

O to President,

Allow me to thank you for organizing this debate on children and armed conflict and to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary General for her unwavering efforts and her presentation of the Secretary General's excellent and timely report.

I fully subscribe to the intervention by the Czech Permanent Representative on behalf of the European Union. I would like to highlight a few principles that are of particular importance to my country, which bilaterally supports a number of organizations striving to alleviate the plight of children in armed conflict, in particular UNICEF and the ICRC.

M to President,

We have a broad range of political and legal instruments at our disposal to prevent the worst sufferings of children during armed conflict. Our common action to protect children in armed conflict is indeed also based on ratification, and foremost implementation, of relevant international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

In this context, it is essential to recall the importance of the process of accession to the Rome Statute, which establishes the recruitment of children under age 15 as a war crime. My Government attaches particular importance to the fight against the impunity of the perpetrators of war crimes and massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in particular when these crimes are committed against children. Impunity cannot be tolerated, and I fully subscribe to the recommendation by the Secretary General in his report that the Security Council should not hesitate to refer violations against children in situations of armed conflict to the International Criminal Court.

The Paris Conference of 2007 also marked an important step forward, by recognizing that the violation of the Rights of the Child is a violation of international law and that States are not only under the obligation to protect children on their territories, but should also do their utmost to obtain the release of child soldiers by armed groups operating on their territories : two years after the conference, it is essential to give the *Paris Principles* a steadfast follow-up.

Mr. President,

The Secretary General's report confirms that despite major international attention to the subject of today's debate, the first victims of armed conflicts continue to be children : the child soldiers on the front lines of more than 30 conflicts around the world, but also the millions of children suffering the atrocities of war, including maiming and sexual violence. In this context, I fully support the recommendation by the Secretary General to extend the trigger of the Monitoring and Control Mechanism of Resolution 1612 to acts of rape or other sexual violence against children.

Mr. President,

Luxembourg invites the Security Council, in line with the Secretary General's recommendation, to ensure that all peacekeeping operations have the necessary resources for child protection policies,

in particular through the deployment of child protection officers. These officers could also flag situations in which the peacekeeping effort might be at the expense of children.

Mr. President,

All conflict situations in which atrocities are committed against children require our urgent attention. I would nevertheless like to highlight two particular cases.

As we speak, fighting continues in Sri Lanka, and civilians, among which many children, are again the main victims. If the full scale of child rights violations is not known, it is clear from the Secretary General's report that parties to the conflict, in particular the LTTE, have recruited children and that an important number of children have been abducted.

While the Government of Sri Lanka is taking some responsibilities by promoting the reintegration of children leaving the ranks of armed groups, aerial bombings and long-range artillery fire cause great suffering to the civilian population, in particular children, and I join my voice to that of all those who call for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Mr. President,

To conclude, a word on Burundi, to which my country is firmly committed in the framework of the Peacebuilding Commission. Luxembourg welcomes the demobilization of former child soldiers, including girls, from the FNL and invites the FNL and the Government to pursue the demobilization of other children in accordance with international law. It is important to facilitate their reinsertion and sustainable socio-economic reintegration through education and training programmes. This development shows how the Peacebuilding Commission can play an important role in the mobilization of resources for DDR processes and of support to awareness campaigns on child soldiers.

Thank you.