



Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations
New York

(Check against delivery)

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR GERT ROSENTHAL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS
UNSC DEBATE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT
17 JUNE, 2013**

Mister President,

We would like to thank the Presidency of the United Kingdom for organizing this debate on Children and Armed Conflict. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Leila Zerrougui, for her presentation of the report of the Secretary General on this matter. We also appreciate the presentations of Hervé Ladsous, Yoka Brandt, and Gregory Ramm. Additionally we would like to acknowledge the leadership of Luxembourg in the Informal Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the negotiation of the Declaration of the Presidency that will be adopted at the closing of this debate.

The Secretary General's report¹ illustrates once more the persistent violations and abuses that children affected by armed conflict continue to face. The Chapter on the evolving nature of conflict and emerging challenges for the protection of children must be brought to the attention of the Council, because our policies must also evolve to meet the challenges and new trends in order to protect children in the best possible way.

The primary responsibility for the protection of civilians falls on the State, and while those States that fail to protect their children are putting their own future at risk, it is also true that new tactics emerging in conflicts represent threats without precedent for all of those children. In this regard, we are concerned that schools are being used for military purposes, that they are being used as military barracks, weapons caches, command centers, detention and interrogation centers, placing children and teachers at a greater risk of attack. This situation not only increases desertion rates from parents not sending their children to school out of fear, but also obstructs the children's own right to education.

We are further concerned over the use of unmanned aircraft – “drones” – in areas inhabited by civilians, where reports show an increase in casualties among children and make impossible the distinction between combatants and non-combatants and seriously weakens the capacity of communities to defend their children. By the same token it is deeply concerning that children are being used as suicide bombers or human shields.

¹ S/2013/245.

We support the Secretary General's call to the parties to the conflict to immediately cease committing grave violations against children and we consider that the issue of persistent offenders or perpetrators of abuse against children should continue to be addressed by the Council, by the Special Representative of the Secretary General and by the Informal Working Group. It is imperative that those responsible for serious violations are brought to justice to pay for their crimes; this is a task that cannot be forgotten until it is fulfilled.

We believe in strengthening national capacities in the justice and security sectors, as well as in the creation of specialized chambers and mixed tribunals. We consider equally as important the complementarity of international justice to national mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court, especially in the fight against impunity for persistent perpetrators.

Due to the aforementioned points, we believe in further consideration of another mechanism that this Council can make use of: the application of a sanctions regime. Currently we have four Sanctions Committees with criteria for the designation of serious violations of the rights of children that are: Cote d'Ivoire, the DRC, Somalia, and Sudan. We also have the lists in the Annexes of the report of the SG, beginning with Annex I that contains the parties to the armed conflict on the agenda of the Council. Further work is needed to ensure the imposition of sanctions against offenders, whether persons or entities that commit grave violations against children.

Regarding the signing of action plans to halt the recruitment of children, we are pleased to see that their numbers have continued to increase, as have the establishment of dialogues with the parties to the conflict. However, from our own experience we consider important the signing of Peace Accords that comprehensively address the problems of the country and seek a sustainable solution and a construction of a firm and lasting peace. We advocate for the issues of children affected by conflict to be addressed in any cease-fire agreements, as well as in the post-conflict agenda.

Nonetheless, we remain concerned about the continuing conflict in Syria where children have been victims of unacceptable and unbearable violations and we join the exhortation made by the SG to the Government and affiliated groups to put an end to these acts of violence that have claimed the lives of children.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Guatemala continues to consider the issue of children and armed conflict of paramount importance, as well as strengthening the provisions of protection of children in all relevant mandates of UN missions for the maintenance and consolidation of peace, including the deployment of advisors for the protection of children.

Thank you very much.