutions on this issue. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to contribute to that aim.

Mr. Radebe (South Africa): We would like to take this opportunity, Mr. President, to thank you for presiding over today's meeting and your delegation for having organized this important debate. We thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their respective briefings. We also welcome resolution 1998 (2011), which has just been adopted.

South Africa remains deeply concerned about the plight of children in armed conflict. Children involved in armed conflict are deprived of the opportunity to grow up in an environment where they can realize their full potential. South Africa is particularly concerned that thousands of children continue to bear arms as soldiers and that many also suffer as victims in armed conflict. We thus remain steadfast in our firm commitment to eradicating the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

Significant progress has been made since the compilation by Graça Machel in 1996 of the first United Nations report on children affected by armed conflict (A/51/306). South Africa is pleased that the issue of children and armed conflict continues to receive the attention it deserves on the agenda of the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular. We are encouraged that the Council has identified six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict. Our country believes that each should be given equal weight and attention by the Council.

In that regard, we welcome the expansion of the trigger mechanism for punitive measures against those committing recurrent attacks on schools and hospitals. We are concerned about the emerging trend of such attacks. We call on all parties involved in conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and to refrain from attacks against civilian targets, particularly those where children might be present.

South Africa is concerned that, despite the positive efforts of the international community to address the challenges faced by children in armed conflict, parties continue to commit violations against children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Palestine, Afghanistan and elsewhere, children continue to be casualties of war and their rights continue to be violated. We are also concerned that a substantial number of countries and situations where children are involved in armed conflict are on the African continent. We welcome the improvement of the conditions of children involved in armed conflict in some areas, such as in Burundi. We call on parties that remain on the list to follow the example of those States and entities that have adopted specific action plans to improve the situation. South Africa is deeply concerned about recently reported additional violations in emerging conflicts, such as in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya. We call upon affected Governments, with the assistance of civil society and the international donor community, to develop and implement concrete plans to address the challenge of children affected by armed conflict. The international donor community should continue to provide long-term and sustainable assistance to facilitate such programmes.

On our part, South Africa has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Optional Protocol sets the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities, for recruitment into armed groups and for compulsory recruitment by Governments at 18 years. Furthermore, our national children's act and national defence force policy are in line with the Optional Protocol, in that they define the age of majority as 18 years, which is also in line with the South African Constitution. The children's act recognizes the need for special care and protection from harm, abuse and neglect of children. It gives effect to South Africa's commitments in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is vital that we do not forget the long-term needs of children who have been affected by armed conflict. South Africa therefore underscores the importance of adopting a broad strategy with regard to conflict prevention, which should address the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner and create a conducive environment for the protection and promotion of children's rights.

South Africa welcomes the unwavering commitment of the Office of the Special Representative and of UNICEF in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, which will go a long way in addressing the recruitment and use of children and other violations committed in armed conflict. We encourage them to work within their respective mandates and in an integrated manner with other key stakeholders, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations, to ensure coherence in addressing this scourge.

We also commend the work of the Security Council Working Group, especially its role to review progress in the development and implementation of time-bound action plans by parties to conflict to halt the recruitment and use of children, which are violations of international obligations.

In conclusion, South Africa would like to express our continued commitment to working with Council members and the international community to ensure that the protection of children remains our main priority.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): We are grateful to you, Mr. President, as well as to Ambassador Wittig and the German Mission, for hosting this important debate and for your leadership as Chair of the Security Council Working Group. We also very much appreciate the important statements by the Secretary-General, Special Representative Coomaraswamy and UNICEF Executive Director Tony Lake.

Abuses against children in armed conflicts do not just tear at our hearts, they also rip the fabric of our societies, undermine our shared security and challenge us all to do far more to bring these outrages to an end. The toll never ceases to shock. According to a recent UNESCO report, between 1998 and 2008 an estimated 2 million children were killed in conflicts and 6 million were left disabled. Approximately 300,000 children are reportedly being exploited as soldiers. Let there be no doubt: we are failing the world's children so long as so many continue to suffer such brutality and abuse.

This is not to diminish the work that has already been done to assist children in armed conflicts around the world. Since 2004, the United Nations has signed 15 action plans in nine conflict zones, and concluded five of them. The Special Representative and United

Nations agencies in the field have had a measurable impact on the ground. One of the brightest spots in the Secretary-General's otherwise depressing report (S/2011/250) is the number of child soldiers who have been released. An estimated 6,300 children were released from such servitude this year in the Sudan, Nepal, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burma and Sri Lanka. We have increased the spotlight on grave abuses. We have built up our information-gathering capacity, including comprehensive reports by the Secretary-General. We have listed serious perpetrators and frankly examined individual country situations.

All those steps by the Working Group help to keep such abuses squarely on the international agenda and to bring them to the urgent attention of national authorities. But, as we all know, a great deal more needs to be done. For instance, I have just returned from witnessing the birth of the Republic of South Sudan. Some progress has been made throughout the Sudan, notably the release over the past year of almost 1,200 children from the terror of armed groups. The United Nations has concluded action plans and signed memorandums of understanding with several groups in the Sudan. But the abuses persist, including by the Lord's Resistance Army and others. The Government of the Sudan and the Sudanese Armed Forces have not yet signed and implemented an action plan. Separately, we urge the former Sudan People's Liberation Movement to continue to implement its now-expired 2009 action plan, as well as to sign a formal extension of that plan.

In Burma there are still child soldiers within the ranks of Government forces and armed groups. The Government of Burma has committed to stop the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to develop an action plan with the United Nations. We urge it to do so as soon as possible and to draw from the expertise of relevant agencies, such as the International Labour Organization and UNICEF.

We are deeply troubled as well by the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Half a dozen groups from that country are listed in annex I of the report of the Secretary-General. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has failed to engage meaningfully with the United Nations to end abuses against children committed by its armed forces. As a result, child recruitment has risen in some areas. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo should move immediately to remedy those alarming violations, including by finalizing and signing a long-overdue action plan with the United Nations.

This year's report also documents another appalling trend, namely, increased attacks on schools and hospitals, in particular in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Burma, Pakistan, Yemen and the Philippines. In Côte d'Ivoire alone, according to UNICEF, 224 schools were attacked during the post-election crisis, disrupting the education of some 65,000 children. The report of the Secretary-General documents such attacks. With today's resolution (resolution 1998 (2011)), the Secretary-General will have the mandate to name and shame those who perpetrate such attacks on a recurrent basis.

Overall, we remain deeply concerned that persistent perpetrators continue their violations against children with impunity. Sixteen parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report have been listed for five years or more. That is plainly unacceptable. Thus, the United States urged the inclusion in today's resolution of the Council's time-bound commitment to consider a broad range of options to increase pressure on persistent perpetrators. The Council's unanimous support for that commitment is an important step towards holding egregious violators accountable for their actions.

Today, let us rededicate ourselves to working towards a world in which all children have the security, opportunity and hope that we seek for our own sons and daughters.

Mr. Brites Pereira (Portugal): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict, an issue to which Portugal attaches great importance. I also wish to welcome and thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their briefings. I also take this opportunity to commend their work and efforts to ensure the protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

Let me start by reaffirm Portugal's strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and the safeguarding of international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians in armed

conflict has been one of the priorities of our action as an elected member of the Council.

Back in 1998, during our last tenure in the Council, we promoted the first debate held here on the issue of children and armed conflict (see S/PV.3896). We were already convinced then, as we are today, that this issue has serious implications for international peace and security. To protect children in armed conflict requires the commitment of the international community as a whole. Portugal is fully committed to this objective.

Since then, the Council has made significant progress and established, step by step, a strong normative framework and mechanism to monitor, report and respond to grave violations against children. The resolution that we have adopted today (resolution 1998 (2011)) expands the causes for listing parties in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General to include attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as attacks and threats of attacks against schoolchildren and educational and medical personnel. That will enable the Security Council to act in a consistent and timely manner to further enhance the protection of children and their access to education and health services.

The inadequate provision of education and health to children in situations of armed conflict is a serious problem that will have consequences for the long-term development of the countries concerned. According to UNESCO, 28 million children are denied their right to education because of armed conflict. This situation is totally unacceptable and it needs to be urgently redressed.

In that regard, my country has regularly introduced a draft resolution at the Commission on Human Rights and at the Human Rights Council on the realization of the right to education, which was at the origin of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education. This resolution, as well as the resolution on education in emergency situations adopted last year in the General Assembly, which my country co-sponsored (resolution 64/290), is a step in the right direction that will guarantee not only a fundamental human right but also an important tool in the fulfilment of other basic rights.

In this context, let me say a word of appreciation for the important work carried out by civil society in terms of increasing the protection of children's rights,

which has significantly helped to pave the way for the work of the Security Council in this very important area.

During the past few years, the Security Council has consistently strengthened accountability for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children. In the near future, we hope to see all such violations given equal treatment, including the abduction of children and denial of humanitarian access.

This normative framework for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict must be furthered. Portugal believes that the Council must continue to address certain situations of concern while striving to find the best way to promote the protection of children affected by armed conflict. In that regard, action plans are an excellent tool for engaging armed forces and organized armed groups. But we must bear in mind that such plans might not be as efficient in cases involving militias or other non-State armed groups that do not have a firm command structure.

Furthermore, many conflicts have a cross-border impact. That perspective might be lost when adopting a country-by-country approach. Parties like the Lord's Resistance Army act with complete disregard for borders. Children are abducted in one country and taken to another, and sometimes to a third. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing coordination efforts by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. But we believe that more needs to be done in terms of coordination to address cross-border child protection concerns.

The ability to impose targeted measures on persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children is an important tool available to the Security Council in this area. We strongly believe that, as they are being renewed or established, the mandates of existing sanctions committees should include child protection criteria and expertise.

But Portugal also believes that the Council needs to find a solution to consider targeted measures for perpetrators of grave violations against children in situations where a dedicated sanctions committee does not exist. We welcome the discussion that will take place in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on options to increase pressure on persistent

perpetrators of acts committed against children in situations of armed conflict.

The advocacy and dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her Office have been crucial in promoting this agenda. Let me welcome the five field trips that she undertook since the last debate (see S/PV.6341) and the commitments reached in each and every place she visited. Portugal supports the renewal of her mandate. That mandate has helped to foster progress on the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

Let me conclude by underlining that much has been done since 1996, when Graça Machel's report (see A/51/306) on the impact of armed conflict on children revealed the suffering of children in situations of armed conflict throughout the world. This study is clearly the foundation for the children in armed conflict agenda, but each resolution adopted by the Security Council has reinforced the children's protection framework. I hope that this open debate and the resolution that we have just adopted will be useful tools in assisting the work of the Council and that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the discharge of her mandate.

The harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children and its long-term consequences for durable peace, security and development are nowadays widely recognized. As Graça Machel said in 1996, the impact of armed conflict on children must be everyone's responsibility. It still is.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to join other speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate. We welcome the international attention that Germany has brought to this issue, both in its role as President of the Security Council and in its chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We are grateful for the statement of commitment from the Secretary-General this morning and for the briefings from Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and from Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF. Let me express my particular appreciation for the work of Ms. Coomaraswamy. We are very grateful for her efforts to help children across the globe and for the leadership that she has brought to this dossier.

I would like to focus on three topics — ambition, practical action and the importance of addressing attacks on education.

First, our ambitions for this agenda must remain high. United Nations efforts to help children affected by armed conflict can, in many situations, work and work well. In the Sudan and Afghanistan, we look forward to the implementation of new action plans to release and reintegrate children recruited and caught up in fighting.

We can highlight specific results, such as the release of almost 3,000 children in Nepal in 2010 and the reintegration of 191 children in Chad this year. But there are also areas where progress has been much slower. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we need to generate far greater momentum to release child soldiers, including those associated with the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo. In Burma, the United Nations needs to be granted greater access to monitor and report on abuses against children, particularly in areas of ethnic conflict.

In the five years following the adoption of resolution 1379 (2001), two-thirds of the world's child population were living in the 42 countries most affected by violence and conflict. In a series of resolutions, Member States have demonstrated the courage to tackle violations of children's rights globally. Resolution 1998 (2011), which we have adopted today, marks another important step forward, but it should not mark the end of our ambition.

Secondly, we should continue to focus our efforts on practical action. The preparation and implementation of country action plans remain the most effective tool for releasing children. It is here that we should focus much of our effort. Of course, we must carefully consider the context before deciding which actions to take. No two countries are the same, so the Working Group and country task forces must constantly be searching for new and innovative methods to make the maximum difference on the ground. We welcome the increased use of field visits, for example, which have been shown to be an effective tool in informing the decisions of the Working Group and bringing about increased local dialogue.

Thirdly, I welcome the focus of our new resolution on addressing attacks on schools and hospitals. Denying children access to education is in itself a violation of their human rights; it also robs

them of the ability to understand and claim their wider rights. Safe schools can deliver life-saving advice in conflict zones. Attending school can keep children from more dangerous livelihoods. It can help prevent conflict in the longer term by reducing youth employment and ensuring that young people are not disenfranchised from society. We hope that this addition will strengthen our efforts to reduce attacks on children and improve their lives.

United Nations action on children and armed conflict works, and it works best when we are practically, not institutionally or theoretically, focused. That is why it is right to maintain and increase our ambition, including by expanding children and armed conflict work to cover the important topic of attacks on education, as we have done today.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on convening this important debate. I thank the Secretary-General for his remarks, and I am also grateful to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy and to Mr. Anthony Lake for their presentations today and for their invaluable work on this important issue.

Shielding children from the horrors of conflict is an important dimension of the Council's efforts to protect civilians, to break the cycle of conflict and to establish sustainable peace. We welcome resolution 1998 (2011), adopted today, and its focus on addressing attacks against schools and hospitals. Education and health are basic human rights and building blocks of peaceful societies. To attack them is to attack the very notion of human dignity.

The Council has developed an important body of norms on children and armed conflict that constitute useful tools to protect civilians. They have led to progress in curbing grave violations against children. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to make our work both more efficient and more effective. We commend the German chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and support a continued reflection on how to better use the tools at the Group's disposal to protect children.

When dealing with situations of armed conflict, respect for international humanitarian law must be our core concern. It is neither necessary nor desirable for the Council to create a new set of norms to discipline the actions of parties in conflict. In cases where international humanitarian law is being violated, the

Council may decide that a more direct involvement is necessary to protect the most vulnerable.

International humanitarian law is clear in regard to attacks on schools and hospitals. Teachers, students, patients and medical personnel are civilians and therefore protected persons under international humanitarian law. The Council has time and again reiterated the responsibility of all parties to conflict to protect civilians. We must avoid selectivity and be consistent in our demands for strict observance of international humanitarian law.

In cases outside the purview of the Council, where there is no armed conflict, Member States should support national and international mechanisms to promote children's rights. Where, in turn, there is an armed conflict, the Council's efforts to protect children must be closely linked to its broader goal to maintain international peace and security. The signing of action plans and the release of child soldiers are very important achievements, but our ultimate goal must be to end the conflicts that have given rise to such violations.

Sustainable peace is the best guarantee of lasting protection. Brazil will continue to firmly support the Council's efforts both to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict and to help lay the foundations of long-term peace.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased to welcome you, Sir, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of your country, to the President's chair at this Security Council meeting, and thank our German colleagues for taking the initiative to hold this meeting and for their very professional chairmanship of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We are grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon; his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mrs. Radhika Coomaraswamy; and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, for their attention to the problem of protecting children in armed conflict and for their useful information on the state of affairs in this area.

Despite all the steps being undertaken at the international and national levels and the existence of a broad international legal basis, we note that children continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups suffering in armed conflicts. The Security Council, within the framework of its mandate to promote

international peace and security, grants significant attention to this issue. In this regard, we welcome the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) today, and hope that its implementation will contribute to enhancing the system for protecting children and international cooperation in this area as a whole.

However, we would like to point out that the task of protecting children is system-wide in nature, and it is important that the work done in this area be well coordinated. That will enhance its effectiveness and prevent any duplication of efforts, because these questions are also handled by the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, within their respective mandates. There is a clear need, therefore, to respect the existing system of burden-sharing among the various United Nations bodies, in accordance with the Charter and other international legal instruments. Significant work is also being undertaken in this area by several international organizations within the United Nations system, in particular UNICEF.

Resolution 1612 (2005) laid the basis for protecting children during armed conflicts and the post-conflict reconstruction process, including through the monitoring and accountability mechanism and the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We believe that those instruments should focus principally on the most severe and large-scale armed conflicts on the agenda of the Security Council, including situations where States agree to their case being considered by the Working Group. In this context, it is particularly important to establish close cooperation, dialogue and trust, which should help to improve the situation of children on the ground.

We have closely studied the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/250), and we note that it contains a wealth of information. Nevertheless, we must once again point out the doubtful reliability of some of the evidence referred to in the report. Clearly, a balanced assessment based on objective and reliable information will guarantee further practical implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. We express our concern at the loose interpretation of what is meant by "armed conflict" in the report. This leads the report to include references to situations of concern. In this context we would like to point out that there is no justification for the references in the report to India, Pakistan, Thailand, the

Philippines and Haiti. The situations in those countries cannot be called armed conflicts.

The work on the report and on the draft resolution has shown — as have the discussions — that many countries have problems as to how the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict is actually implementing some aspects of her mandate. We believe that the time has now come for a broad discussion of this issue in order to answer Governments' concerns.

With regard to the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General, we support the idea of the need to give equal attention to all six categories of serious violations of children. Crimes against children must not go unpunished.

It is also necessary to take long-term measures for the rehabilitation of children who are affected by conflicts and for their reintegration into society. It is extremely important in this connection to establish the right conditions for children to obtain uninterrupted and complete education, and also to have access to comprehensive health care.

Finally, it is important to consistently enhance the mechanisms for bringing to justice those who are guilty of violating the rights of children. I repeat, impunity is not acceptable.

We strongly condemn the killing and maiming of children, both during planned attacks and as a result of indiscriminate or excessive use of force. Despite the additional measures being taken to prevent this from happening, including by international military presence, they occur with tragic regularity. We believe it is unacceptable to try to describe the victims among civilian populations, particularly children, as collateral damage. That contradicts the provisions of the Geneva Convention. We advocate careful investigation of such incidents and punishment for the guilty.

Nor is it acceptable that children should continue to be detained in military prisons of international forces without having access to the civil justice system. We call on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict to give particular attention to this issue.

In conclusion, I would like to express again the view that effective cooperation, including in the area of protection of children, is impossible without cooperation with the Governments of countries

involved in conflicts or in the post-conflict reconstruction stage. In that context we stress the importance of cooperation between United Nations missions and United Nations country teams with non-State armed groups must take place only with the agreement of the Governments involved in those conflicts.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon): Allow me at the outset to thank Minister Westerwelle for his presence here to preside over this important meeting. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Lake, for their comprehensive briefings.

Confronted with the dehumanizing effect of force, children are too often robbed of their childhood. The front lines of conflict bring them face to face with the absurd horrors of war and threaten their education, health care and the most basic human right — the right to life.

Though notable progress has been made at the normative level and in some specific contexts, the overall situation of children in armed conflicts remains troubling, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/250). We condemn all indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against children, and we call on all parties in situations of armed conflict to strictly adhere to international humanitarian law.

Attacks against schools and hospitals are a growing trend, as evidenced in the Secretary-General's report. Lebanon had first-hand experience of attacks on its schools and hospitals during the last war waged by Israel, in 2006. By introducing a new criterion — attacks on hospitals and schools — for listing parties to armed conflicts in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual reports, the resolution before us makes critical progress in the protection of children in armed conflict. It sends a clear warning to perpetrators about the serious consequences of committing such violations.

Targeting schools also has far-reaching and damaging repercussions on development. Indeed, the World Bank, in its report on education in the Middle East and North Africa, argued that the provision of education, particularly for girls, is the single most effective intervention that countries can make to

improve human development and to tackle conditions of fragility.

In a more comprehensive manner, we believe that the six grave violations enumerated in resolution 1612 (2005) are of equal gravity and should be accorded the same attention by the Working Group. These are: killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, abduction of children, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children. We look forward to the day when the criteria for listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report will be extended to all these six violations.

Looking ahead, we wish to stress first that the introduction of new listing criteria will require the provision of accurate and verifiable information to the Council — which will further strengthen the reporting and monitoring mechanism already in place — in close cooperation with the local authorities. Secondly, we underscore the importance of a more effective follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group and the Group's swift response to urgent situations in which children are affected on a large scale. Thirdly, accountability relating to crimes against children in armed conflicts remains the exception. The United Nations could play a crucial role in that respect through providing capacity-building and coordinated support to fragile States in the field of the rule of law.

I wish to conclude by recognizing the role that education can play in fostering the value of peace, tolerance and inclusiveness as the most effective way to prevent conflict, protect children and heal them of the traumas of war.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I align myself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany for his initiative to convene the Security Council to consider the issue of children and armed conflict.

This morning the Council is showing that it is determined to ensure respect for the right to education and health in armed conflict. Attacks against schools and hospitals and their staff are prohibited under international humanitarian law. During conflicts they

destroy infrastructure and wipe out the elite that are vital for any country. Following conflicts such attacks have a lasting impact on the country's reconstruction.

The Security Council is today sending a clear message to parties to conflicts who commit such attacks by deciding to act on the basis of information provided by the Secretariat. That is significant progress. It responds, first, to the increase in attacks against schools and hospitals and their staff that have been seen on the ground, as has been demonstrated by the situations in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. But it is also a response to the awareness among the international community that has followed the presentation of the UNESCO report, *The Hidden Crisis: armed conflict and education*, which showed that 28 million children were deprived of basic education in countries in conflict. That report also evidenced the contribution made by the World Health Organization.

In the absence of progress, we must not hesitate to implement robust and targeted sanctions. The Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is to consider this issue in order to present specific recommendations to the Council within a year. In the context of this exercise we emphasize two aspects.

First is improving the overall coherence of the sanctions systems architecture in order to enhance the credibility of the Security Council's actions.

Secondly, with respect to enhancing the links between the Working Group and the international criminal justice system, we welcome the contribution made by the International Criminal Court to combating impunity, as evidenced by the ongoing trial of Thomas Lubanga on charges of war crimes. We call on civil society and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide material for consideration by States.

We also pay tribute to the work of the Secretary-General and of his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. We endorse the analysis and the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. We commend the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to protecting children in armed conflict as well as the work of his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy.

We share the goal of the United Nations of achieving a world without child soldiers within 25 years. That is an ambitious but realistic goal. It is estimated that there are 250,000 child soldiers worldwide, and UNICEF is contributing to the reintegration of approximately 10,000 of them each year. Major challenges remain in terms of addressing the broad-ranging issues of sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. To facilitate the implementation of resolution 1882 (2009), we call on the Secretary-General to provide the necessary resources to the monitoring and reporting mechanism and for the dissemination of information, as well as to take into account the cross-border aspect of certain conflicts, as was done in the process of fighting against the Lord's Resistance Army.

We commend the signing of the action plans in Afghanistan and in Chad, and we call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma to complete their own such plans, in coordination with the United Nations.

With regard to the support provided by the Secretariat to the Working Group of the Security Council, we thank the Secretary-General for the administrative support, and we look forward to the continuation of country visits by the Working Group at the current pace, following those to Nepal in 2010 and to Afghanistan in 2011. We hope that such missions will be financed as new measures under the regular budget for 2012-2013, which will be adopted in the fall.

Together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and our partners in the steering committee, we will convene the fourth ministerial follow-up Forum on the Paris Commitments and the Paris Principles, to be held on the margins of the ministerial-level meeting of the General Assembly in September.

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to the Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Peter Wittig, for his outstanding chairmanship of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): Let me convey Nigeria's profound appreciation to the German presidency of the Security Council for having convened this timely meeting on children and armed conflict. I commend your personal leadership, Mr. President, in planning and organizing this important meeting. Germany has

not only demonstrated excellent leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, it has also taken a determined stance on compelling moral issues, including attacks on schools and hospitals in situations of armed conflict.

Let me also add Nigeria's voice to those who have expressed appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy and Executive Director Anthony Lake for their inspiring statements. I must also thank the Secretary-General and his team for the painstaking and lucid report (S/2011/250) on the subject.

Over the past 12 years, significant progress has been made in identifying children at risk and engaging with those who would otherwise threaten their well-being and reintegrating and rehabilitating children who have been affected by war.

The development of the monitoring and reporting system, the steady growth in the implementation of action plans and the refocusing on the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law have in many instances made the world a safer, if not more peaceful, place for children.

In spite of these notable improvements, several challenges still exist. Of particular concern to most delegations, including mine, is the troubling trend of attacks and other violations against schools, hospitals, pupils and staff. It is critical that parties to armed conflict are made to recognize the special status such institutions enjoy as safe havens in time of conflict. That status must be inviolate. It must be inviolate, as impeded access to health care and education will have devastating and long-lasting humanitarian consequences. In protecting these safe havens, we recognize the human rights to education and health as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

There is indeed an accountability gap for violations against children affected by armed conflict, which we should breach. Impunity for violations against children, which remains an ever-present feature of conflicts, is a symptom of a wider issue of capacity. States involved in conflict are resource-starved and therefore lack the manpower to devote to the investigation of crimes against children. It is the obligation of the international community to adequately resource such Governments, provide the

necessary technical assistance and guidance for the drafting and implementation of national action plans.

In addition, justice-sector capacity-building should constitute a vital part of our peacekeeping activity. In support of national efforts, the Security Council should be unremitting in applying these targeted measures against the perpetrators of grave violations against children. We must remain open to ensuring that the work of the Working Group benefits our wider policy bodies, including the sanctions committees, where appropriate. It is our sincere hope that the resolution adopted today will move beyond the incremental improvements made thus far and breach the accountability gap once and for all.

Nigeria unequivocally endorses the cooperative approach to child protection that features prominently in the report of the Secretary-General. We are unequivocal in our support for the highly effective partnership between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as the functional partnerships between UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The in-country task forces, peacekeeping operations and special political and peacebuilding missions should also be commended for their efforts to systematize approaches to child protection within their respective mandates. Their engagement with civil society and State actors is a prerequisite for long-term improvement in this regard. A notable model for such cooperation is the United Nations regional strategy on the protection of children affected by the Lord's Resistance Army.

Nigeria is a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and a founding signatory to the recent N'Djamena Declaration. We believe that these actions underscore our commitment to standards for the protection of children, particularly those who are vulnerable to armed conflict. We are and will remain an active participant in the effort to shield our young people, enforce their rights and, more importantly, to hold accountable those who violate those rights. It is our collective duty, we believe, and our vocation to protect the innocent and the vulnerable from the ravages of war. It may be helpful for us Council members to

consider ourselves in loco parentis. We are, in fact, part of the larger community that it takes to raise and protect each and every child. Accordingly, we must all be watchful, vigilant and even fierce in our commitment to keep armed conflict from indelibly scarring our youth.

Mr. Mougara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, your country's excellent stewardship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict attests to your leadership and deep interest in the fate of children and armed conflict. The organization of this debate confirms Germany's commitment to this important issue.

We thank the Secretary-General for his important statement on this issue early in the debate. We also express our gratitude to Ms. Coomaraswamy for the skill with which she is discharging her duty to provide greater protection for children affected by conflict, and for the highly useful information she has shared with us. Finally, we welcome the presence of the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, and reiterate our support for the significant contribution of his institution to the defence of the cause of children in general, and those affected by conflict in particular.

Today's debate is taking place in the overall context of the Security Council's action to protect civilian populations in armed conflict. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250), thousands of children continue to fall victim to serious violations of international law in conflict zones. Gabon firmly condemns such violations, particularly the recruitment and use of child soldiers, murder, kidnapping, rape and other forms of sexual violence, the denial of access to humanitarian assistance, and attacks on schools and hospitals. These serious crimes committed by Government or armed non-State forces violate the provisions of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 1612 (2005).

We should like to make two observations — the first with respect to the progress achieved in the Council's normative action to protect children, and the second concerning the challenges we continue to face in protecting children in the field.

Turning first to the normative framework, we applaud the considerable headway achieved since the adoption of resolutions 1379 (2001), 1539 (2004) and, most particularly, 1612 (2005), establishing the

monitoring and reporting mechanism. Since the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), the Security Council has been able to refer to lists, annexed to the reports of the Secretary-General, of parties to armed conflict who commit the murder and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence. Together, these measures constitute an effective architecture for raising the awareness of all parties to conflict on the gravity of the crimes they may commit. Such measures are also deterrent in terms of the sanctions which their perpetrators run the risk of incurring.

This progress has also strengthened the activities of peace missions and facilitated the work of the principal actors on the ground. In that regard, we stress the key role played by advisers in the protection component of peace missions. We point to the success achieved in Chad, the Sudan, the Central African Republic and, most especially, the Democratic Republic of the Congo thanks to the joint activities of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNICEF that contributed to the liberation of many child soldiers.

The progress we have made should not make us lose sight of the various challenges remaining ahead in ensuring the more effective protection of children in situations of armed conflict. In that regard, I would raise two specific issues.

First, it is deplorable that certain Governments remain strongly resistant to the possibility of engaging in constructive dialogue with the United Nations with a view to signing an action plan geared to ending violence against children in armed conflict. It is also regrettable to note that increasing numbers of parties to conflict are targeting public institutions, such as schools and hospitals that shelter children, teachers and medical staff. Gabon therefore supports your initiative, Sir, of considering the inclusion of attacks on children in schools and hospitals on the list of criteria for listing persons accused of serious violations against children in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports.

In conclusion, we express our desire to see the Security Council's action to protect children in armed conflict subject to ongoing evaluation and strengthening in order to make our struggle against the impunity of offenders more effective, especially with regard to the heinous crimes perpetrated against

children. Gabon will continue to support the international community's fight against the use of children in armed conflict and all forms of abuse, violence and deprivation to which they are subject.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): I, too, would like to express our appreciation for Germany's able stewardship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its organization of today's debate.

Rabindranath Tagore, the national poet of India, said that "every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man". Children constitute one-third of humankind — the most important third. They are also the weakest and therefore the most susceptible to suffering. If we are to be judged by how we treat the weakest among us, then we have a lot to account for.

Children continue to suffer appallingly from violence, hunger and illness. What is perhaps most tragic is the manner in which millions of children are condemned to live their lives on the margins, bereft of opportunity and sometimes of hope. They do so as other, more fortunate children embark upon lives of unprecedented prosperity and promise.

President Nelson Mandela has said that "we owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear". This is, in some ways, the primary responsibility of every Government — the most important element of the social contract between Governments and citizens. The work of the United Nations on children in general, and on children and armed conflict in particular, is therefore among its most important activities.

India believes that the international community has the responsibility and, indeed, the obligation to do its utmost to provide succour to children affected by armed conflict. We have engaged constructively in the ongoing efforts to make the work of the United Nations more relevant and effective in this area. We strongly support the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We have participated actively in its deliberations and will continue to contribute to the strengthening of a regime that protects children in situations of armed conflict.

The work being done by the international community in this area is in some ways on the cutting edge of international politics and international law. We need to move forward with deliberation, taking into

account the concerns and experiences of Member States. India has a number of concerns about the manner in which Security Council resolutions in this area are being interpreted. Several representatives who have spoken before me have raised the same concerns.

My delegation believes that the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations must be followed consistently and scrupulously. Member States should not outsource the exercise of their basic prerogatives and responsibilities to international civil servants. The actions of the international community that have legal and judicial characteristics must be in accordance with the doctrine of natural justice and separation of powers. The principle of *audi alteram partem* — or "hear the other side" — must be adhered to. Mandate creep must be checked and countered.

India deplores grave violations and crimes committed against children during war. We have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and are committed to the norms and practices associated with this international regime.

The Government of India accords the highest priority to ensuring that the rights of children in India are protected. Nineteen per cent of the world's children are Indian, and we have created a legal and institutional framework to protect and promote their rights and their well-being. A national charter for children has been adopted. Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years has been declared a fundamental right that is enforceable. A National Commission for the Protection of Children has also been set up and a national plan of action for children has been adopted.

The Government of India is committed to creating, through these and other initiatives, a protective environment for children. In this connection, I would also like to point out that Indian civil society is an integral part of that framework. We consider civil society to be a valued partner in our national and international efforts on children's issues.

India has been at the forefront of converting the Council's word into deed through its peacekeeping mandates. More than 100,000 Indian troops and police officers have participated in peacekeeping operations over the past five decades. Based on our experience on the ground, we would like to emphasize that the central challenge to the implementation of the Council's mandates is the question of resources.

I am sure that Special Representative Coomaraswamy, whose zeal is remarkable, will agree with me when I say that peacekeeping missions require more child protection advisers with more resources. My country would encourage the Special Representative to work with national authorities in developing capacities to deal with children in armed conflict. We believe that support for efforts by national authorities to end impunity and ensure accountability should be a key focus area.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism requires the involvement of Member States and close supervision by them in order to ensure veracity and credibility. We expect that the processes of data collection and analysis and of listing and de-listing will be carried out in a transparent and judicious manner under the close supervision of Member States.

Vast numbers of children are affected and traumatized by armed conflict. However, we cannot lose sight of the economic and social marginalization of the poorest nations that is driving hundreds of millions of children towards childhoods that could well make them part of tomorrow's problems rather than tomorrow's solutions. We need to address this broader picture of the destitution and desperation that claim even more lives than armed conflict and often pave the way for a fresh cycle of violence. This dynamic, unfortunately, neither attracts international media attention nor appears on the Security Council's agenda. Nevertheless, in our discussions here the Council must ensure its clear focus in order not to lose sight of the emergency before it, which constitutes a global challenge.

In concluding, I would like to quote an English author who said that "children begin by loving their parents; after a time, they judge them; rarely, if ever, do they forgive them". We must not be found lacking in our efforts if we expect any chance of forgiveness from the children of our future.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome Germany's initiative to convene today's meeting. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement, as well as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy and UNICEF Executive Director Mr. Anthony Lake for their respective briefings.

China attaches the utmost importance to the issue of the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

China rejects the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other acts that violate the rights of children in armed conflict. China supports the continued efforts of relevant United Nations bodies to protect children affected by armed conflict in accordance with their respective mandates and based on their advantages and strengths. In this connection, I would like to emphasize the four following points.

First, in order to ensure that children affected by armed conflict are protected against harm, the issue must be tackled from its root causes. More attention should be focused on the prevention, control and elimination of armed conflicts. The Security Council should effectively implement its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It should strengthen preventive diplomacy to encourage and support the peaceful settlement of disputes by the parties through good offices, mediation, dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation, and should work to reduce and respond in a timely and appropriate manner to situations of conflict so as to create a safe and favourable environment for the healthy development of children.

Secondly, the mandates of Security Council resolutions must be strictly implemented, in accordance with provisions of the Charter as well as of relevant Security Council resolutions. The Council should give priority attention to the issue of children affected by armed conflict. China supports the important role of the Special Representative on the issue of the protection of children affected by armed conflict, in accordance with the Council's mandate.

Since armed conflicts have varied causes, protection measures for children affected by armed conflict should be established based on relevant factors of each particular situation. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Sanctions remain the choice of last resort at the Council's disposal to address situations that pose a threat to international peace and security. China has always advocated caution in adopting sanction measures.

Thirdly, efforts should be made to ensure the effectiveness of various programmes and plans to protect children while adhering to the principle of national ownership. Governments bear the primary responsibility to protect children affected by armed conflict. The actions of relevant United Nations entities are meant to support and supplement Government

actions. The Security Council and its Working Group in Children and Armed Conflict should strengthen communication with the Governments concerned. The Secretary-General and his Special Representative should establish a channel for sharing information at the earliest possible moment and maintain contact thereafter. The Council should consider the information provided by all the relevant parties to an armed conflict, particularly that of the Government.

Fourthly, the long-term impact of armed conflict on children must be addressed seriously. Comprehensive measures must be adopted to ensure the return of children affected by armed conflict to society and the resumption of their normal life. In promoting post-conflict reconstruction, the international community should ensure the return of children to their families, schools and societies as a priority matter. In this connection, the international community must provide sufficient resources, scale up development assistance and redouble efforts in the areas of poverty elimination, universal education and the promotion of sustainable development in order to provide safe and favourable conditions for the development of children.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Ragolini (Italy): I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. I also would like to commend Germany's leadership role as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Let me express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, to his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and to the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, for their commitment to defending and promoting the rights of children who fall victim to armed conflicts.

In taking the floor, Italy endorses the statement to be delivered by the European Union. We also support the comments made by Canada on behalf the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, of which Italy is a member.

The protection of children's rights during armed conflicts is one of Italy's foreign policy priorities. We have consistently advocated greater commitment by the Security Council to address this scourge. We welcome the steady progress achieved in strengthening the protection framework. Resolution 1998 (2011),

adopted today — which Italy is proud to have co-sponsored — confirms this trend. The decision to include attacks against schools and hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons in relation to schools and hospitals as new listing criteria for the annexes of the Secretary General's reports is indeed a vital step towards comprehensive protection of children from all grave violations.

Italy welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250) and strongly endorses its recommendations. We join other delegations in calling on the Security Council to adopt more vigorous measures against persistent violators. Impunity can seriously undermine the credibility of the protection system we have created. Relevant sanctions committees must address this issue within their respective mandates. In cases where sanctions committees are not established, the Council should consider how to tackle the accountability gap.

Cooperation with the International Criminal Court is also key. Monitoring and ensuring adequate follow-up to the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is another important aspect.

We attach great importance to action plans. We welcome the recent signing of plans in Afghanistan, for example, and urge Governments to give concrete follow-up to their commitments.

The Child Protection Advisers of United Nations missions also perform essential duties. Adequate training in child protection is one of the core recommendations expressed in the Secretary General's report. Italy is supporting an initiative by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and Save the Children, to develop a comprehensive and systematic training programme on child protection and child rights for all peacekeeping personnel. We hope that other donors will join us in supporting this strategic project.

I conclude by expressing our strong support for the United Nations campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Important results have been achieved since its launching in 2010. We believe that universal ratification is an ambitious but realistic goal. It would reflect our determination to put an end to the

worst violations of the rights of the child, which violations are also a major threat to the stability and welfare of our societies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Mr. Guido Westerwelle, for convening this important debate, and to congratulate his delegation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council during the month of July and the chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Mexico had the honour of chairing the Working Group during its term as non-permanent member of the Security Council in the biennium 2009-2010. We are well aware of the responsibilities involved.

Resolution 1998 (2011), adopted this morning, represents a positive step, as it gives both the Security Council and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General better tools with which to respond to the serious violations that, regrettably, are committed against thousands of children in armed conflicts in various parts of the world.

Over recent years the Security Council has contributed to improving the United Nations capacities in the comprehensive protection of children in armed conflicts. Resolution 1882 (2009) broadened the criteria whereby parties to a conflict can be listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports to include sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. Resolution 1998 (2011) includes an additional criterion: cases of attacks against schools and hospitals and attacks or threats of attack against protected persons in relation to schools and hospitals.

This new criterion is particularly important, considering that attacks against schools and hospitals not only threaten thousands of children, teachers, doctors and support staff but also represent an attack on the future of societies, depriving boys and girls of the inalienable right to education and health and therefore undermining the development of the country.

The Security Council has reaffirmed today its unequivocal commitment to protect children in situations of armed conflicts and is sending a clear message that the commitments imposed on parties by international law regarding the security and well-being

of children must be respected and all abuses of or violence against children avoided.

Nevertheless, such violations will continue to be committed as long as we do not sanction those responsible for those crimes and do not fight impunity at all levels. It is important that national authorities and the parties concerned take the relevant legal measures to bring those responsible to justice.

Combating impunity must go hand-in-hand with the process of reintegrating and caring for children affected by armed conflict. In this context, the Security Council must ensure that the sanctions committees view the protection of children as a core element of their mandates, and the Council must analyze in detail the cases where specific committees do not exist so as to adopt the necessary measures against those who are responsible for systematic violations against children.

Mexico recognizes the importance of bolstering the mechanisms that are available to the Working Group in order to improve its effectiveness and to contribute to the effective implementation of its recommendations. We consider that the Working Group should use all the tools available to it in an efficient way, including regular field visits and emergency or informal meetings in the case of serious violations at the request of the Chairman or any member of the Working Group. Also, the Security Council must continue to strengthen the mandates of peace missions for the protection of children by deploying advisers and establishing reintegration and support programmes for victims of sexual violence.

Finally, I would like to recognize especially the extraordinary work of Special Representative Radhika Coomaraswamy and her team, as well as Mr. Anthony Lake and the officials of UNICEF, who together with civil society are implementing this mechanism and are working tirelessly on this priority issue on the international agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rivard (Canada): First, I would like to thank Germany for convening today's open debate and to commend their leadership in protecting children in conflict.

Let me also say a few words on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, an informal network of 38 interested Member States.

The Friends Group is pleased with the work undertaken by the Security Council in the past few years in progressively strengthening the protection framework for children affected by armed conflict. We also commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her work to ensure that children experience the full protection of all human rights in situations related to armed conflict, and the dedicated work of UNICEF in this regard.

Members of the Friends Group have reliably called on the Security Council to further strengthen its protection framework and have consistently called for all six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict to be included among the listing criteria established by resolution 1612 (2005). The Friends Group has supported a progressive approach in this regard and therefore commends the Security Council for filling an important gap in the child protection framework by including attacks on schools and hospitals as the latest trigger through resolution 1998 (2011), adopted today.

For the Friends Group, a new trigger such as this includes in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports not only those parties to armed conflict who, in contravention of applicable international law, engage in attacks on schools and hospitals, but also those who engage in threats or attacks against schoolchildren, patients, and education or medical personnel. In addition, a new trigger such as this would include United Nations country-level task forces monitoring attacks on schools or hospitals; threats or attacks against schoolchildren, patients, and education or medical personnel; and military use of and other relevant disruptions to educational and medical facilities. The Friends Group is pleased to see these measures included in the resolution adopted today.

Although the Friends Group applauds the action taken by the Security Council so far in strengthening accountability for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children, we call for three types of further decisive action against such perpetrators. First, we urge the Security Council to ensure that grave violations against children trigger the imposition of sanctions when mandates are established or renewed for relevant sanctions committees, as agreed in the presidential statement of 16 June 2010 (S/PRST/2010/10).

Secondly, we call on the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports actions taken by existing sanctions committees regarding such provisions, as well as proposals for additional steps to ensure perpetrators' accountability.

Thirdly, we remain concerned about the accountability gap, and call on national authorities and all concerned parties to take appropriate legal action against persistent perpetrators. The Friends Group also calls on the Security Council to take decisive action against all persistent perpetrators listed in annex I of the Secretary-General's reports and, in cases where there is no designated sanctions committee, to consider how to address that gap through proactive means.

Lastly, the Friends Group has stressed the importance of follow-up regarding the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations, as called for in resolution 1882 (2009). We call on all parties to conflicts, including non-State actors, to follow up and implement the recommendations of the Working Group.

(spoke in French)

In my capacity as representative of Canada, I would like to formally welcome the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250). This debate is an opportunity once again to bring to the Security Council's attention the seriousness of the acts of violence that continue to be perpetrated against children.

We firmly believe that today's adoption of a new resolution on children and armed conflict will highlight the gravity of the attacks being made on schools and hospitals. With this additional trigger, strong support on the part of the international community will be needed for the monitoring and reporting mechanism country teams to track attacks on schools and hospitals on a systematic and comprehensive basis. Canada believes that education is the strongest tool we can provide to children in order to improve their chances in the future. That is why one of Canada's signature projects focuses on increasing access to education in Kandahar by investing up to \$12 million in building, expanding and repairing 50 schools in selected districts of Kandahar province.

We are also pleased that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is actively seized of the issue of accountability. We therefore call on the

Council and its relevant sanctions committees to impose sanctions more systematically so that perpetrators of grave violations against children may be held to account. As the Secretary-General has recommended, Canada urges the Council to take more vigorous and targeted measures against offenders who have been listed in the Secretary-General's annual report for at least five years for committing grave violations against children. Canada also calls on the Working Group, in accordance with its mandate, to hold urgent or informal meetings in order to ensure a speedier response to new situations where grave violations are being committed against children in armed conflicts.

Children's rights are a priority of Canada's foreign policy and international development aid. Canada will continue to play a strong role and to help contribute to concrete results both at the United Nations and on the ground in countries concerned.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Allow me first to thank Germany for having organized this important open debate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their briefings and for their tireless efforts dedicated to protecting children affected by armed conflict. I would also like to align Slovenia with the statements of the European Union, the Human Security Network and the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

Today's debate is based on the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2011/250), which shows that 2010 was not a very positive year for children affected by armed conflict around the world. There have nevertheless been some improvements, among which I would like to highlight the signing of new action plans and the progress made in implementing existing action plans. We welcome the fact that the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict gave briefings to a sanctions committee that resulted in its adding the practice of recruiting and using children as a criterion for sanctions. We hope that this practice will be adopted by other committees.

Although positive steps have been taken to hold persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children accountable, we believe that the Security

Council should impose further targeted measures on such perpetrators that will prevent them from committing any other grave violations against children. Slovenia would also like to voice its support for the Secretary-General's recommendation encouraging concerned Member States to facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State actors in order to ensure broad and effective protection of children.

We are pleased to see that the mechanism for protecting children affected by armed conflict that was developed subsequent to resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) has produced important and visible results. We would like to commend the Working Group, and in particular Germany and other previous Chairs of the Group, for the work it has done over the past five years. The Working Group has become a credible and well-established subsidiary body of the Council. We encourage it to use all the tools at its disposal, including more field visits and the organization of urgent or informal meetings, which will enable it to be even more responsive.

Two-thirds of the country situations discussed in the Secretary-General's report include attacks on schools and hospitals. Almost half of children who do not attend school are children in conflict situations. Education gives children the possibility of a future without insecurity. This has been confirmed on many occasions, including at the 2009 thematic dialogue in the General Assembly on education in emergencies, and General Assembly resolution 64/290 on the same topic last year.

Slovenia strongly supports the expansion of the new trigger on attacks on schools and hospitals, by expanding both the Secretary-General's list of parties to the conflict who engage, in contravention of applicable international law, in attacks on schools and hospitals, and of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. That decision further develops the protection framework for children affected by armed conflict and is a step in the right direction. We hope that in the not-too-distant future it will encompass all six grave violations against children in armed conflict.

Both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are part of the normative framework for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Slovenia therefore supports the campaign for universal ratification of the Protocols by 2012. Slovenia will also continue to be engaged in

rehabilitating disabled children affected by armed conflict and in efforts to remove landmines and other unexploded ordnance.

Children should not suffer because of armed conflict; they should not be victims of any grave violations and should enjoy their rights fully. Today's adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) is an important step in that direction, and it is for this reason that Slovenia has joined in co-sponsoring the resolution.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): New Zealand thanks the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2011/250), Ms. Coomaraswamy for her outstanding work as his Special Representative and Germany for organizing this debate during the month of its presidency, thus giving us an opportunity to influence the Council's consideration of the issue of children and armed conflict, including through the informal event it hosted on 30 June.

For the Council's decisions to be effective, the commitment and investment of the wider United Nations community is also required. For the 177 countries that cannot sit at this table, participation in the Council's work ensures that commitment, and regard to our voices encourages that investment.

It is important to remember that, as we sit in the Chamber today, children are still being forced out of classrooms and playgrounds and onto battlefields. They are suffering the vilest forms of sexual abuse and rape. They are being disfigured, maimed and even murdered. The Council's actions can improve the lives of those children, as has been demonstrated through its institutional innovations, such as the creation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and through the consolidation and implementation of the protection framework. But, as always, more concrete action can be taken that will improve the lives of children affected by conflict, including girls, minorities such as indigenous children and children with disabilities.

To that end, New Zealand fully endorses the recommendations made a short time ago by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict. Given the time constraints, I will not repeat those points except to say that New Zealand welcomes the addition of a new educational and medical trigger. We support

strengthened sanctions and other targeted measures to punish and deter persistent perpetrators. And we urge the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict more effectively to follow-up on its recommendations. I will expand, if I can, on just three points.

First, the Council can better target persistent perpetrators. As well as asking the Secretary-General again to list persistent perpetrators in his annual report, the Council could designate child-protection criteria in the mandates of the relevant sanctions committees and request child-protection expertise in its expert groups. The Council could also seek the advice of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General more often and more systematically emphasize the cross-cutting nature of this issue by including concerns about children in its reports.

Secondly, more effective action can be taken to ensure the implementation of the Council's resolutions and conclusions. The Working Group could, for example, use the full range of tools at its disposal, as well as emergency meetings, to respond to crisis situations and to follow up on its recommendations. Child protection provisions could be more systematically included in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

It is not just the Security Council, however, that must act to protect children. Member States and the various United Nations organs also have a vital role to play. We urge those countries concerned, for example, to allow United Nations country teams to contact non-State actors so that they can prepare action plans and carry out other protection measures. We ask the Council to take a more active role to ensure that context.

Those are just a few steps that could be taken to protect children affected by conflict even more. There are others. It is to the Council's credit that its actions over the past decade have improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. But hundreds of thousands are still affected. It is our collective duty to take bold and effective action to protect them all. That duty is one for each and every one of us.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the Human Security Network, namely, Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland,

Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Thailand, South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Switzerland.

We welcome the efforts and the important progress in different parts of the world in addressing the six grave violations against children in armed conflicts. The adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) today fills an important gap in the comprehensive child-protection framework by including attacks against schools and hospitals as the latest trigger in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. This step will also complement ongoing efforts by other bodies of the United Nations system. However, challenges remain.

Accountability for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children should further be strengthened. We call on the Security Council for further decisive action, including through targeted and graduated measures against such perpetrators, and to consider how to address the accountability gap through proactive and effective means. We also call for more efforts to address impunity and to investigate, prosecute and punish all those who commit grave violations against children.

We acknowledge the positive trend towards mainstreaming the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict within some United Nations missions on the ground. We encourage the relevant departments of the Secretariat responsible for providing support to the field to continue to work closely together to ensure a more systematic and consistent approach in all missions. The appointment of more child protection advisers and the inclusion of child protection modules in the pre-deployment training of police and troop-contributing countries could also contribute to that end.

From a human security perspective, it is important to complement existing action plans with a strong programmatic response to support Governments in the implementation of comprehensive national strategies that include prevention and provide a multisectoral approach to the assistance and social protection of children who have been associated with armed forces and groups. Assistance measures must focus on avoiding their marginalization and stigmatization, as well as facilitating their social reintegration. Furthermore, a more stable and long-term funding structure to fulfil all the elements of the action plans is crucial.

Last but not least, the Human Security Network invites the Council to enhance its efforts in order to approach the protection of civilians in a more systematic and coordinated manner, taking into account the situation of children and women. We therefore appreciate the fact that consultations on how to foster such synergies were held under Brazilian presidency of the Council in February. We encourage further discussions on this issue and call on members of the Council to be as inclusive as possible.

(spoke in French)

With the President's permission, I should now like to make a few comments in my national capacity.

With regard to General Assembly resolution 64/290, on the right to education in emergency situations, Switzerland welcomes the fact that, through resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council has today filled an important gap in the framework for the protection of children by including in the list of triggers recurrent attacks against school and hospital facilities. The inclusion of those new elements should make it possible to expand the roll of shame maintained by the Secretary-General not only to combatants who carry out such attacks in violation of international law and international humanitarian law, but also to those who repeatedly threaten or attack all those afforded protection in this context.

We also call for new and decisive steps be taken against perpetrators. First of all, we urge all sanctions committees to ensure that the gravest violations against children be made subject to sanctions at the time that mandates are established or renewed.

Secondly, we call on the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports all the steps taken in sanctions committees with regard to the actions called for in those reports, as well as with regard to proposals made to move towards greater responsibility for the perpetrators of such violations.

Thirdly we remain very concerned about the lack of responsibility owing to the lack of sanctions committees charged with dealing with repeat perpetrators of violations set out in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports. We commit to urgently taking resolute measures against these offenders, thus filling the gaps in a proactive manner.

Oversight of the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations in implementation of

resolution 1882 (2009) is of capital importance. That is why we would invite the Working Group to request a response from countries or the concerned party, if necessary, on the report on the conditions for the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations. We expect a strengthening of existing tools, starting with field missions and making extensive use of options already available, as well as emergency meetings in order to grapple with the resurgence of violations on the ground.

Like my colleague from New Zealand, who just spoke, Switzerland once again calls on Member States to facilitate contacts between the United Nations and local and international actors, with a view to guaranteeing comprehensive and effective protection of children. These contacts will in no way prejudge the political and legal status of non-State actors.

Finally, children are increasingly being detained for association with armed groups. Their detention often includes the use of violence, abuse, threats of violence or abuse and other brutality, with the sole purpose of obtaining information from them. Switzerland counts on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to address this issue in a working document and propose appropriate measures for strengthening the protection of children.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): Please allow me, at the outset, Mr. President, to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General on the presentation of his annual report to the Security Council on children in armed conflict (S/2011/250). We also appreciate the important role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Child and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, in monitoring the state of children in armed conflict. I would also like to thank Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for his presence and remarks. I commend the Security Council for adopting resolution 1998 (2011) today.

In her speech this morning, Special Representative Coomaraswamy stated,

"During my visits to conflict areas, I have personally seen the devastation — schools completely destroyed, bombed or burnt to the

ground. I have also seen schools with broken window panes and empty classrooms where children have been recruited as child soldiers. I have met girls whose colleagues stay away from schools because, as female students, they may be victims of acid attacks."

I would like to state that nothing like that is happening in Iraq, because Iraq is not a conflict area. However, my delegation is pleased to make the following observations about the section on Iraq in the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict.

The report covers the situation during 2010 and emphasizes that children were used by the terrorist group Al-Qaida and the affiliated terrorist group, the Islamic State of Iraq. We would like to note that the security situation in Iraq has continued to improve since 2003. The year 2010 witnessed a very low rate of terrorist attacks and casualties, as a result of the growing capabilities of the Iraqi security forces, the pursuit of Al-Qaida and pre-emptive strikes against it, and the capture of most of its leaders in Iraq.

The year 2010 also witnessed the killing of Al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri and the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who were both killed in mid-April 2010. These strikes and arrests have dispersed Al-Qaida's strength, disrupted its strategies and revealed to Iraqi security agencies Al-Qaida's plans, thus weakening Al-Qaida's ability to finance and recruit terrorists in Iraq.

The year 2010 witnessed a lot of security achievements, the most prominent of which was the safe atmosphere surrounding the general election held on 7 March, which clearly indicated the great improvement in Iraq's security situation and the growing capabilities of the Iraqi security forces to maintain order throughout the country. The Secretary-General mentioned this fact in his report to the Security Council on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), stating that

"the overall environment in which the poll was conducted was relatively free of violence and without any major security incidents that affected the polling itself" (S/2010/240, para. 6).

In paragraph 16 of the same report, the Secretary-General further states that

“the Iraqi security forces have demonstrated their increased capacity to assume greater security responsibilities, evidenced by their successful maintenance of security during the March elections”.

Paragraph 97 of the report contained in document S/2011/250 states that there were consistent reports from many parties during 2010 that Al-Qaida forces in Iraq were managing a wing of its organization called “Birds of Paradise”. The same paragraph also refers to the difficulty in obtaining information concerning that group and identifying its leadership.

In that connection, we would like to note that the report covers the year 2010 and that the wing was discovered before 2010. According to reports from Iraqi security forces, the intensive security campaigns carried out by Iraqi forces at the beginning of 2010 resulted in the elimination of most of the forces of Al-Qaida, the dismantling of the majority of cells and the arrest of its leaders, including members and leaders of the Birds of Paradise. This wing did not commit any terrorist attacks in 2010. We thus believe that there is no need to refer to this wing of the organization in this report.

Paragraph 97 of the same report also refers to information that was based on allegations and not evidence: “In other instances, insurgents have allegedly used children as proxy bombers who did not know they were carrying explosives”.

Paragraph 98 of the report indicates that a number of children were killed or injured as a result of the continued conflict in Iraq. In fact, the losses incurred in 2010 were the result of attacks carried out by terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq, and were not due to any conflict.

Paragraph 98 mentions that access to many parts of Iraq is limited and that the verification of all incidents was not possible. The United Nations thinks that the figure may underrepresent the actual numbers. What is stated in this paragraph gives a picture that is contrary to the reality of the Iraq situation in 2010, witnessed by the current stability and the inability of terrorists to have a public presence in any region of Iraq. The security forces control all areas of Iraqi. Civilians and security forces have ease of movement, especially in areas that were previously reported to be dangerous.

Paragraph 98 also speaks about child casualties resulting from their presence in areas of armed clashes or during confrontation at checkpoints. We reiterate that the improvement in security in 2010 prevented direct clashes between security forces and terrorists because the terrorists have lost control of the ground as a result of the dismantling of their groups by security forces. Therefore, terrorists started to attack randomly and in a way that did not reveal them to the public.

Paragraph 99 refers to the danger that prevents children from going to schools, while paragraph 98 refers to the incident that took place at the Church of Our Lady of Salvation. The report states that some schools were closed in Baghdad for a few weeks because they were located next to churches. Throughout 2010, there were no general school closures, despite the fact that there were such closures for weeks in many countries throughout the world due to all kinds of disasters, such as floods, epidemics, hurricanes and so on.

The report does not mention the efforts made by the Iraqi Government to combat the remnants of terrorist groups and improve security in all areas of the country, nor its success in limiting the recruitment of children by terrorist groups. As I said earlier, we feel that the report’s section on Iraq is in need of more accuracy, especially as regards the monitoring of the situation of children in Iraq. This section of the report contradicts some information contained in reports of the Secretary-General on UNAMI that point to an improvement in the security situation in Iraq, including facts. We therefore hope that, in the future, the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict will be able to provide more accurate information in order to give a clear picture to members of the Security Council.

I would like to conclude by extending our thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and her Office for their efforts. I would like to invite her to visit Iraq again. Since her last visit, three years ago, a lot of improvements have taken place in Iraq. We will continue to cooperate with United Nations bodies to ensure human rights in general and the rights of children in particular as priorities of the Iraqi Government.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): I would like first to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month of July. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General, his Special Representative Ms. Coomaraswamy and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Lake, for their comprehensive briefings. Japan very much appreciates the advocacy activities of Ms. Coomaraswamy, in particular her country visits, as well as the dedicated field work done by UNICEF in the area of children and armed conflict.

While there has been commendable progress, such as the signing of action plans by the Governments of Afghanistan and Chad this year with the United Nations to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, many challenges still remain on the agenda in terms of children and armed conflict, including sexual violence against children.

Based on Japan's two-year experience in the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, until the end of last year, I would like to focus on three issues that we regard as particularly important, namely, attacks on schools and hospitals, accountability for persistent perpetrators and a comprehensive approach.

First, Japan is deeply concerned about the reported trend of an increasing number of attacks on schools and hospitals during conflicts. We strongly condemn the perpetrators of such attacks, in particular those who target female students and girls' schools.

Attacks on and the military use of educational and medical facilities and attacks against pupils, teachers and medical personnel not only deprive children of their lives but also seriously violate a child's fundamental rights to access to educational and medical services. Such acts are not permissible under any circumstances, in particular in conflict situations. The Security Council should play a key role in protecting children's rights to education and health.

In that regard, we welcome that the new resolution just adopted by the Council (resolution 1998 (2011)), which Japan proudly sponsored, requests the Secretary-General to include in the annexes to his reports those parties that engage in recurrent attacks on schools and hospitals and against protected persons in relation to such facilities.

Secondly, Japan continues to be concerned about the fact that as many as 15 parties to conflict have been listed for more than five consecutive years in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports. In order to ensure accountability for persistent perpetrators, the Security Council must reinforce targeted measures against them, as the Council already agreed to impose seven years ago in resolution 1539 (2004).

We welcome the fact that, as a result of the briefing by Ms. Coomaraswamy in the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Committee included several individuals in its sanctions list for their grave violations against children. We encourage the holding of briefings on a more regular basis to the relevant sanctions committees by both the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We commend the German presidency and all Council members for addressing in very strong terms the issue of accountability for persistent perpetrators in the new resolution.

Thirdly, I would also like to underline the need to address the issue of children and armed conflict in a more comprehensive manner, through cooperation between Member States and the United Nations system. Support must be ensured seamlessly, from the protection of children in conflict to the rehabilitation, care and reintegration during peacebuilding efforts of those formerly associated with armed forces or groups and who are victims of sexual violence. Children's perspectives need to always be considered in the processes and programmes related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, as well as those associated with security sector reform, landmines, unexploded ordnance and cluster munitions.

We also expect that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, apart from just adopting conclusions on each situation annually, will be more creative in holding special meetings and issuing political messages in a timely manner in response to an urgent appeal by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

In its assistance to conflict and post-conflict countries, Japan has placed great importance on the protection and empowerment of children, who are the

most vulnerable. For example, in cooperation with international partners, we have extended assistance in the areas of rehabilitating child victims of landmines and providing mine-risk education in countries such as Cambodia. Through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, Japan has also supported community-based programmes that improve the educational environment and provide education and training for former child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By preventing and alleviating the deleterious impacts of conflict, we will continue to endeavour to enable children around the world to have a brighter future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I would like to fully associate myself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Luxembourg warmly welcomes the convening of this open debate and the adoption of the new resolution on the issue of children in an armed conflict (resolution 1998 (2011)). This demonstrates the continuing commitment of the Security Council to promote the protection of children, both in countries that are on its agenda and in other situations that are of concern to us all.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their tireless efforts in support of children. We encourage them to continue to strive to ensure that children are better protected and that violations against them are brought to our attention.

The roll of shame that is annexed to the Secretary-General's reports and, more generally, the Secretary-General's reports based on information gathered thanks to the monitoring and reporting mechanism are of vital importance in obliging us to face up to the brutal reality of children in time of armed conflict. The country visits by the Special Representative, the work of experts on the protection of children in field missions and the new practice of field visits by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict contribute considerably to greater awareness of violations against children in conflicts.

Initial tangible results can indeed be seen. More and more children are being released by armed forces

or rebel groups in many conflict situations. However, additional efforts and resources will be necessary in order to have a greater impact on the ground.

In 2010, the Security Council, following consultations with the Special Representative, imposed for the first time sanctions against individuals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were responsible for serious violations against children. The Council will be able to build on that precedent in order to punish in the same way those who are responsible for serious violations against children in the context of other armed conflicts.

We call on the Security Council to continue to work to that end and at the same time to consider, as the Secretary-General has suggested, ways by which sanctions may be imposed in contexts where there are no Security Council sanctions committees.

From now on, parties to a conflict that attack schools or hospitals could find themselves on the list of shame contained in the report of the Secretary-General. We congratulate the Council for having thus enhanced the monitoring mechanism, and it is our hope that the Council's gradual approach will allow for the inclusion, in the not-too-distant future, of the two other categories of serious violations against children identified in resolution 1612 (2005). Ultimately, we must assign equal importance to all serious violations against children.

Allow me briefly to dwell on the issue of attacks against schools. As is clear from the report of the Secretary-General, we are witnessing on an increasingly frequent basis the destruction of schools and attacks on students and their teachers. In certain cases, girls' schools are specifically targeted. Insecurity prevents parents from sending their children to school for fear that their health or even life might be at risk.

This year, the Economic and Social Council is examining, at its substantive session now under way in Geneva, the issue of education for all. Synergies with our debate today are quite clear. In his speech before the Council on 5 July last, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Mr. Jean Asselborn, emphasized the fact that "protection against violence is one of the key preconditions for enjoying the right to education". He welcomed the Security Council's initiative aimed at expanding the criteria for listing on the list of shame to cover attacks against schools and hospitals, thereby

allowing for the imposition of sanctions on those responsible and contributing to the fight against the impunity that is far too common for these heinous crimes.

Minister Asselborn called on the international community to take additional measures to help the 28 million children who are deprived of education because of armed conflicts and who are subjected to

rape, sexual violence, targeted attacks against their schools and other human rights violations. I wish to reiterate that appeal today.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list. I therefore intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.