



Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5129th meeting

Wednesday, 23 February 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Biaou	(Benin)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Benmehidi
	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Wiltzer
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Onodera
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Ms. Migiro
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2005/72)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 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/2005/72)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Canada, Gabon, Guinea, Iceland, India, Iraq, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Myanmar, Nigeria, Norway, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Uganda, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

There being no objection it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Otunnu to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Rima Salah, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Ms. Salah to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahima Diouf, Special Adviser on Child Protection to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Diouf to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, document S/2005/72.

I now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

Mr. Otunnu: I thank you, Mr. Minister, for convening this meeting of the Security Council, a meeting devoted to taking action to ensure the protection of children exposed to armed conflict. I have had the opportunity to witness — particularly in the context of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), here at the United Nations and at the African Union — the concern of the Government of Benin and your personal leadership on this issue. Your presence here today testifies to that engagement and leadership. We are grateful.

I warmly welcome in our midst Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children of Tanzania. We are delighted that she is here with us today.

I am very grateful to Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière and the rest of the French delegation for their continued stewardship of this issue in the Council. I thank them for their steadfast commitment.

On this occasion, I wish to pay a special tribute to a pioneering leader who is not in our midst today. I refer to Ms. Graça Machel, whose seminal and compelling report, issued in 1996 (A/51/306), laid the

foundation upon which we have been building over these years.

We have come this far in the development of this important agenda because of the important collaboration and contribution of many stakeholders: delegations, United Nations partners, regional organizations and the community of non-governmental organizations. I wish to express particular appreciation to Carol Bellamy and all our other colleagues from the United Nations Children's Fund, represented here today by Rima Salah.

I am pleased to report that, since the adoption of resolution 1539 (2004) last year, the heads of United Nations field teams have become fully seized of their responsibility for follow-up, monitoring of progress and coordination of response on this issue. As a result, the United Nations field teams have been the primary sources of the information contained in the present report.

The United Nations field representatives have informed us of the various constraints they have encountered in fulfilling that responsibility. They include security problems, lack of access and non-cooperation of parties. But the most important constraint has been the absence of an organized and functioning mechanism for monitoring and reporting at the country level.

The Council has before it a report of great consequence. The report is about instituting a serious, formal and structured compliance and enforcement regime to ensure the protection of children who are at present being brutalized in many situations of conflict. The report brings together all the necessary components for the establishment of such a regime. This marks a turning point in our collective campaign for the "era of application": for transforming protective standards into compliance and condemnation into accountability. This is the culmination of several years of a block-by-block building process.

Members of the Council will see that specific, concrete and practical features of the compliance and enforcement regime have been laid out in the report. I draw attention in particular to three features of the report, which together comprise the key components of the compliance and enforcement regime: review of the conduct of parties to conflict, resulting in the systematic naming and listing of offending parties; ensuring accountability for offending parties,

particularly through the imposition of concrete and targeted measures; and the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

The efforts deployed over the last several years have yielded significant advances and created strong momentum for the protection of conflict-affected children. Those gains include: greatly increased global awareness of and advocacy for child protection; an impressive and comprehensive international body of protection instruments and norms; the protection of war-affected children being firmly placed on the international peace and security agenda; the protection and well-being of children being increasingly reflected in the mandates, training and reports of peacekeeping missions, as well as in the deployment of child protection advisers; children's concerns being incorporated in peace negotiations, peace accords and post-conflict programmes for rehabilitation and rebuilding; and the mainstreaming of this issue taking hold in several institutions and mechanisms, within and outside the United Nations.

I am pleased to report that the overall situation for children has improved considerably in some situations. Those include Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. Clearly a great deal has been achieved in the space of a few years, most of it with the Security Council at the forefront.

But much more remains to be done, because far too many children continue to be brutalized in situations of conflict. Consider the following. Although the overall figure has decreased in the past few years, more than a quarter of a million children continue to be exploited as child soldiers, used variously as combatants, porters, spies and sex slaves. Tens of thousands of girls are being subjected to rape and to other forms of sexual violence, sometimes as a deliberate tool of warfare. Abductions are becoming widespread and brazen, as we have witnessed, for example, in northern Uganda, Nepal and Burundi. Since 2003, more than 11 million children have been displaced within their own countries and some 2.5 million children have been forced to flee their own countries and to become refugees because of conflict. Approximately 800 to 1,000 children are killed or maimed by landmines every month. As the horror of Beslan and other incidents have demonstrated, schools are increasingly being targeted for atrocities and abductions.

Against that background, the present report has reviewed developments in 17 situations of concern, recording systematically the following five grave violations: the killing or maiming of children, the recruitment or use of child soldiers, attacks against schools or hospitals, rape and other grave sexual violence committed against children, and the abduction of children. Altogether, 54 offending parties have been specifically named and listed; they are drawn from 11 situations of concern. All 54 offending parties are responsible for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. In addition, many of them are responsible for committing other grave abuses, as recorded in the lists.

Compared with the lists in the last report (S/2003/1053 and Corr.1 and 2), which was discussed by the Council in January 2004, eight parties have been dropped from the lists because of change of conduct; six offending parties have been added to the lists this year, mainly because of improved information-gathering; and a few parties have been dropped from the lists for lack of verifiable information.

This is the third report received by the Council that systematically documents grave abuses and lists offending parties. The Council has already, on previous occasions, expressed its intention to take concrete and targeted measures against those parties. It is most important that the Council make good on its promise on this occasion; the credibility of this exercise depends on that. The targeted measures should include the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, the imposition of arms embargoes, a ban on military assistance and restriction on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned.

In the light of the facts, the lists and the trends towards impunity recorded in the three consecutive reports, I would propose and urge that the Council undertake a four-pronged response to end impunity: first, decide to impose concrete and targeted sanctions measures against the offending parties named in the monitoring lists; secondly, constitute a committee of the Council to review and monitor the imposition of specific sanctions measures for the protection of children exposed to conflict; thirdly, demand that the parties on the monitoring lists, working in collaboration with the United Nations field representatives, prepare within six months time-bound action plans to end the grave violations for which they have been named; and fourthly, endorse the monitoring

and reporting mechanism with a view to putting it into operation expeditiously.

The purpose of the compliance and enforcement regime is to ensure that the offending parties take heed and that the necessary actions are undertaken to end the violations for which those parties have been named. In that connection, I should like to report that yesterday, I received a letter from Mr. S.P. Tamilselvan, head of the political wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka — a party named in this year's report — taking note of their inclusion on the lists and expressing their readiness to enter into dialogue using the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. While I welcome that message from the LTTE, I call on its leadership to embark immediately upon tangible actions leading to a time-bound action plan to end, once and for all, the practices of recruiting, abducting and using children as soldiers. And I urge all other parties named in the report to take immediate concrete steps to demonstrate their commitment to ending their grave violations against children.

I am very sad to report that one of the most disturbing developments in the reporting period has been the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel, both civilian and military, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. United Nations peacekeepers are warmly welcomed into war-torn communities because they are viewed as a God-sent presence to end impunity and to restore protection and respect for vulnerable and long-suffering populations. I pay tribute to the vast majority of peacekeepers who have carried out their mission with honour and dedication. But the notion that some peacekeepers would use their position to prey on local children and women in this way is a particularly shocking and unacceptable betrayal of trust.

I commend my colleague from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, for his swift and transparent response to these developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is important that we get to the bottom of this issue through a fundamental and comprehensive review. What is the scope of this problem? What are the reasons for the prevalence and level of abuse? What issues must be addressed concerning institutional capacities, the enforcement of existing standards, the investigation of allegations and the multiplicity of jurisdictions?

In order to mount a truly comprehensive and effective response, we need to receive solid answers drawn from an across-the-board review. That must necessarily involve the United Nations Secretariat working hand in hand with countries that contribute military and police peacekeepers. Together, we must move — without any compromise or complacency — to punish the offenders and to root out this practice from all United Nations field presences.

The report before the Council sets out a concrete plan of action for establishing a comprehensive, from-the-ground-up monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism to provide for the gathering of objective, specific, reliable and timely information — the “who, where and what” — on grave violations being committed against children in situations of conflict. In turn, that information should lead to action and accountability.

The plan identifies the grave violations that should be particularly monitored. It sets out instruments and standards that should constitute the basis for monitoring — the yardsticks for judging the conduct of parties to conflict. It identifies the key bodies that constitute “destinations for action”, those responsible for taking concrete measures in response to these grave violations against children, with the Security Council at the forefront.

As we move to put in place a compliance and enforcement regime, it is important to underscore a few pertinent issues. It is crucial to engage in protection dialogue with all parties whose actions have a significant impact on children, without any implications as to their political or juridical status. The only purpose for such dialogue is to ensure protection for and access to vulnerable children.

It should be stressed that the accountability lists do not name States or countries as such. The purpose of the lists is to identify particular parties to conflict, whether Governments or insurgents, that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the grave violations in question.

The monitoring lists name all offending parties, while preserving a clear distinction between parties in situations on the agenda of the Security Council and parties in situations not on the agenda of the Council

and other situations of concern. Concrete and targeted measures should aim to bring an end to all grave violations by all listed parties, while preserving the aforementioned distinction.

The idea of drawing up lists of offending parties is, above all, about ensuring accountability. For a party to be listed, therefore, it should be a specific, identifiable and identified entity; it is not sufficient to refer to a broad or non-specific category of actors.

The mention, review or discussion of any particular situation in the monitoring reports should not be construed as a legal determination that there exists a situation of armed conflict within the context of the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols. Our approach has been to focus on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to situations of concern.

A monitoring and reporting mechanism is of limited value unless it leads to action — unless the information compiled can serve as a trigger for action. In this, the Security Council has to lead the way, as the most important “destination for action”, because of its primary responsibility for peace and security.

The time has come for the international community to redirect its energies from the normative task of the elaboration of standards to the compliance mission of ensuring their application on the ground. Today, as never before, we have the necessary means — normative, juridical, institutional, and political — to realize the “era of application” for the protection of children exposed to armed conflict.

When the tsunami tragedy struck in Asia, we felt almost entirely helpless in the face of a mighty fury unleashed by the force of nature. Alas, what is recorded in this report before the Council is a human-made catastrophe. This is nothing short of a process of self-destruction, consuming the very children who assure the renewal and future of all our societies. How can we allow this? Unlike the onslaught of the tsunami yesterday, we can do something today to bring to an end this human-made horror, the horror of war being waged against women and children.

In conclusion, as we deliberate today on what measures to take for the protection of children, I return to Bob Marley, whose life and music is being celebrated worldwide this month. I return to his prophetic voice, to his spiritual rendition of the themes

of suffering and redemption for those who are vulnerable and abused. As we debate here, I can hear Bob Marley challenging us, singing:

“Hear the children cryin’
From Beslan to Bar-Lonyo to Bunia
And so we tell them:
‘No, children, no cry
Don’t worry about a thing,
’Cause everything gonna be all right.’

“Hear the children cryin’
From Mazar-i-Sharif to Jumla to Darfur,
Won’t you help sing
’Cause all they ever asked:
Redemption Songs. Redemption Songs.

“Rising up this mornin’,
I saw three little birds
Pitch by the doorstep of the Council
Singin’ sweet songs
Of melodies pure and true,

Sayin’, ‘This is our message to you.’

“Hear the children cryin’
From Apartado, to Malisevo, to the Vanni
But I know they cry not in vain
Now the times are changin’
Love has come to bloom again.”

And so, the children are waiting. They are waiting for the Redemption Songs from this Council. I know you will not let them down.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Ms. Rima Salah, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund.

Ms. Salah (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for the excellent advocacy work he has been doing for several years in order to advance the cause of children in armed conflict.

I would like to begin by telling Council members the story of a young girl named Alison, a child of Sierra Leone. That is not her real name. She is an ordinary girl, 16 years old, and interested in everything that girls of her age throughout the world are interested in — school, sports, boys and the latest fashion. However, since she was kidnapped at the age of 13, she only thinks about one thing: survival. Alison recounts,

“I was forced to walk through the mountains around Freetown, and I was brought to a house where I was shut up for three days. There were many other girls and boys there that had also been kidnapped, and we were all afraid. We did not know what was going to happen to us. A short while later, a group of vehicles took us to the town of Masiaka, where the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has a lot of supporters”.

Alison worked there as a “housekeeper” for the Commander. She tells us simply that she had to do the cooking, wash dishes and do the laundry and that she had to carry heavy loads for the Commander, but we know the truth. She tried to escape several times but was re-captured each time. The day after one of her escape attempts, to punish her the Commander engraved the letters “RUF” on her chest with a razor blade. It took weeks for her to recover. Since then, she has been released and has tried by all means, including surgery, to make these marks disappear.

Today she has gone back to class, and she enjoys playing basketball with her friends. She says, “I have to study a lot, because I want to be a doctor later on. I think you know why”.

(*spoke in English*)

Armed conflict exacts a terrible toll upon children. Caught up in conflicts that have multiple causes and little prospect of early resolution, children’s rights continue to be violated. They fall victim to disease and malnutrition and are subjected to forcible displacement and brutal violence. Whether they are drawn in as fighters, deliberately targeted as civilians or forced to become perpetrators of atrocities themselves, it is children who bear the most appalling consequences of armed conflict.

Violence has uprooted more than 20 million children from their homes and deprived them of basic services, including food, shelter and education. Sexual abuse and exploitation, wielded as weapons of war, inflict lasting psychological wounds and contribute directly to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Such horrors etch themselves into young minds, with terrible consequences for children’s values, identity and beliefs, and for their ability to function as leaders and decision makers in the future. Yet children remain our greatest hope and our most precious resource in the struggle to rebuild war-affected communities and to promote peace and security over the long term.

We must do more to protect them. As Graça Machel observed in her landmark study of 1996 (A/51/306), our collective failure to protect children must be transformed into an opportunity to confront the problems that cause their suffering. The impact of armed conflict on children is everyone's responsibility, and it must be everyone's concern.

Allow me to express, on behalf of UNICEF, our deep appreciation for the Council's continued commitment to addressing the alarming situation of children in armed conflict. We thank Council members for their continued support, which has ensured that the peace and security agenda includes children affected by armed conflict. Unfortunately, the situation of these children is not improving, a harsh reality that the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2005/72) underscores.

Allow me to provide a snapshot of UNICEF's activities on behalf of children affected by armed conflict around the world. UNICEF provides assistance before, during and after conflict, working to protect and support children, families, communities and Governments. At all times, we work closely with many partners, often at great risk to our dedicated staff.

In Liberia, the back-to-school campaign has enabled more than 600,000 students to return to school, renewing a sense of stability and hope for communities across the country.

In Somalia, amidst continued instability, UNICEF has helped to establish 10 regional child protection networks and has mobilized 80 communities, enabling Somali children to experience an enhanced protective environment.

In Afghanistan and in Nepal, against a backdrop of violence, we continue with our programmes in health, education and, particularly, protection.

And yet, as noted by Mr. Olara Otunnu, despite the best efforts of UNICEF and other local and international humanitarian organizations, children and women continue to face ongoing violations of their rights. The Security Council has the ability to take decisive action to protect children in situations of armed conflict by translating the commitments of international legal and other standards into action.

Several targeted measures recommended in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict are helpful to the realization of that objective

and should be considered by the Council, including: close monitoring of, and reporting on, States' compliance with international standards; holding perpetrators accountable; and a strong focus on the rights of all children, not only during a conflict but also after it ends.

The time has come to subject those who recruit and use child soldiers to the full force of national legal systems and the International Criminal Court. UNICEF is committed, with all of our partners, to ending impunity and to addressing accountability. Our protection mandate and human-rights-based approach to programming demand that we work towards the full protection of children's rights, including monitoring of violations and advocating that those who commit violations be held responsible.

Another way to protect children's rights in conflict areas and to better address accountability is by improving our understanding of the problems facing children and women affected by armed conflict. The development of a systematic mechanism to monitor and report on violations of the rights of children in armed conflict that is linked to response will represent a significant step in that direction. We thank Mr. Olara Otunnu very much for that initiative.

In addition to developing effective monitoring and reporting procedures and an effective system of justice for children, we need to pay specific attention to some of the most hideous crimes confronting children. Sexual violence has often been regarded as a routine part of conflict, but it can no longer be dismissed. We must respond to the crime of sexual violence as a matter of urgency. We need to enhance community-based measures to monitor the situation and needs of the victims, improve their immediate security and provide them with immediate, compassionate and committed support and protection.

We need clear standards of behaviour for all peacekeepers, pre-deployment training on sexual exploitation and abuse and prosecution of perpetrators. I urge the Council to take action to ensure that peacekeeping forces adhere to the rules, monitor and report on sexual violence and are held accountable for their crimes.

We can also protect children by working to stem the flow of small arms and light weapons and by advocating against the use of indiscriminate weapons such as landmines and cluster munitions.

We can further protect children by preventing the recruitment of children in armed forces and by working to secure their release, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration. We should seek commitments from parties to refrain from recruiting and using children and should negotiate the release of children who have already been recruited.

In Burundi, through the Child Soldiers National Structure, with the support of UNICEF and other partners, more than 2,000 child soldiers from the Forces armées burundaises and allied civil defence militias were demobilized. The demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers are crucial to ensure that children are not re-recruited.

(spoke in French)

The experience of UNICEF in a large number of countries in conflict has confirmed that there has been significant progress in the protection of children in armed conflict. But, unfortunately, much progress remains to be done. Two actions come immediately to mind. First, we must ensure that justice is done for children whose rights have been violated. In that respect, I would like to repeat the words of the Secretary-General in his statement to the Security Council with regard to the situation in the Sudan.

“The Commission strongly recommends that the Security Council immediately refer the situation of Darfur to the International Criminal Court, to ensure that those responsible for these heinous crimes are held to account. It is vital that these crimes not be left unpunished.” (S/PV.5125, p. 2)

Protecting the rights of children, while at the same time ensuring that justice is done is an essential basis for bringing about and maintaining sustainable peace in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Secondly, UNICEF calls on the Security Council to guarantee that child protection elements be included in all peacekeeping missions and that the protection of children be taken into account in Council debates pertaining to the establishment of new peacekeeping missions, such as in Darfur.

By working together we will be able to guarantee that our responsibility towards children is fully met. Children are far too often victims of war, and it is our duty to protect them. Together, we have already made enormous progress in this area, as Mr. Olara Otunnu

has pointed out. I would nevertheless ask the Security Council to remain vigilant and cognizant of the specific needs of children, as well as of the central role they play in the future of humankind. I am certain that, together, we shall be able to build a world fit for children.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on Mr. Ibrahima Diouf, Special Adviser on Child Protection to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States.

Mr. Diouf *(spoke in French)*: At the outset, I would like to convey to the Council the sincere regrets of Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, who was unable to make the trip here today due to severe constraints on his time, as well as to share with the members of the Council our common concerns with regard to ensuring a protective environment for children.

I would also like to express my gratitude for Benin’s invitation, as well for its Government’s excellent initiative. I say that in particular because Benin is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that has already demonstrated its commitment to protecting children, even though it is a country that, thank God, has not yet experienced conflict.

Allow me further to welcome and commend the Council’s commitment to issues of peace and security in general and, specifically, to the protection of children, especially those affected by conflict. That commitment is reflected in the Council’s adoption of various resolutions, in particular resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003). In accordance with the President’s request regarding what he would like us to address today — namely, our thoughts concerning future prospects for the situation of children in Africa — I would like to share with the Council the current experiences of ECOWAS in the field of child protection.

As I begin my statement, I would very much like to thank the Government of Canada, which for years — from the outset — supported ECOWAS in the establishment of its child protection programme, namely, from 2002 to 2004. I would also like to thank UNICEF and its Regional Office for West and Central Africa, which since 2004 has been ensuring the development, operation and organization of the programme.

It should be said that, overall, the situation of children in West Africa is not exactly brilliant. Given the goals set out at the World Summit for Children, the first of its kind, West Africa today is among the regions in which there has not been significant progress in the field of child protection. I therefore fully endorse the comments made by Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Rima Salah with regard to the overall state of children in armed conflict. That is a situation that West Africa shares with other regions of the world experiencing conflict. With the Council's consent, I would like to dwell a bit on the characteristics we have noted in our subregion, in particular with respect to countries that have experienced conflict, namely, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and, more recently, Côte d'Ivoire.

Generally speaking, as we have worked out our programme on the ground, we have realized that children are actually victims of wars in several ways. Children are not merely directly involved in conflicts as combatants; they are sent to the front as soldiers specifically because they are completely unaware of the dangers facing them. Once injured in combat, such children are left to their own devices. Children who find themselves in the midst of conflict must also fend for themselves if their parents are killed or if they are separated from them. We have seen that phenomenon in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. The problem of children affected by war is also evidenced by the large number of children in refugee camps.

The main result of the participation of children in armed conflict in our subregion is that their normal development is hampered because they are deprived of access to educational systems and training institutions. Children are very often left behind at the end of hostilities, forcing them to resort to criminal activity for survival. We have noted that such situations are quite simply the result of the existence of armed non-State actors who are resolutely opposed to the cessation of conflict and who continue to use children in combat.

While we have noted that some children in West Africa have been forcibly enlisted, others have voluntarily joined warring groups due to hunger, the desire to play the hero or a longing to find a second family. In that connection, it is very interesting to note that studies are being carried out to determine possible links among children who are victims of trafficking,

children who easily fall prey to recruiters and street children seen in various West African cities.

Generally speaking, therefore, ECOWAS supports the establishment of a protective environment and shares the concerns of UNICEF in that regard. We know that the absence of a sustained protective environment jeopardizes any rehabilitation effort. It was necessary to establish such programmes in West Africa in the light of the use of the first child soldiers in Liberia in the 1980s, a phenomenon that continued with the war in Sierra Leone. Moreover, field visits to Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau revealed that children were also involved in the armed conflicts there. That is why ECOWAS heads of State or Government took action to ensure that ECOWAS was one of the first regional economic communities to place on its political agenda the overall issue of protecting children, especially those who have been the victims of conflict. For that, we commend them.

ECOWAS has put in place a number of mechanisms that today enable it to monitor the instruments it has adopted. I would like to mention several of them here. They include the April 2000 Accra Declaration on War-affected Children in West Africa, the 2000 decision on combating trafficking in children, the Declaration on the Decade of a Culture of the Rights of the Child in West Africa and our peer-review mechanism to address the situation of children. That commitment on the part of ECOWAS heads of State or Government has also benefited from the present environment, which has led to all its member States having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All ECOWAS member States have also submitted their initial reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, and several are submitting periodic reports.

With regard to the core child protection instruments — Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography — we are proud that much progress has been made in West Africa. ILO Convention No. 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour has been either ratified, signed or adopted by 12 of the 15 member States of ECOWAS. The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict has

likewise been either ratified, signed or adopted by 11 of the 15 member States. And the Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography has been ratified, signed or adopted by 12 of the Community's members.

On that basis, ECOWAS has established a Child Protection Unit directly under its Executive Secretariat. Its mandate is very straightforward, and involves four basic goals: to monitor the situation of children affected by war, to ensure the promotion of conflict-prevention mechanisms, to take part in child rehabilitation and reintegration efforts in the context of peacebuilding and to set up an early warning and emergency assistance mechanism.

With respect to monitoring the situation of war-affected children, we have undertaken a number of joint activities with UNICEF that have allowed us to participate in the "Back to School" programme established by UNICEF in Liberia.

With respect to the promotion of conflict-prevention mechanisms created during the negotiation of the Accra peace agreements on Liberia, we can see that the issue of child protection has been taken into account in those agreements. Similarly, we are now involved in the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire to ensure that the Government to be established after the elections in that country takes the issue of child protection into account in the peacebuilding process.

Our current activities include the training of West African armed forces in children's rights and protection in armed conflict; ensuring that child-related issues are taken into account in peace agreements, as I mentioned earlier; sending fact-finding missions to conflict zones in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau; the training of security personnel, judges and social workers in children's rights and the protection of child victims of trafficking; the establishment of reintegration programmes for child victims of violence and other crimes; and the establishment of links with child-protection agencies.

One highlight of the programme that I wish to share with the Council is the training of West African armed forces in the area of the rights and protection of the child. A training workshop has been held to establish core groups of 26 officers designated as trainers. The higher-ranking officers, of at least the rank of colonel, are key in that field. Increased numbers will allow us to establish broader core groups

among the West African forces of some 300 officers who are currently training the trainers. The programme, which began in 2002, is currently reaching some 6,000 peacekeeping soldiers in the ECOWAS region and elsewhere. There are a number of ECOWAS elements operating in the Sudan, the Congo and other countries that have already received such training and awareness-raising.

Our monitoring of the situation of children is another of the programme's key points. Such monitoring includes site visits that have enabled ECOWAS to assess the situation of the 11,780 demobilized children in Liberia, 11,673 of whom have been returned to their families in neighbouring countries. Among those, some 2,000 girls have been demobilized. The visits have allowed ECOWAS to take part in UNICEF's "Back to School" programme and to identify specific child-protection programmes.

The programme's weak points are its ongoing focus on children and armed conflict and its failure sufficiently to address the issue of child trafficking. The picture of the situation in West Africa clearly shows that there are other categories of children who need protection and that, if such protection is not provided, conflicts will clearly make those children more vulnerable still. Finally, the lack of resources ensures that many of these projects remain in the planning phase.

In terms of prospects, given the will expressed by our heads of State and Government to give greater attention to child-related issues in the programmes and policies of ECOWAS, and taking account of the great gains achieved in the implementation of the current child-protection programme, the Executive Secretary intends to incorporate child protection into its agenda and to expand its mandate to other categories of children in need of protection.

The Executive Secretary wishes thereby to ensure better participation by the member States in the implementation of the programme, particularly since the ECOWAS foreign ministers meeting, in Accra on 18 January, agreed to convene this year a conference of ECOWAS ministers for foreign affairs on child soldiers and to proclaim a week of truce in solidarity with children affected by war. We commend the spontaneity with which the Government of Benin agreed to host the conference. With respect to the first feedback received from that Government, I believe that we can look

forward to an excellent conference. The conference and the week of truce are key activities that will enable us better to mobilize ECOWAS' partners on behalf of children. The Executive Secretary therefore intends to make the issue of children a priority in the context of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

In conclusion, ECOWAS' child-protection programme was designed in a subregional context and to provide a lasting alternative in the creation of an environment conducive to a culture of non-violence and peace. We must place the issue of children and their rights at the heart of the political agendas of our decision-makers. To that end, we must be able to ensure that all children enjoy all their rights in all circumstances.

While ECOWAS focuses its activities on protection, we also know that the issue of children's rights are intimately linked to four areas: development, survival, participation and protection. We also know that the rights to development, survival and participation require less political involvement, but that with respect to child protection we need to adopt, ratify and implement protocols. In that regard, Governments are called on to act and must make child-related questions a policy issue, because it is thereby that such issues will become a choice of society and a political lodestar.

In the near term, we must work to see to it that West Africa ceases to be the world's laggard in the protection of children and their rights. The economic and social development of our region depends on it.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five 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.

On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Honourable Asha-Rose Migiro, Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Ms. Migiro (United Republic of Tanzania): Allow me at the outset to express our profound thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu,

for presenting the insightful and touching report of the Secretary-General. It will, obviously, serve to strengthen our resolve to fully address children's issues, especially as they relate to situations of conflict.

My delegation would like to register its appreciation to the delegation of Benin for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. The issue before us resonates our commitments in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. In the Declaration, we pledged, amongst other commitments, to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflicts, to end the recruitment of children for armed conflicts and to factor issues of protecting children into peacekeeping processes. Nevertheless, the recruitment of children for combat activities by non-State actors and militias continues unabated in many parts of the world. By the same token, several Governments and regimes cannot escape culpability and/or complicity.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, issued in document S/2005/72. The report is the culmination of a succession of initiatives on behalf of children by the United Nations, beginning with advocacy and followed by standard-setting based on relevant Security Council resolutions to this stage of implementation, contained in the document before us for deliberation by the Council today.

The proposals and methodologies for monitoring, reporting and compliance are professionally well-thought-out tools. However, we foresee some difficulties which could be encountered in the collection of information for monitoring and reporting purposes. We are of the view that there is a need for United Nations country teams, and in particular for a focal point for children, to have a dialogue with, and sensitization programmes for, concerned Governments on the need to provide such information. It should also be noted that some Governments may be willing to provide such information, but that the information may not be kept in a systematic manner or simply not have been recorded.

The establishment of a comprehensive monitoring and reporting system, as recommended by the Secretary-General, has to take these constraints into account. Similarly, in developing such a system, it should be noted that, whereas a generic system may be desirable, there is a need to tailor it to be country-

specific, as situations may differ from one country to another. To ensure the availability of monitoring and reporting information, countries that are not willing to provide such information should be helped to develop the needed capacity and encouraged to meet compliance requirements.

While we welcome the progress that has been made in some countries, such as Liberia and Afghanistan, my delegation is deeply concerned by the continued use of child soldiers in many situations of armed conflict. We strongly condemn those parties that kill children who wish to opt out of or refuse recruitment. We also condemn all those parties to conflicts that attack schools and hospitals or commit atrocities that are in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. Stern measures need to be taken against such parties to conflicts. The report of the Secretary-General recommends that action be taken at various levels — national, regional and international, including by the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance and enforcement of international peace and security.

A long-term solution to the problem of children in armed conflict lies in conflict prevention — by way of building solid foundations of good governance, democracy and all-round development. In the Great Lakes region, for example, this matter has been incorporated in the Dar es Salaam Declaration, adopted on 20 November 2004 during the first Conference of the Great Lakes Region on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development. The Declaration, which is expected to culminate in a peace pact later this year, prohibits the recruitment of children into armed forces and calls for the reunification of such children with their families or their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities. In that regard, we welcome the recommendation of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change for the establishment of a peacebuilding commission to address comprehensively the reintegration and rehabilitation of children ex-combatants, with particular emphasis on ex-girl soldiers.

The challenge before us, therefore, is to develop appropriate laws and policies and to enact relevant laws. Their enforcement will require political will and commitment at the highest political levels to the protection of children, which translates into programmes that lead to poverty eradication and improved opportunities for the education and

development of children. The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has established a children's department within the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children to ensure that children's and gender issues are mainstreamed in national policies. At the same time, the majority age in Tanzania is 18 years, which also applies to the recruitment of soldiers in the Tanzania People's Defence Force.

The gravity of the situation of children in conflict requires our concerted efforts. We have at our disposal a number of instruments that provide the framework for protecting children and ending child soldiering. What is now needed is compliance with those instruments. The use of child soldiers needs to be added to the list of existing regimes of sanctions, and criminal procedures against the perpetrators must be undertaken. My delegation welcomes the action plan proposed by the Secretary-General as a starting point for discussion on a framework for monitoring and reporting and ensuring compliance.

In conclusion, we welcome what has become a standard practice — authorizing the protection of civilians, including children, in peacekeeping missions. However, we are astounded by reports of sexual abuses against girls and women in peacekeeping missions. Those responsible seem to be taking advantage of the weak judicial institutions in the countries they serve to violate their own professional ethics. We support the zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General aimed at stopping such repulsive practices. They should be stopped. We urge troop-contributing countries to take stern disciplinary measures against the culprits and to work with the Secretary-General in that endeavour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Migiro for the kind words she addressed to me and to my country.

On behalf the members of the Council, I should like warmly to welcome Mr. Pierre-André Wiltzer, High Representative for Security and Prevention of Conflicts.

Mr. Wiltzer (France) (*spoke in French*): May I first thank you, Mr. Minister, and, through you, Benin, for having taken the initiative to convene this debate on children and armed conflict. As the Council is aware, France has for a number of years been deeply involved in this question at the United Nations and

with its European Union partners, and fully supports you, Sir, in this initiative.

All over the world, wars continue to bring death and suffering to vast numbers of children. The staggering numbers referred to by Mr. Otunnu and Ms. Rima Salah — both of whom I would like to thank — make clear this unacceptable reality. The suffering of a child caught up in the storm of an adult war is always revolting, but for a child to be exploited and used in such a war is a scandal that the international community must not tolerate.

That is why our debate today must be action-oriented. It must enlighten us as to the urgent and necessary measures that must be taken to put an end to this situation.

As the Secretary-General's latest report rightly notes, we are confronted today with a cruel dichotomy. On the one hand, clear and rigorous standards have been adopted at the international level to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict. On the other, however, atrocities continue to be perpetrated on the ground, and those who commit them enjoy almost total impunity.

That failure to implement the standards it has decreed must be a matter of concern to the international community. More particularly, it is a matter of concern to us, the members of the Security Council. Indeed, since 1999, the Council has adopted five resolutions demanding an immediate end to child recruitment and progressively stepping up pressure on the armed groups responsible. Two of those resolutions illustrate that progression clearly: first, resolution 1379 (2001), adopted on 20 November 2001, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council a "blacklist" of parties to an armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers in violation of international norms, and for the first time envisioned targeted sanctions; and, secondly, resolution 1539 (2004), adopted last year, demanded that the parties identified in the blacklists halt any practices in violation of international law and established a graduated, concrete regime on the ground providing — in the absence of progress and as a last resort — for sanctions against the parties concerned.

However, that resolution, like resolution 1379 (2001), has not been implemented in terms of its main provisions.

France, the author of both those texts, which it submitted to and negotiated in the Council, deems this situation unacceptable. Accordingly, we subscribe fully to the recommendation of the Secretary-General, who, in his most recent report, reiterates the request he made last year to the Security Council, that is, to agree on specific, targeted measures in the absence of progress on the ground. Those measures are necessary. They are explicitly envisaged in the last three resolutions adopted by the Council on this matter. We must now move from consideration to action.

We are well aware that the decision to impose targeted sanctions raises many questions. One of those questions relates to the fact that groups identified in the black lists are involved in conflicts well beyond the range of situations on the Council's agenda. We will also have to take into account the fact that some of those groups are already subject to sanctions regimes. Lastly, we will have to keep in mind the fact that recruitment itself is part of a whole spectrum of very serious violations, particularly those linked to sexual violence.

All those questions will naturally have to be studied and discussed in detail.

At the same time, we must avoid concentrating exclusively on the issue of sanctions. Those measures, while certainly necessary, must be part of a comprehensive mechanism of monitoring and reporting, as well as follow-up, with respect to demobilized children. Let me briefly touch on those mechanisms.

The first element is a monitoring and reporting mechanism. Its purpose is to provide for the systematic and rapid gathering of objective, accurate and reliable information on violations against children in situations of armed conflict. This information is absolutely necessary if we want to move to action. The Secretary-General, in his recent report, proposes an action plan for setting up such a mechanism, involving a broad range of actors, including, naturally, his Special Representative, Olara Otunnu, and UNICEF. The Council should approve the plan and request that it be implemented as quickly as possible. The role of non-governmental organizations within this system will have to be clearly identified.

The second key element is the reintegration of child soldiers. Denied the right to education and their chances for balanced development — in short, cheated

of their future — these children are victims above all. But we must also prevent them, deprived of family and social guidance, from becoming a potential factor for the recurrence of crises. Any country emerging from war takes a risk by leaving its young people on the sidelines, without prospects and knowing only the culture of violence. Programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants must take into account the specific needs of children — in particular those of girls, as just mentioned, who are often even more severely affected than boys, and whose reintegration is even more difficult.

Experience shows — and this is particularly true in West Africa and the Great Lakes region — that recruits are often re-enlisting: having been demobilized, but lacking adequate care, children are enrolled again in the ranks of armed groups. The reintegration segments are often the poor relations in DDR programmes for want of the necessary financing, and also for the lack of proper coordination among all the actors involved on the ground. In this regard, it is important and urgent to appoint a leader to ensure the coherence of all actions undertaken on the ground.

My final point — one that is of particular concern to us — is the proven link between small arms trafficking and child recruitments. Last week's debate in the Council (see S/PV.5127) cast light on that link. It is intolerable that parties identified in the black lists of child recruiters continue to be supplied with light arms, which are easily used by children. It seems to us therefore that the Council should send a strong message in that regard.

Ultimately, effectively stopping child recruitment and fighting against the many violations on the ground require us all to mobilize — States, United Nations bodies and agencies, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, regional and subregional organizations and civil society. Each one must come face to face with its responsibilities.

At the beginning of my remarks I expressed the hope that our debate today would be action-oriented. The draft resolution presented by the Benin presidency endeavours to respond with ambition and determination to the various points I have just raised. That is why we fully support it. I hope that our debate today will strengthen Benin in its determination, and that agreement can be reached quickly on the text that has been presented.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the minister for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country.

Mr. Motoc (Romania) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Minister, I want to warmly welcome you to the Council and to thank the Beninese presidency for the initiative of organizing this public debate on this urgent and complex agenda item. We are also very pleased at the large number of ministers who have joined us today.

I would like to state that the delegation of Romania fully associates itself with the statement that will be made by the Luxembourg presidency of the Council of the European Union. My comments will therefore be brief and to the point.

We have considered with great interest the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2005/72). We have heard the statement of Under-Secretary-General Olara Otunnu, which measured up to that remarkable document. They describe an ongoing, disheartening modern-day situation: the recruitment and use of large numbers of children as combatants in a number of conflict zones.

In the face of this terrible challenge, it is imperative that the international community act without delay by adopting the measures necessary to ensure that the legal framework that already exists is actually implemented. To do this, we need first to activate the instruments provided for in successive Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 1379 (2001), which introduced the concept of the black list, and 1539 (2004), which refers to the possible imposition of sanctions against parties that do not respect the obligations incumbent upon them or that do not honour their commitments.

With regard to these two elements, the report of the Secretary-General specifically recommends that targeted and concrete measures be taken where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties named in the black list. That recommendation is of particular relevance. Romania will provide strong support for any initiative leading to the adoption of the kinds of measures proposed by the Secretary-General. We shall thus mark the beginning of an “era of application” and, at the same time, move towards the end of an era of impunity.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism represents another part of the active commitment to ensure that the standards established are ultimately respected by those they refer to. This system should be comprehensive and inclusive; that will enable it to ensure the systematic transmission of specific, complete and verifiable information, which is indispensable for a timely and appropriate response.

The action plan proposed by the Secretary-General for setting up such a mechanism has made an excellent impression on us; we hope to see it put in place as soon as possible. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF should pool their efforts in order to ensure that the system works with the effectiveness expected of it. At the same time, non-governmental organizations and civil society should perhaps be given a clearer role in the preparation of the final products of the mechanism.

My delegation would like to express its extreme gratitude for the work done by the Special Representative, who, in the implementation of his mandate, has been acting pragmatically and in a cooperative fashion to provide broad and effective protection for children exposed to situations of unrest anywhere in the world. It is in this spirit that we would like to draw attention to the possibility of including in the scope of the work of the Special Representative the particular situation of children that are victims of physical and psychological violence practised in the so-called no rights zones. Those areas are very often the result of frozen armed conflict where self-proclaimed illegitimate authorities have seized power by force and proceed with all impunity to massively violate human rights, including the rights of the child. This is an intolerable situation — an example can be seen in the area of Transnistria on the borders of Europe — that must not escape the attention of the international community in its efforts to bring protection to children in armed conflicts.

In his report, the Secretary-General mentions with grave concern the problems related to sexual mistreatment and exploitation on the part of staff of United Nations peacekeeping missions and the fact that the situation is more serious and widespread than we initially thought. We note with satisfaction his conclusion that the current approach to that issue will be entirely revised for all operations. In our opinion, this translates into an alarm bell for those who have the duty to respond — given the scope of the phenomenon,

which affects the various peacekeeping missions deployed throughout the world. Romania, as a country that provides significant contingents to those missions, is prepared at all times to take part in analysis and consultations in order to find joint solutions that we can apply generally to peacekeeping operations.

The Security Council will shortly begin consultations on a draft resolution that would provide new guidelines for further steps to be taken in order to protect children in situations of armed conflict. I remain convinced that, with determination and in a spirit of compromise amongst members of the Council, the text of the resolution will be rapidly agreed to and can be adopted in short order.

I would like to conclude by quoting an African proverb that says that when you take a child's hand, you warm the heart of the mother. I would ask the Council to warm the hearts of mothers everywhere.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): We are greatly honoured today by your presence and heartened by your Government's deep concern for the situation of children in armed conflict. On the occasion of this open debate, the Philippines joins the international community in searching for durable approaches and strategies to prevent and eliminate the exploitation and abuse of children.

We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing, and to the representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their important and informative statements.

We appreciate the submission of the Secretary-General's fifth report, which has provided us with information on the humanitarian conditions in conflict areas as they impact the protection of children. We condemn those serious violations and stress our readiness to contribute to solutions that will appropriately and effectively address that problem.

However, the report could have given a more comprehensive account of all conflict situations. Paragraph 76 of the report, which claimed that the lists submitted encompassed all violating parties, does not seem to be as complete and accurate as it should be. A thorough and non-selective coverage of conflict situations in future reporting is necessary in order not

to leave unprotected those children whose situation may never be addressed.

We endorse the Secretary-General's proposal for a monitoring and reporting mechanism. As the minister of France has stressed, it is important that there be objective, accurate and reliable information gathering and monitoring of violations against children in situations of armed conflict. We agree, in particular, with the Secretary-General's idea of a strong local component in the gathering of information and the monitoring of developments on the ground. Local protection networks are right at the front in conflicts and are in closest contact with the affected children and communities. We need to strengthen those networks and give them the necessary support to develop their capacities for monitoring, reporting and humanitarian intervention. Investments in building local capacity are of great value because they help deliver long-term solutions for the protection and rehabilitation of children affected by conflict.

We are, however, concerned about the report's suggestion that the practice of initiating direct contact by United Nations actors with non-State actors be generally applied as part of the mechanism at the country level. That practice may be effective in some areas, but in other situations it may be a precarious procedure to use. The minister of Tanzania has clearly stressed the different dynamics of the conflict situation there. There are countries, including the Philippines, that have established channels of communication between the Government and non-State parties to conflict, which constitute the basis of the vital peace process. That peace process involves many essential elements, including a joint human rights monitoring component. Any engagement involving United Nations actors must fall within the context of that established peace process in order not to undermine or impair the existing delicate peace process.

The disclaimer that United Nations engagement with non-State actors would not confer any political or legal status to those groups does not address the different dynamics of each conflict situation.

The "era of application" can be realistic if the implementation regime is based on cooperation among Governments, the United Nations system, international humanitarian agencies and local civil society actors. The "era of application" should address the root causes of child soldiering and counter the incentives for

recruitment of children by armed groups. This new regime should also require the strengthening of social structures, such as the family, community and the school system, in order to lessen the vulnerability of children to recruitment and to provide more sustainable rehabilitation for former combatants. Efforts to protect children in armed conflict should be carried out as part of the general strategy to rebuild peace and order and promote reconciliation in conflict areas.

We are appalled by incidents of sexual abuse and exploitation by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. Those horrific acts negate the very purpose of peacekeeping and betray the very people they were supposed to protect. It is necessary to put in place accountability mechanisms for offenders. We seek the support of troop-contributing countries for setting up more stringent regulations, as well as in enhancing education for peacekeepers. We also urge the inclusion of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions in order to provide the necessary in-field training.

We welcome the report's elaboration on best practices in disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR). Those measures should urgently be incorporated into peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding efforts. We also appreciate the report's recommendations on measures to control illicit cross-border activities that negatively impact children. The recommendations cut across many important dimensions and should be considered by the broad membership of the United Nations in cooperation with relevant international bodies.

Conflicts and wars place the lives and well being of civilians and innocent people at extreme risk. Children are particularly vulnerable and that problem demands urgent action through coordinated strategies. The Security Council can contribute towards this end if there is accurate, comprehensive and inclusive monitoring of violations on the ground and if it monitors the implementation of its past resolutions on that issue.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm my delegation's commitment to the protection of children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Philippines for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Your presence, Mr. Minister, underlines the importance of this subject and of today's debate; you are very welcome here. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2005/72), our three briefers for their opening statements and United Nations partners and civil society organizations for the important contributions they are making to tackle this issue.

The United Kingdom associates itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

We have come a long way since Graça Machel's landmark 1996 report on the impact of armed conflict on children. The achievements made so far are covered in the Secretary-General's report. But, despite our best efforts, children remain vulnerable to forced recruitment and abuse by armed groups. So making the "era of application" a reality must be our top priority. Resolution 1539 (2004) laid out three key elements: the production of action plans; the monitoring and review of the implementation of those action plans and of violations more generally; and, finally, what we should do when plans are not made or action is not taken.

The first element, time-bound action plans and the nomination of country-level focal points, has seen some progress, but more needs to be done to ensure full implementation. The Secretary-General has highlighted the difficulties and the constraints to effective implementation; we now need to overcome them.

The second element concerns the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism. Like the Special Representative, my Government regards that as critical in making the "era of application" a reality. The proposed mechanism should be practical and realistic; it should be clear about what will be monitored; it should protect those involved; and it should be adaptable in the light of experience.

Finally, monitoring and review is not an end in itself. It must lead to action — and effective action at that — when progress is inadequate. The Security Council will now consider how best to extract compliance from parties to armed conflict who continue to recruit children and violate their rights. The aim is real improvement on the ground, and the approach must not just make us feel good; it must also

do good. Success will require the right institutional framework, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system and its response to children and armed conflict. So we very much welcome the Secretary-General's determination to implement his recommendations without delay.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) is a vital element of post-conflict peacebuilding. We therefore welcome the best-practice guidelines set out in the Secretary-General's report. There is a clear need for effective DDR of all children associated with fighting forces, both combatants and those in ancillary roles, especially girls. That must not be dependant upon formal peace processes. The recruitment and use of children is illegal under international law anyway and should be a priority separate from DDR of adult soldiers.

The United Kingdom welcomes and encourages the steps taken to tackle illicit cross-border activities, particularly the trafficking of small arms and light weapons, which serve to fuel and prolong armed conflict, where children always end up suffering disproportionately.

Like others who have spoken, the United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the allegations of sexual misconduct by civilian and peacekeeping personnel, especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the allegations are particularly disturbing. We welcome the recent statements by the Secretary-General on this matter. Like others, we urge the United Nations to investigate all allegations fully and to report the outcomes to the Council. We also look forward to the report of the Secretary-General's special Adviser, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini, which should contain wide-ranging recommendations for radical reform within the United Nations to tackle abuses. Meanwhile, however, I want to be absolutely clear: there should be no misunderstanding that the Security Council expects those in charge of both civilian and military personnel to ensure that command arrangements in all theatres preclude the opportunity for such abuse and to impose much-needed discipline. The Council must hold to account those who do not fulfil that simple obligation.

Some of the countries listed in the Secretary-General's report are already on the Council's agenda,

so I would like to confine my remarks, briefly, to the situations in Myanmar, Nepal and northern Uganda.

Last year, I expressed concern about the plight of child soldiers in Myanmar. Since that time, we have noted and welcomed the establishment of the Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Under-Age Children and its recently adopted plan of action. We now call on the Myanmar authorities to implement that plan of action.

Last year, I also expressed concern about the plight of children in northern Uganda, one of the gravest humanitarian crises in Africa. Recent efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict are encouraging and represent perhaps the best opportunity for peace in more than a decade. So we urge both sides to engage in dialogue, to sign a cessation-of-hostilities agreement and to follow the path to peace. The international community must be ready to support the consequent reconciliation and rehabilitation efforts.

With regard to Nepal, the British Government is deeply concerned about the abduction, use and recruitment of child soldiers by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), as well as the violence reportedly carried out against children by both Maoist and Government security forces. We therefore urge both parties to halt such practices and to find a peaceful solution to the conflict through dialogue.

The United Kingdom will continue to work hard to support this agenda at all levels in the United Nations system and beyond. Nationally, we are supporting a variety of projects in several African and Asian countries, mainly in the area of DDR; we are also supporting civil society networks in the area of monitoring, reporting and advocacy; and we continue to support the agenda through the actions of the European Union.

In terms of making the “era of application” a reality, Security Council and United Nations action helps, and we can have — and indeed should have — a moral obligation to respond. But much more depends on the will and actions of national Governments and armed groups that continue to subject children to forced recruitment and abuse. We must therefore strengthen our resolve to hold accountable those who commit such intolerable acts and who thereby deprive children of the most important years of their lives.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

On behalf of the Security Council, I warmly welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr. Itsunori Onodera, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Mr. Onodera (Japan): It is my honour, Mr. Minister, to participate in today’s open debate in the Security Council under your presidency. The fact that you are presiding over the debate demonstrates the importance that your country attaches to this issue. Unfortunately, my Foreign Minister could not come to New York at this time, as you requested, but has instructed me to join the debate on his behalf.

I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for presenting the Secretary-General’s report.

It is encouraging that the international community is paying greater attention to the suffering of children caught in armed conflict. This has resulted in achieving positive developments in some situations, yet the stark fact remains that in numerous cases children are still facing dire conditions. This is unacceptable, and the international community needs to take more vigorous action to improve this unconscionable situation.

However, to be effective in our action, we first need to have a clearer grasp of what the reality is. As the Secretary-General’s report shows, we have only limited information on the actual situations concerning the recruitment and use of children for soldiers, as well as other violations committed against children. Access allowed to aid workers is often limited in conflict situations. Communication with the outside world is also difficult, as vital infrastructure is often destroyed. Also, armed groups keep their activities secret. All these factors make the gathering and assessment of information extremely difficult.

That is why Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) requested the Secretary-General to devise an action plan for a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism in order to provide timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers. My Government welcomes the Secretary-

General's action plan set out in his report and extends its support to the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism. At the same time, my country believes that it is important to take the following points into account upon setting up such a mechanism.

First, a collaborative and coordinated approach will be needed for such a mechanism to function effectively. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, there are many bodies and actors that possess relevant information, ranging from United Nations entities — such as peacekeeping missions, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights — to national Governments, local authorities and local and international non-governmental organizations operating on the ground. Therefore, the focal point of a monitoring and reporting mechanism should ensure collaboration and coordination, utilizing the resource base and the expertise of all these bodies and actors concerned.

Secondly, such a mechanism will need to ensure that the voices on the ground are adequately reflected in the compilation of information and evaluation and assessment of the situation. For example, we understand that the Government of Myanmar has established a committee for the prevention of military recruitment of under-age children and has drawn up an action plan to be implemented by the committee. That is to be regarded as a positive step in itself. Therefore, the mechanism should establish ways to reflect such information, which is to be assessed and reflected in the Secretary-General's future reports. In this process, the United Nations country team's assessment of such an action will also need to be reflected with regard to its actual effectiveness in preventing the recruitment of child soldiers.

Thirdly, a monitoring and reporting mechanism, once established, should be continually improved. It should be subjected to a full review after its first report is submitted to examine the timeliness, accuracy, objectiveness and reliability of the information gathered and contained in the report and efforts should be made to identify ways and means to further improve the workings of such a mechanism.

Objective viewpoints and reliable information in specific situations will prepare the basis for appropriate

actions that need to be taken. We share the view expressed in the report that all relevant actors should be encouraged to consider appropriate action to address any given situation. However, in most cases, the most important actor will be the national Government itself. Among the United Nations bodies, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Security Council, should also come in, as appropriate, to consider actions according to their respective mandates.

In discussing the problem of children in armed conflict, we must refer to the recent reported incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where some United Nations peacekeeping personnel actually became abusers of children. This misconduct is unacceptable and reprehensible. Needless to say, such misconduct causes suffering to children and seriously damages the credibility of the United Nations and its entire effort, not only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also elsewhere. My Government strongly supports the United Nations zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual abuse and believes that robust measures need to be taken to achieve genuine compliance. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to this end. In considering such measures, Japan, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, stands ready to work with interested Member States.

Let me briefly mention some of the concrete programmes in which Japan has recently participated in helping children caught in armed conflict. Last March, my Government contributed \$3.64 million to UNICEF to help implement its disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration project for child soldiers in Liberia. That project aims to help return an estimated 15,000 children to their homes and communities. We also supported the back-to-school campaigns run by UNICEF in Afghanistan and Iraq, which help to rehabilitate local communities while alleviating the trauma of children affected by long-term conflict.

All those programmes are based on the concept of human security, which Japan upholds. We will continue to work closely with the relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to promote the welfare and empowerment of the general public based on the concept of human security, with particular emphasis on children and women.

In conclusion, we would like to underline the importance of strengthening international cooperation towards the shared goal of helping children in armed conflict. As the theme of today's open debate suggests, the suffering of child soldiers in Africa is particularly grave and is of serious concern to all of us. Yet the problem is not limited to Africa. We must change what is a tragic reality around the world, that of twelve-year-olds running around with Kalashnikovs, without any access to education and without ever knowing that there is a different lifestyle, to which they have a right.

For that reason I commend you, Mr. President, for convening an open debate to hear the views of non-Security Council members. Their views expressed today should be duly taken into account in our deliberations in the Council. I am confident that our collective wisdom will help us find effective ways for the United Nations to better address the issue of children and armed conflict. The time for advocacy is over, and the time is now upon us for concrete action. We should all strive to implement concrete plans for the benefit of our children around the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Japan for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. Your presence here manifests the commitment of the Government of Benin to this very important and sensitive issue.

Greece fully associates herself with the statement to be delivered later by the Ambassador of Luxembourg to the United Nations on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, I wish to make the following remarks.

The Secretary-General has presented a substantive report. In our view, the fifth report on children and armed conflict has fully addressed the recommendations of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), and specific proposals have been submitted.

We would also like to commend the remarkable work done in the last seven years by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu.

The report of the Secretary-General provides us with evidence and data on progress made towards reducing the number of child soldiers and redressing

the horrendous acts of abuse inflicted upon children who are caught in armed conflict situations.

However, children continue to be recruited, killed, maimed, abducted, sexually abused and exploited in armed conflicts. The report specifies 42 armed groups in 11 countries that are recruiting and abusing children in war zones. We witness progress in one war situation and at the same time there is a drawback in another armed conflict, even in the same country. The current situation in the Sudan is just an example of the complexities of the issue.

The information concerning sexual exploitation and abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo committed by United Nations peacekeeping personnel demonstrates how widespread and serious the situation is. The response of the United Nations must be unequivocally a zero-tolerance policy. All of us agree that we have to act and act soon. But how can we do that in order to get the long-awaited results?

As the report points out, in recent years we have succeeded in establishing a comprehensive international legal framework for the protection of war-affected children. I have two comments on that issue.

First, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that no one under the age of 18 should be recruited by any army. All States must become parties to this Protocol and must implement its provisions. Greece has ratified it and as a European Union member State is also committed to the implementation of the European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict adopted in 2003.

Secondly, the international community must not allow impunity to prevail as regards serious crimes against children in armed conflict. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice. In that respect, we would like to underline the importance of the International Criminal Court in pursuing accountability. The Rome Statute provides a clear legal basis, as it stipulates that the use of children under the age of fifteen as soldiers in armed conflict is a war crime.

Therefore, having a complete set of the necessary legal and judicial tools at our disposal, what remains to be done is to take action.

We welcome the strong focus on compliance in the Secretary-General's report, in particular the recommendation that the Security Council impose

targeted measures against those parties named in the two annexes who do not meet their obligations for compliance. In that context the fifth report indeed paves the way, in the words of the Secretary-General, to an era of application.

The Secretary-General's action plan to establish a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism contains important elements that would enhance the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. It has the full support of Greece. We hope that the Security Council will soon be able to agree on the relevant resolution, currently under discussion.

With regard to post-conflict situations, special attention should be given to ensuring that all children are included in all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes and that their specific needs, such as medical support, education and reunification with their families, are being addressed. The vulnerable situation of girls also deserves special care. Greece is committed to contributing funds to the DDR programmes for children through the European Union's Plan of Action on Children and Armed Conflicts.

In concluding my remarks, I would like to congratulate Benin for keeping the issue of children and armed conflict high on the agenda of the Security Council by presenting a draft resolution destined to be our trigger for action that we hope to be able to agree upon at a later stage.

We all share responsibility in taking action to stop the recruitment and all acts of abuse that children suffer in armed conflicts throughout the world. The perpetrators have to be made accountable for their crimes. There is no other way to protect the lives of our innocent children, our hope and our future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Greece for his kind words addressed to me as well as to my country, Benin.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): I would like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Benin, as well as to express our appreciation to his country for the leadership it has demonstrated in addressing the issue of children in armed conflict. I would also like to thank Special Representative Olara Otunnu for his statement this morning, as well as to express my gratitude for the report of the Secretary-General on

children and armed conflict, which was issued earlier this month.

Like other delegations, the United States recognizes with deep regret the tragic consequences suffered by children affected by armed conflict. We urge the United Nations, the Security Council and the Governments of all Member States to continue to focus on the issue of children in armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's report details some welcome evidence of compliance with regard to ending the use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law. His report also notes progress in addressing other violations suffered by children in armed conflict. While the Secretary-General's report indicates that some positive steps have been taken, clearly there is much more to be done. My country fully supports the call for all parties listed in the annexes of the report to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of international law. As noted in the report, the use of child soldiers is especially dire in Burma, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, the Sudan and Uganda.

The United States notes that the Secretary-General's report included the terrorist attack that occurred in Beslan, in the Russian Federation, a tragedy that resulted in hundreds of children being injured or killed. We of course hope to do whatever we can to prevent the recurrence of such outrages.

In the course of this discussion, the United States would also like to emphasize that there is a serious problem in our own peacekeeping operations that has too often affected children. That is an issue that requires immediate and sustained attention. An abuse of power not only affects victims from the most vulnerable sectors of society, but it also undermines the trust and legitimacy that peacekeepers around the world deserve, and which they require to carry out their mandates.

The United States supports the Secretary-General's commitment to stop continued violations against children, such as recruitment or use of child soldiers in violation of international law, unprovoked attacks targeting schools or hospitals, the maiming and killing of children, child abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence and unwarranted denial of humanitarian access. We welcome effective monitoring

and reporting of all such violations as an important element of an effort to eliminate them.

My delegation does, however, have some concerns about certain aspects of the proposed plan of action. They include possible unanticipated policy and resource implications of the proposed new thematic sanctions committee in the Council and the call for an expansion of the duties of voluntarily funded programmes — such as UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and related non-governmental organizations — without the assurance that sufficient additional resources will be available.

Although we agree that a broad partnership among national Governments, civil society and the United Nations is needed to address the issue of children affected by armed conflict, we believe greater clarity and selectivity is needed so that we can move forward in an effective and efficient manner. Several non-governmental organizations expressed related concerns at last week's Arria-style meeting, which was held under the able leadership of Ambassador de La Sablière.

We look forward to addressing those concerns with other delegations as we continue negotiations on the draft resolution following up today's meeting. We are particularly interested in hearing the views of other members of the United Nations today. We have already heard some very valuable perspectives that will contribute to the debate.

We look forward to addressing this critically important issue. Again we welcome you to the United States, Mr. President, and thank you for your contribution to this debate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me and my country, Benin.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would first of all like to welcome the President, the Foreign Minister of Benin, a very friendly country, who has come here to personally preside over today's open debate. The Chinese delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the issue of children and armed conflict. We also thank Ambassador Otunnu for his presentation.

Children are the future of the world, and they represent humankind's hopes for tomorrow. However,

as the most vulnerable group, they are often adversely affected by armed conflict. All countries and parties have an obligation to try their best to protect children from the harm of armed conflict. In recent years, the United Nations adopted a series of measures to promote the protection of children in armed conflict. It has also achieved positive results in this area. The Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions — namely, resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004) — that provide a very important legal framework for the protection of children.

Some United Nations peacekeeping operations have also taken the protection of children very seriously, including by appointing child protection advisers and by assisting countries emerging from conflict to give full consideration to the special needs of children as part of their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. In addition, some of the peace agreements that the United Nations has promoted or participated in contain provisions on the protection of children. And some of the countries concerned have taken active steps to provide legislative safeguards for the protection of children. All of that has, to a certain degree, reduced the harm that armed conflict causes children, and such steps should be affirmed.

But despite that progress in the protection of children in armed conflict, countless children continue to suffer from the effects of such conflict. The situation of encroachment upon children's rights by parties to armed conflicts has not improved a great deal. The international community must make sustained efforts to truly change the situation. In that connection, we agree that, in the context of the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should intensify its efforts to prevent and curb conflicts and actively address the root causes of the phenomenon of child soldiers in order to achieve our goal of protecting children.

The United Nations should collect its experience in the area of protecting children during peacekeeping operations and give it special treatment so that future peacekeeping operations can benefit from that experience.

At the same time, all parties to armed conflicts should strive to meet their obligations under relevant international law and to respect and safeguard the

legitimate rights of children. Post-conflict reconstruction should solve the problem by prioritizing the return of children to their families, schools and communities and by providing sufficient resources to that end.

We appreciate the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations agencies are playing an active role in protecting children in armed conflict. We agree that coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations and among United Nations agencies should be strengthened. We must adopt an integrated strategy in joining efforts to help countries in conflict to increase their ability to protect children.

China will continue to work with the international community in making its due contribution to the protection of children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Let me begin by thanking you, Sir, for your presence and for convening this meeting and thereby once again focusing the attention of the Security Council on the hardship and suffering of children in armed conflicts.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his latest annual report and to his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as other United Nations agencies that have assisted in preparing it.

Finally, I should like to associate my delegation with the statement to be delivered later in the debate by the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

We all know that the issue of children and armed conflict is one of great complexity. A solution to the problem can be reached only by taking a comprehensive approach including legal, political, as well as socio-economic measures. We need to address the demand side of the equation by taking action against Governments and other entities that either recruit or force children to become armed combatants, but we also need to be cognizant of the supply side,

particularly the close interlinkage between security and development.

Children affected by armed conflict must be provided with real alternatives to the harsh reality of war. It is consequently of key importance that all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes address the special needs of child soldiers. A long-term solution depends on the creation of incentives and possibilities for child soldiers, including the possibility to get education, vocational training and, in the end, real jobs.

The report of the Secretary-General is indeed sobering reading. As we speak, thousands of children in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, northern Uganda and Sri Lanka are being forcibly recruited to participate in the killings of innocent people or are being killed themselves. Children are being raped or exposed to other kinds of grave sexual violence. Places where our children should feel safe, such as schools and hospitals, have become the targets of deliberate armed attacks and unspeakable atrocities.

It is clear that, in the absence of direct and firm national and international involvement in the solution to that multifaceted problem, anarchy, brutality and impunity will continue to reign. What immediate actions can the Council take to address the present deplorable situation regarding children in armed conflict? I would like to point to three areas.

First, as repeatedly reported by the Secretary-General to the Council, the situation of children in armed conflict around the world is not improving. On the contrary, impunity is widespread. Parties to a number of armed conflicts show no will to respect their international obligations either with regard to the norms of relevant legal instruments or to the decisions and repeated demands of the Security Council.

However, the credibility of the Security Council rests on its ability to follow up on its previous decisions and effectively to address the widespread impact of armed conflicts on children. For those reasons, we believe that the time has now come for the Security Council to take action.

In that respect, we note the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Security Council should move to take targeted and concrete measures where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties

named in the lists annexed to the Secretary-General's report. What the exact nature of those measures should be and how they could most effectively be implemented are some of the issues which we look forward to discussing in more detail during the forthcoming deliberations of the Security Council on the draft resolution to follow this debate.

Secondly, as we move to consider targeted measures against the worst offenders, we must also ensure that we continue to receive systematic, reliable and accurate information on the situation on the ground. In that regard, we find it of key importance that the Security Council should endorse a mechanism to monitor and report on the use of child soldiers and on other violations committed against children affected by armed conflict.

The Council has repeatedly called for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism within the United Nations system and the Secretary-General has in his report accordingly provided the Council with an action plan for the setting-up of that urgently needed mechanism. Denmark will work to ensure that the final result is one that will be effective.

Parallel to the action plan, we must also make sure that the Security Council's earlier decisions on that issue are effectively implemented. More needs to be done in that field, including the designation of specific focal points in situations of armed conflict, enhanced dialogue with Governments and armed groups using child soldiers, and the development of concrete action plans at the national level to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Finally, I would like to point out that, while striving to find ways to effectively address the atrocities committed against children by parties to armed conflicts, we must not lose sight of the shortcomings of the international community's own efforts to protect children in war-torn societies.

A particularly grim experience in that regard is the serious allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children that has been made against United Nations peacekeeping personnel. Such abuse is a complete betrayal of the trust which the victims of war must always be able to place on those who come to protect them and support the peacebuilding process. Firm measures and a policy of zero tolerance are needed to prevent and put an end to all sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping

personnel. Those who have perpetrated such conduct must face disciplinary and criminal prosecution. Denmark is confident that the Secretary-General will continue to take the appropriate steps needed to address the problem.

Much more could be said, but let me conclude by reiterating that the time has come for the Security Council to act. A monitoring and reporting mechanism should be endorsed and the Council should move to take targeted and concrete measures pursuant to the recommendations of the Security General. It is time for the Security Council to take action to reverse the deplorable situation of an increasing number of children worldwide trapped in the midst of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Denmark for her kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Rogachev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are gratified, Sir, that you have decided to personally take part in today's open debate of the Security Council, convened on the initiative of Benin, on this important question. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General prepared for this meeting of the Security Council, and we would like to touch on several points that, in our view, are of paramount importance — above all, the problem of the use of child soldiers by various non-State armed groups. We firmly condemn the recruitment of child soldiers and believe that the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

One should also bear in mind not only the involvement of children in armed conflict but also the efforts that will be needed in future to rehabilitate and reintegrate them in order to prevent minors from becoming anti-social members of society. There are fears that a child traumatized by war, a child who knows nothing other than hatred and violence, may not be prepared to live normally, in conditions of peace and legality. For those reasons, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General to identify those parties to armed conflicts that continue the pernicious practice of using child combatants.

In that connection, it is necessary to determine our position as to the legally correct interpretation of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in order to avoid any broadening of its interpretation. It is important also that efforts in

that area be appropriately coordinated to avoid redundancies.

It must be underscored that all the efforts of the international community will be in vain without the active involvement of national Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for addressing the entire range of problems related to safeguarding and protecting the rights of children. We share the view expressed in the report that it is key to take into account the child factor in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, particularly with respect to the establishment of child protection adviser posts and to ensuring access for humanitarian agencies to zones of conflict, separating civilians from combatants, and maintaining the civilian nature of facilities accommodating refugees and internally displaced persons.

General policy support in the implementation of all these tasks should be provided by the Security Council, with a key role being played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, in particular with respect to assisting in the establishment and coordination of activities linked to child-related monitoring mechanisms and better targeting of outreach, advocacy and in-country work.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for the initiative of convening this debate on the situation of child soldiers. The delegation of Brazil highly appreciates your presiding over this meeting, as it demonstrates Benin's commitment and contributes to endowing the matter before us with the required political relevance and urgency.

I wish also to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his fifth report on children and armed conflict, which serves as a basis for our deliberations.

The situation of children affected by armed conflict has grave consequences for the international peace and security agenda. Violations committed against children by armed groups — not just recruitment but other egregious violations as well — seriously compromise the prospects of war-torn countries. In Africa in particular, the situation of

children affected by armed conflict is extremely serious and poses a serious challenge that should be met.

Since the Graça Machel report of 1996, a landmark in this area, the need to take action has been receiving growing international recognition. We appreciate the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and his Office, to raise awareness of this issue and to help develop a body of norms for the treatment of children affected by armed conflict.

Given the prominence of the issue, the next step, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, is to take effective measures in order to ensure “the era of application”.

Positive developments are currently under way, such as the gradual integration of children affected by armed conflict issues in peacekeeping activities, for which the inclusion of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations has proved useful. The development of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes that take into account the specific needs of children, as encouraged by the Secretary-General in his report, is also promising.

However, the response of the United Nations system to the situation will need significant improvement in order to ensure that the era of application becomes a reality. Given the diversity of actors involved, which all of us are familiar with, responsibilities must be assigned, and better systematization is required.

Keeping in mind the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report, Brazil supports enhancing the efficiency of the United Nations system in gathering, compiling and vetting information on violations, in partnership with national Governments and civil society. In addition, great care will be needed in order to ensure the homogeneous application around the world of any measures to be adopted by the Council in that area.

It is essential to obtain precise and reliable information on the situation of children affected by armed conflict. We also appreciate the recognition in the report of the many “destinations for action” which may make use of the information compiled and exert their influence in order to hold violators accountable.

The Security Council must continue to demonstrate its political will, but, while remaining seized of this issue, the Council must also recognize the essential roles of and collaborate closely with other destinations for action such as the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, equipped as they are to respond to the social and economic dimensions of this complex issue.

The International Criminal Court (ICC), as indicated in the report, can also play a decisive role in deterring violations against children in the context of armed conflicts. If the ICC is provided with access to reliable information, its capacity to fulfil its mandate to prosecute those responsible for such war crimes would be greatly enhanced.

Brazil is fully committed to the cause of promoting and protecting the rights of the child in general, and we are determined to furthering, in the Security Council, the agenda of protection for children affected by armed conflict. Indeed, life and security for children everywhere is a key goal for Brazil. It is unacceptable that violations of the rights of children should continue to undermine the future of nations. The Council should work to find long-lasting solutions to this grievous situation by contributing towards ending impunity for violators of the rights of children in conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative for the kind words he addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like at the outset to thank the Government of Benin for having taken the initiative to convene this open debate on children and armed conflict. I am very pleased to see also that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Benin is presiding over our work, and we are sure that this will be a great opportunity to enrich the work of the Council on this subject.

Likewise, I should also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, for his statement, as well as the Secretary-General for his fifth report on children and armed conflict, which will, without a doubt, form the basis for the major part of our deliberations.

In August 1999, through resolution 1261 (1999), the Security Council strongly condemned the targeting

of children in situations of armed conflict, including their killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction and forced displacement and the recruiting and use of children in armed conflicts in violation of international law.

Since resolution 1261 (1999), the Council has reiterated its condemnation of attacks deliberately aimed at children in situations of armed conflict through the adoption of several resolutions resulting from constant work that seeks to put an end to one of the most flagrant violations of human rights — the violation of the most vulnerable.

In 2001, in resolution 1379 (2001) the Council requested the Secretary-General to attach to his annual report a list of the parties in armed conflicts that recruit or use children in violation of international obligations in situations that are on the agenda of the Council or that may be brought to the attention of the Council by the Secretary-General because, in his opinion, they may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Last year, through the adoption of resolution 1539 (2004) the Council took a further step towards the implementation phase when it asked the Secretary-General to devise urgently an action plan for a systematic monitoring and reporting mechanism in order to provide timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of international law. Likewise, the Council expressed its intention to consider imposing targeted and graduated measures against parties to a conflict that refuse to enter into dialogue, fail to develop an action plan or fail to meet their commitments.

While the Security Council made progress in formulating rules of protection that were more and more action-oriented, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts was also developing important advocacy work to ensure that the issue of children and armed conflicts became increasingly visible and was permanently placed on the agenda of the international community.

At the same time, we have seen significant collaboration between UNICEF and other entities of the United Nations system, Governments, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in order to transform protection into concrete initiatives.

Results of this collective effort include, for example, the incorporation of the protection of children in the mandates and training programmes for peacekeeping operations, as well as in programmes of the principal regional organizations; the development of various protection initiatives at the local level; the integration of the interests of children in conflict situations into peace negotiations, peace agreements and rehabilitation and post-conflict reconstruction programmes; and the deployment of advisers on protection of children in the United Nations peacekeeping operations.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, I would like to express the firm condemnation of my country with regard to the sexual abuses committed by civilian and military staff in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were there as part of a peacekeeping operation sent by this Council. While that action should be condemned, it is an exception, bearing in mind the great number of peacekeeping operations that are in the field, but we feel that these acts must not be silenced. We call for maximum punishment for those guilty of those violations of human rights against innocent victims, the great majority of whom are girls and boys. We support the zero-tolerance policy recommended by the Secretary-General to deal with those acts.

We agree with the Secretary-General when he affirms, in his report, that the situation of children on the ground remains grave and unacceptable. On the one hand, clear rules of protection have been developed and there are concrete initiatives, but on the other, atrocities against children in conflict zones have not decreased.

In that regard, my delegation feels that the presentation by the Secretary-General of an action plan for a systematic monitoring and reporting mechanism, in accordance to the request made in resolution 1539 (2004), constitutes a step forward towards the implementation phase that we must seek.

We must be careful in the definition of the scope of implementation of the action plan proposed by the Secretary-General. The categorization of violations that can be monitored that appears in paragraph 68 of the report may vary according to each particular situation, creating a certain grade of uncertainty in reference to the scope of implementation of the mechanism.

The process of gathering, examining and compiling information must be as accurate and reliable as possible if at the end of the day we hope to assign responsibility.

Argentina understands that the Security Council holds a special responsibility in the protection of children in armed conflicts because of its close connection with the maintenance of international peace and security. However, we feel that there should be better coordination in addressing this subject between the Council and the General Assembly on one hand, and between this Council and the Economic and Social Council on the other, in conformity with Article 65 of the Charter. In particular, it is interesting to us that the General Assembly could consider the possibility of having a draft resolution on the follow-up and fulfilment of the provisions regarding children and armed conflicts within the framework of the item entitled "Promotion and protection of the rights of children". As regards the Economic and Social Council, we should explore the proposal of dedicating high-level sessions to the examination of the issue of children and armed conflicts.

We believe that the establishment of the International Criminal Court is a fundamental step as much for its dissuasive function as for the possibility of bringing to justice those who commit war crimes against children. Perhaps in the future the mechanism being proposed to us might contribute to this Tribunal, giving it the available information.

Finally, we believe that it is fundamental that the organs in the United Nations that compose the system for the protection of human rights incorporate the issue of children and armed conflicts in their respective agendas.

In conclusion, I would like to express the willingness of my delegation to continue working seriously on a draft resolution that embraces the aspirations of the international community and allows us to make a difference through its implementation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Benin.

I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you, Mr. President, and tell you how honoured we are to have you

presiding over our work and enhancing by your presence the Security Council's examination of this important question of children and armed conflict, which is closely linked to the maintenance of international peace and security.

We would like to welcome the ministers that have joined us in this meeting. We thank the Secretary-General for his report and his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for the firm and unequivocal support for finding urgent and sustainable solutions to the tragedy of child soldiers and for putting an end to that shameful, degrading and revolting practice. Finally, I would like to thank the representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNICEF for their important statements.

The report that has been submitted to us marks a new stage in our common quest to see norms for protecting children in armed conflict situations effectively applied.

The action plan for setting up a monitoring and reporting mechanism proposed by the Secretary-General presages a new era in monitoring the behaviour of parties in situations of armed conflict. It also allows the collective system for protecting children to utilize more binding means to stop the vicious spiral of using child soldiers. Even though there are differences with regard to the practical implementation of the action to be undertaken and with regard to the role of each of the entities intervening in the process, we feel that this plan has good chances of meeting with broad endorsement.

The debate today could become a timely opportunity to shed further light on the adoption of an ambitious but realistic draft resolution that Benin has submitted, and we would like to express our gratitude for that. We feel that this draft is an appropriate response to the alarm raised in 1996 by Graça Machel and should enable the international community to move beyond statements of intent towards action. The report of the Secretary-General shows that the phenomenon of child soldiers continues to afflict various regions of the world, Africa in particular, leading to generalized and unacceptable violations of law and morality. It is therefore imperative — and this implies a particular responsibility on the part of the Security Council — that all parties to conflicts honour their obligations and put an end to the enlistment of children.

We note, however, with some satisfaction that programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children have been set up in situations of conflict and post-conflict. We encourage the integration of best practices in those programmes, as reported by the Secretary-General in part IV of his report. We also find relevant the measures proposed by the Secretary-General with a view to fighting illicit cross-border activities that harm children. We welcome the increasingly important role played by peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions in improving the protection of children. While we condemn the sexual exploitation of children that has been reported recently, my delegation welcomes the swift and appropriate reaction of the Secretary-General and of the troop-contributing countries to deal with those intolerable acts.

Better coordination between the United Nations and regional and subregional bodies would also seem to be the way to make the collective system of protection for children affected by armed conflict more effective. Africa, which has a charter on the rights of the child, has taken the problem in hand and remains open of course to any serious and coherent initiative that would be part of common efforts aimed at bringing an end to the phenomenon of child soldiers.

The problem of child soldiers is a complex one and in that respect it is important that the international community also address the deep-seated causes of those conflicts, which stem in the majority of cases from the absence of development, socio-economic inequalities, inter-ethnic rivalries, the denial of human rights, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and from cross-border problems. Algeria will continue to provide its support to any measures aimed at bringing an end to the odious practice of using children in armed conflicts and we believe that the implementation of all action plans should conform to the universal rules of transparency, non-selectivity and objectivity.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to support the draft presidential statement prepared by the delegation of Benin.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Algeria for his kind words to me and to my country, Benin. I should now like to make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Benin.

I thank the Council members for their kind words addressed to my country. My gratitude goes

particularly to my colleagues, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, as well as others, who have come to New York to take active part in our thematic debate today, engaging in forward-looking brainstorming with respect to the situation of child soldiers, particularly in Africa, within the framework of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

The insertion of the situation of children affected by armed conflict on the Security Council's agenda in 1998 demonstrated the determination of the international community to put children and their security at the centre of action aimed at maintaining international peace and security. Genuine progress has been made to improve and strengthen the legal arsenal for protecting children — not only through the unwavering commitment of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, but also through the role played by United Nations missions and the United Nations Children's Fund, along with the invaluable contributions of other United Nations institutions, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Population Fund, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations. We pay a well-deserved tribute to all of them here.

However, as seen in the latest, highly instructive report of the Secretary-General, which is before the Council today, this problem persists. We have seen a striking dichotomy between the strict international standards and the ongoing atrocities victimizing children affected by armed conflict, compounded by the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of those violations of international law and humanitarian international law.

Beyond the intolerable practice of recruitment and use of children as soldiers, this report highlights a range of other serious abuses and major violations of children's rights, which pose a true challenge to the Security Council. That is why my country, Benin, has proposed forward-looking brainstorming on this subject. The aim here is to mobilize the international community towards resolute action in order to bring about an end to the practices we have condemned and to put an end to the impunity enjoyed to date by those who violate international standards in force in the area of protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

This also has to do with preventing violations and abuses and promoting the reintegration of war-affected children. In that respect, we fully endorse the recommendations of the Secretary-General aimed at implementing the relevant Council resolutions. We reiterate here the need to scrupulously implement the plan of action proposed by the Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 2 of resolution 1539 (2004) to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism, which is needed by the Council in order to ensure effective action to promote compliance with international standards.

Beyond establishing such a mechanism, which we believe is a top priority, and setting up ways to ensure appropriate use of the information gathered, we need to give specific attention to a number of key considerations that have to do with coordinated and effective action to promote the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. From this standpoint, the following three pillars of action deserve particular attention.

First, we need to identify weaknesses in international law in the area of the protection of children affected by war and to address those weaknesses. To that end, my country, Benin, proposes establishing an open-ended working group under the auspices of the General Assembly to study the issue of reclassifying the crime of recruiting and using child soldiers, with a view to treating it as a more serious crime.

Clearly, this means undertaking a negotiation process that would be aimed at achieving a consensus on the need to reclassify this phenomenon — currently considered as a war crime — as a crime against humanity in view of its disturbing recent evolution and the seriousness of the abuses seen in recent years, which you all have mentioned in your statements and which give this phenomenon some of the basic characteristics of a crime against humanity. To be sure, we have increasingly seen this in a context in which the parties involved pursue a targeted policy of widespread recruitment of children with the clear intent to dehumanize them and make them into war machines and true cannon fodder.

In addition, it is disturbing and revolting to note that the grim statistics on the victims of armed conflicts do not reflect the tens of thousands of children — soldiers or non-soldiers — who die

annually in situations of armed conflict. Those innocent victims — our hopes for tomorrow — die anonymously and through the guilty indifference of all.

That is why we ask the international community as a whole to work to make the standards of international law greater deterrents in order to defuse this time bomb that the abuses and violations perpetrated against children affected by situations of armed conflict represent for our societies. Benin, my country, adheres fully to international instruments that protect human rights. We invite the States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Benin has ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocols, including the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 May 2000, and in addition made a binding statement setting the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces at 18.

The second direction for action would be to develop a comprehensive and integrated transboundary strategy aimed at the recovery, rehabilitation, reinsertion and reintegration of child victims of violations and abuses related to war situations. To do that, we need to carry out a census of the children concerned, including those older than 18, and an assessment of institutional capacities at the international and domestic levels, of the legislative and regulatory framework at the national level and of the potential of civil society, including the private sector.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism to be created could be used by the United Nations to begin a survey aimed at identifying shelter facilities and assessing how well their capacities meet new specific needs in protecting war-affected children so that we can properly identify what resources should be mobilized to ensure the recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration or reinsertion of such children. International actors must support efforts undertaken at the local level and must support local grass-roots communities in order to strengthen traditional child protection norms. The establishment of child protection advisers at the local level must be expanded to all countries affected by this phenomenon.

The third direction that action should take would be to articulate at the regional level — particularly in the African region — a resolute policy that includes practical measures and specific programmes to solve the serious development problems that the

phenomenon of child soldiers poses for the societies concerned, particularly African societies. In fact, if nothing is done today, child soldiers will be destabilizing elements for our States and for our young democracies. These child victims of armed conflict, who lack education or professional training and know only the language of weapons, will be a potential breeding ground for mercenaries, criminals and outlaws if the international community — particularly the Security Council — does not adopt strong measures to save this young generation, which our societies are in the process of losing.

Therefore, we recommend holding regional and subregional seminars to address the following issues: the link between the phenomenon of child soldiers and the continent's socio-economic problems, such as poverty and unemployment; the adaptation of bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes to the specific needs of child soldiers; the specific needs of girl soldiers, who are often given very little attention in the context of official disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; the establishment by the countries concerned of national focal points for child soldiers and other conflict-affected children to better coordinate financing at the subregional and interregional levels; and, finally, the elaboration and implementation of specialized educational and training programmes, with international assistance, for children affected by conflict situations.

My country, Benin, faithful to its political choice to resolutely combat the phenomenon of child soldiers, will host in Cotonou, during the week of 13 to 17 June 2005, a conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to assess the role played by national Governments and ECOWAS in protecting war-affected children. We chose that week because 17 June each year is dedicated to the African child. In that context, we would like to appeal to members of the Council, the United Nations system, our bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations to support us in our efforts to organize, hold, follow up and implement the outcome of the conference, which will be along the lines of this public debate.

For us, today's debate is a point of departure for a new impetus in mobilizing the international community to ensure better protection for children in armed conflict and to make significant progress in combating the atrocities of which they are victims. To accomplish

that, we must adopt a draft resolution as soon as possible to operationalize the monitoring and reporting mechanism. To that end, we have before us a plan of action to establish the mechanism, and we must institute it in order to give ourselves the appropriate tools to enable us to effectively undertake the implementation phase described in the Secretary-General's report.

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

As there are still a number of speakers inscribed on my list, and in view of the lateness of the hour, I propose, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.40 p.m.