Resolutions 1261 (1999) Adopted Unanimously; Olara Otunnu Stresses Words On Paper Cannot Save Children in Peril; Namibia's Foreign Minister Presides

The Security Council tonight strongly condemned the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict including killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction and forced displacement, recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law and attacks on places that usually have a significant presence of children such as schools and hospitals, and called on all parties concerned to put an end to such practices.

By unanimously adopting resolution 1261 (1999), after hearing from 48 speakers during an all-day debate, the Council expressed its support for the ongoing work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), other parts of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations dealing with children affected by armed conflict, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to develop coordination and coherence among them.

The Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Council by 31 July 2000, a report on the implementation of the resolution, consulting all relevant parts of the United Nations system and taking into account other relevant work. He was also requested to ensure that personnel involved in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building activities have appropriate training on the protection, rights and welfare of children.

Also by the text, the Council urged States and the United Nations system to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children used as soldiers in violation of international law, and called upon, in particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, UNHCR and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts in that regard.

The Council recognized the deleterious impact of the proliferation of arms, in particular small arms, on the security of civilians, including


refugees and other vulnerable populations, particularly children. It recalled resolution 1209 (1998) which,
among other provisions, stressed the importance of all Member States, and in particular States involved in manufacturing and marketing of weapons, restricting arms transfers which could provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing tensions or armed conflicts, and which urged international collaboration in combating illegal arms flows.

All parties to armed conflicts were urged to ensure that the protection, welfare and rights of children are taken into account during peace negotiations and throughout the process of consolidating peace in the aftermath of conflict. They were also urged to take special measures to protect children, in particular girls, from rape and other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict and to take into account the special needs of the girl child throughout armed conflicts and their aftermath, including in the delivery of the humanitarian assistance.

In the text's preambular part, the Council noted recent efforts to bring to an end the use of children as soldiers in violation of international law, in International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which prohibits forced or compulsory labour, including the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, in which conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 into national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities is characterized as a war crime.

Addressing the Council at the outset of the meeting, Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, said that over the past 50 years the world had developed an impressive body of international humanitarian and human rights instruments, but their impact remained woefully thin on the ground, he stressed, adding that words on paper could not save children and women in peril. Energies must therefore be shifted from the juridical project of elaborating norms to the political project of ensuring their application and respect on the ground. That could be accomplished if the international community was prepared to employ its considerable collective influence to that end.

Mr. Otunnu said that to stem the present massive use of children as soldiers, a three-pronged approach was needed: first, raise the age limit for recruitment and participation in armed conflict from the present 15 to 18; second, an effective movement of international pressure must be mobilized to lean on armed groups that were currently abusing children; and third, the political, social and economic factors which created an environment where children were induced by appeal of ideology or by socio-economic collapse, to become child soldiers, must be addressed.

The Council President, Theo-Ben Gurirab, speaking in his capacity as Foreign Minister of Namibia, said "We, as one human family, are demeaned and diminished when the response to humanitarian needs of victims does not measure up to the gravity of the situation as regards the plight of children". In Africa, the impact of armed conflicts on children had been particularly harmful, and no region of the continent had been spared the scourge of armed conflicts. "The challenges we are faced with are enormous", he said, "and require each and everyone to work in a holistic, collaborative and dedicated manner to ensure that the standards which we accepted are fully enjoyed by the ultimate beneficiaries -- the children. They are the leaders of tomorrow."

Statements were also made by the United Kingdom, France, United States, Slovenia, China, Malaysia, Russian Federation, Gabon, Brazil, Argentina, Bahrain, Gambia, Netherlands, Canada, Algeria, Norway, Finland, Bangladesh, Japan, Costa Rica, Republic of Korea, India, Portugal, Iraq, Slovakia, Afghanistan,

Council Work Programme

The Security Council met this morning to consider the issue of children and armed conflict.

Statements

OLARA OTUNNU, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, said that in approximately 50 countries around the world, children were suffering from the effects of conflict and its aftermath, that more than 20 million children had been displaced by war within and outside their countries and that some 300,000 young people under the age of 18 were currently being exploited as child soldiers. There had been a qualitative shift in the nature and conduct of warfare. Several developments marked that transformation.

Almost all the major armed conflicts in the world today were civil wars, he said. They were marked by widespread social breakdown and lawlessness, the proliferation of small weapons and involvement of multiple armed groups and the massive use of child soldiers. A key feature of that struggle was the demonization of the so-called enemy community. In that setting, the village had become the battlefield and civilian populations the primary target. The traditional limits on the conduct of warfare -- international instruments as well as local taboos and injunctions -- were being cast aside.

Those excesses were no longer exceptional, he said. They were widespread across the globe and were going on today in some 30 locations of conflict. It was against that background that today up to 90 per cent of casualties in ongoing conflicts around the world were civilians -- the vast majority of whom were women and children. There was a danger that the international community might be exposed to so much that it could come to regard as normal a phenomenon that in fact represented a radical departure from the fundamental norms of conduct acceptable to their various societies. That must not be allowed to happen. The trend of abomination could and must be reversed. In that context, some concrete proposals were offered for the Council's consideration.

First, he said, the international community should resolve to launch the application of international norms and standards. Over the past 50 years, the world had developed an impressive body of international humanitarian and human rights instruments. But their impact remained woefully thin on the ground. Words on paper could not save children and women in peril. Energies must therefore be shifted from the juridical project of elaborating norms to the political project of ensuring their application and respect on the ground. That could be accomplished if the international community was prepared to employ its considerable collective influence to that end. He said that local value systems that had traditionally provided ethical bearings to many societies must not be cast aside. In most societies, distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable practices were
maintained, even in times of war, with taboos and injunctions proscribing the targeting of civilian populations, especially women and children. But today, so many conflicts around the world were a "free-for-all". All resources must be mobilized -- especially parents, extended families, elders, teachers, schools and religious institutions -- to reclaim and reassert those values and taboos that had traditionally been instrumental in protecting children and women in times of conflict.

Proposing "neighbourhood initiatives", he said that although most of today's conflicts were internal, the victimization of children was often exacerbated by cross-border activities, the flow of small arms and light weapons, the transfer and use of landmines, the recruitment and abduction of children by armed groups and the movement of displaced populations. Threats facing children within countries in conflict often could not be brought under control without addressing those cross-border dimensions.

He said there was an urgent need to monitor and control the flow of arms into and the illicit exploitation of natural resources from theatres of conflict, where there was evidence that children and women were being systematically brutalized. Similarly, illicit trade in timber, gold or diamonds tended to fuel the war machines responsible for atrocities and abuse against children and women. The business community was urged to assume its responsibility in that matter.

To stem the present massive use of children as soldiers, he said, a three-pronged approach was needed: first, raise the age limit for recruitment and participation in armed conflict from the present 15 to 18; second, an effective movement of international pressure must be mobilized to lean on armed groups that were currently abusing children; and third, the political, social and economic factors which created an environment where children were induced by appeal of ideology or by socio-economic collapse to become child soldiers must be addressed.

STEWART ELDON (United Kingdom) said an estimated 2 million children had been killed in wars in the last decade. Tens of millions of others had been orphaned, maimed, traumatized, sexually abused, tortured and starved. "We all have an obligation to do everything in our power to stop this", he stressed. Conflict prevention was clearly the best way to protect children. Such prevention was best accomplished by promoting democracy and development. Governments must also respect their international obligations under the convention on the Rights of the Child, which had now been ratified by nearly all the members of the United Nations. "We must speak out more clearly when they do not. This is one instance where naming and shaming helps", he added. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons had a particularly damaging impact on children. The existence of so much weaponry in difficult and sensitive areas of the world was in itself destabilizing.

He said that when wars happened, the protagonists must make sure that children were properly protected. The Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child set out the standards. There must be no impunity for those who ignored them. Those who targeted children must be brought to justice. The establishment of the International Criminal Court would be an important step towards that. The internationally agreed minimum age of recruitment for soldiers must be raised, since the current age of 15 was too low. "We are all familiar with pictures of children as young as 10 carrying Kalishnikovs in Africa. Our priority must be the ending of such recruitment, and the demobilization and reintegration into society of existing child soldiers", he said. Children neither started wars nor perpetuated them. They should not pay the price for adult wars. They had a right to be protected, "and all of us have a duty to ensure that they are".

YVES DOUTRIAUX (France) stressed the importance of the truly universal ratification and strengthening of the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the age limit on participation by children in armed conflicts. It was hoped that negotiations now under way on that issue would lead to the adoption in the year
2000 of an additional protocol to the Convention which would end the use of child soldiers and raise the minimum age of their participation in hostilities to 18 years.

Noting that the Statute of the International Criminal Court had been adopted since the last Security Council debate on children and armed conflict, he said that the entry into force of the Ottawa Landmines Convention was another positive development. France would see to it that the protection of children was duly and systematically taken into account, including in those situations involving the imposition of sanctions.

He said that the uncontrolled and destabilizing spread of small arms and light weapons made children as much victims as it made butchers of them. It was for that reason that France and its European Union partners had adopted common actions and were following the efforts of other countries or regional organizations to overcome that phenomenon. All available means must be mobilized to ensure the right of children to peace and security.

NANCY SODERBERG (United States) said her delegation lamented the deterioration in local value systems that had accompanied the increase in protracted and brutal civil conflicts. Children, women and the elderly, she said, had all become "fair game" for the most horrendous of atrocities in the value-less climate which prevailed in too many war zones. She said the civil conflicts which put children in harm's way, and which delivered so much death, homelessness, hunger, illness and suffering upon them, had to be resolved in order for their suffering to be abated.

Demobilizing children in armed conflicts after peace was attained, and reintegrating them into society was a complex process, she said. Approximately 5,000 children had received assistance, directly or indirectly, from programmes funded by the United States in Angola, Liberia, northern Uganda and Sierra Leone. Those programmes included counselling not only for the children, but also for their families and communities to facilitate the acceptance of their return home. Educational and vocational training were also provided as a means of preparing children affected by wars to lead constructive lives. "Today's children are tomorrow's hope", she said. "We must all work to ensure that hope is not extinguished by the blight of armed conflict."

DANILO TURK (Slovenia) said the Council had to pay special attention to children in its decision-making on and mandating of peacemaking, peacekeeping or peace-building operations. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration represented a standard aspect of many situations dealt with by the Council, and the special needs of child soldiers had to be duly taken into account. Just as important, but perhaps not as obviously pertinent to the work of the Council, was the question of preventing recruitment of children as soldiers. If the Council proved effective in addressing specific situations, it would also help the larger cause of curtailing the practice of the exploitation of children as soldiers. Children simply had no role in warfare. Slovenia supported the effort to raise the minimum age for recruitment and participation of children in hostilities to 18 years through the adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

He said the international community was facing a perplexing situation today. There was an impressive body of international humanitarian and human rights laws that set the standard for conduct in conflict situations. Yet there was an unacceptably wide and growing gap between the existing norms and the situation on the ground, where those norms were flagrantly violated by belligerent parties. It was clearly the responsibility of States to put an end to impunity and to ensure that those responsible for violations of norms were brought to justice. The adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court had historic implications for children affected by armed conflict. It designated as a war crime conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 or using them to participate actively in hostilities in both international or non-international conflicts. It was his delegation's hope that the Statute would enter into force as soon as possible.

SHEN GUOFANG (China) said that in situations of armed conflicts, not only could children not live a normal
life, but they were also constantly exposed to the threat of death. The fundamental approach to protecting them was to effectively prevent armed conflict. In that regard, more input was needed from the United Nations. Under such circumstances, it should urge the parties to end the conflict peacefully and expeditiously.

He called on the international community and the relevant United Nations agencies to further strengthen their coordination and cooperation in bringing an end to the problem of children in armed conflict. China had always attached great importance to the protection of children.

The question of children in armed conflict was a highly technical one, he said. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council were more appropriate forums where that subject could be taken up. The Security Council should focus more attention on eliminating the fundamental causes of humanitarian crises and on the establishment of effective monitoring mechanisms.

KAMAL YAN YAHAYA (Malaysia) asked what the international community was doing to protect the innocent and hapless children. Was it doing enough to ensure the promotion of the rights and protection of children victimized by armed conflicts? The issue of children in armed conflict deserved the serious attention of the international community in its own right. Strong political will was necessary to translate existing standards and commitments into actions to make substantive progress in the protection of children in armed conflict. It was imperative that the Security Council call on States involved in armed conflicts to protect children using the measures available.

He said his delegation supported the Special Representative's view that children must be protected during armed conflict and helped to recuperate and reintegrate in post-conflict situations but, more important, that the onset of the conflict should be prevented in the first place. International and national actors should take actions to prevent conflicts rather than allowing inequities and marginalization to escalate into armed conflicts. The international community should not be content to play a fireman's role of merely putting out fires. A "band-aid" solution would neither resolve the conflict nor provide a permanent peace.

The Malaysian delegation, he said, was gratified that the conscripting of children under the age of 15 into armed forces or using them to participate in hostilities, and the targeting of schools had now been made crimes under the Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Security Council, when adopting measures under Article 41 of the United Nations Charter in dealing with armed conflicts, must give due consideration to their impact on children in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions.

ANDREI E. GRANOVSKY (Russian Federation) said it was important for all members of the Council to be united in addressing about the misfortunes of children. Humankind was approaching the next millennium with lofty humanitarian ideals which encompassed rights and freedoms. The scourge of war deprived children of things that were dear to them: their parents, health, childhood and homelands. It should be pointed out that some progress had been achieved in the struggle for the right of children to peace. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was the most universal international treaty. The Russian Federation supported the recommendation for the early adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On 20 November, the tenth anniversary of the Convention would be observed. The inclusion of that anniversary on the agenda of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly would provide an opportunity to address problems facing the younger generation.

He said there was a broad range of authoritative institutions dealing with issues related to children. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Economic and Social Council were just some of them. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross was providing special protection and assistance to children in armed conflict. In undertaking efforts to settle and prevent armed conflicts, the world community had to do its utmost to lessen the impact on children.
That, however, was not enough. It was also time to deal with preventing children from being involved in hostilities. There was a need to limit arms shipments to areas of conflict and to seriously control the flow of light weapons and small arms. The Russian Federation had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The legal elements of that Convention were some of the basic tenets of Russian society.

DENIS DANGUE REWAKA (Gabon) said that in June 1998, the Security Council had expressed agreement with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that an end must be put to the recruitment of children, as well as to their disarmament and demobilization; to the promotion of landmine-clearance and mine-awareness programmes; and to programmes of re-education and re-adaptation.

He said that States, and particularly those involved in armed conflict, must give high priority to the effective implementation of existing international instruments. A lasting solution to the problem would include, on the one hand, the prevention and settlement of armed conflicts and on the other, the economic and social improvement of the countries where those children lived.

GELSON FONSECA (Brazil) said it was a paradox that the positive trend represented by the readiness of the Council to keep the issue of children and armed conflicts on its agenda was a direct result of the deteriorating situation on the ground. Unfortunately, efforts still fell short of what was needed to end the grievous suffering of children affected. The Council must play its part in a much broader strategy to address the various dimensions of that urgent problem. It should not lose sight of the special humanitarian needs of children. When discharging its functions in matters related to international security, the Council should bear in mind the imperative of putting an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. The Council must also work in close coordination with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in the context of post-conflict peace-building.

On several occasions his country had expressed its concern at the use of landmines, which accounted for a great deal of deaths and casualties among children. Along with the ban on landmines, it was necessary to set in motion comprehensive programmes of mine-clearance and mine-awareness. In the field of disarmament, attention should also be paid to the flow of small arms and light weapons, not only because of their deadly potential, but also because they were easily carried by child soldiers. Political will and decisive action were required if the international community was to successfully prevent the childhood of the next generations from being stolen and their futures ravaged by warfare.

FERNANDO ENRIQUE PETRELLA (Argentina) said it was indispensable that international norms be formulated to prevent the barbaric practice of bringing children into the battlefield. In addition to existing international instruments, the current debate and the resolution before the Council, the International Criminal Court would be a formidable tool to eradicate that practice.

He said Argentina believed that the age limit for the recruitment of young people into armed forces must be 18 years. It was essential to provide training for troops forming peacekeeping missions, which would range from the disarmament of children to their demobilization. That would help avoid their future involvement in armed struggles.

There should be compensation, rehabilitation and special education programmes for children and young people brutalized by armed conflicts, he said. Peace agreements must contain explicit provisions in that respect.

He said that the design of sanctions must be improved so that they did not have an impact on children. The Security Council must contribute to ending that "unacceptable reality".
JASSIM MOHAMMED BUALLAY (Bahrain) said the meeting today was clear proof of the determination to address the issue of children in armed conflict. The phenomenon was an old one, and was one of the most negative aspects of armed conflicts. The issue had, however, taken a dangerous turn in recent times and the international community was forced to take a different look at it. Hundred of thousands of children were serving as soldiers, while millions of children all over the world were affected by conflicts. There were also those children who suffered from terrible living conditions because of lack of education or food.

He said the situation of children either as soldiers or refugees was a black mark for the rest of the world. It was necessary to bring to justice those who were responsible for the recruitment of children during armed conflicts; they should be dealt with as war criminals. War had psychological consequences on children that were impossible to remove even in adulthood.

BABOUCARR-BLAISE ISMAILA JAGNE (Gambia) said it was distressful to learn that 90 per cent of the casualties of today's conflicts were civilians, of which the vast majority were women and children. In many conflicts, the lofty values of protection of children seemed to be forgotten completely. Children had been conscripted as soldiers, sometimes at gunpoint, and not even young girls were spared. "Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea", he said, those who were able to escape the horrors of conflict situations were either internally displaced or went elsewhere as refugees, or were separated from their families.

He said grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law often occurred in communities which were cut off from the outside world. The presence of the international community in such places would be vital for the purpose of producing witnesses. Many belligerents did not know the rules governing armed conflict, he said. It was therefore important that the attention of warring parties were continuously drawn to their obligations to observe them. It was also important to obtain humanitarian ceasefires or "days of tranquillity" for the purposes of delivering humanitarian aid or carrying out vaccination campaigns to inoculate children, he said.

The meeting was suspended at 1:30 p.m. and resumed at 3:33 p.m.

PETER VAN WALSUM (Netherlands) said it was important to realize that the issue under discussion would not disappear from the agenda after today's meeting. The international community could build on concrete experience and plan further action. That was the essence of the draft resolution before the Council, which had full support of his delegation. It was of particular importance that personnel involved in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building activities be familiarized with such subjects as protection, rights and welfare of children. They should be specifically trained to deal with child soldiers. Tragically, child soldiers were not only the victims of the armed conflict, but they could be the perpetrators of atrocities, as well. An integrated approach should lead to their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in society.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and other instruments contained clear prohibitions with regard to the use of child soldiers, he continued. Those norms had to be respected. In the field of standard-setting some further progress was being made. The Netherlands had begun the process leading to the ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182, which prohibited forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict. In cases where the rights of children were violated on a massive scale, it was the responsibility of all States to ensure that the perpetrators were brought to justice. Children saved from the scourge of armed conflict could help build a healthy society and prevent future conflicts.

ROBERT R. FOWLER (Canada) said the protection of civilians in armed conflict was central to the human security agenda. Children, as the most vulnerable group, deserved the Council's special consideration. Children were increasingly the innocent victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Therefore, the
culture of impunity should be ended through continued support of the International Tribunals and the timely
establishment of the International Criminal Court.

The Lomé Peace Agreement on Sierra Leone, with its welcome focus on war-affected children, would be an
important milestone for the international community, since the conflict in that country had been dubbed the
"Children's War", he said. The successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers
would be a critical element in rebuilding a climate of security and stability. The practice of employing children
as weapons of war should be stopped. Creative solution which could integrate children who had been left
orphaned or abandoned by families, clans and communities should be found. Children should be offered real
alternatives to joining armies or rebel groups -- or to living alone on the streets.

The Foreign Minister of Namibia, THEO-BEN GURIRAB, said that on the eve of the new millennium one
could look back at this century, which witnessed two world wars, the invention and use of chemical,
biological and nuclear weapons, and record numbers of atrocities. He said the impact of armed conflicts on
children was exacerbated by international arms dealers who fuelled internecine conflicts through the flow of
arms, especially small arms. Concerted action should be taken to identify the sources of small arms and to
stop their illicit production and trafficking.

"We, as one human family, are demeaned and diminished when the response to humanitarian needs of victims
does not measure up to the gravity of the situation as regards the plight of children", he said. In Africa, the
impact of armed conflicts on children had been particularly harmful, and no region of the continent had been
spared the scourge of armed conflicts. He appealed to Member States of the United Nations to provide
adequate humanitarian assistance to the lead agencies to facilitate the demobilization, rehabilitation and
reintegration of child soldiers into society. "The challenges we are faced with are enormous", he said, "and
require each and everyone to work in a holistic, collaborative and dedicated manner to ensure that the
standards which we accepted are fully enjoyed by the ultimate beneficiaries -- the children. They are the
leaders of tomorrow."

ABDALLAH BAALI (Algeria) said that in one of UNICEF's public messages, a child was asked what he
wanted to be when he grew up. His answer -- to be alive. That response summed up the present-day
tragedy. He recalled the terrifying figures on children in conflict recounted a year ago by the Special
Representative. Today, Mr. Otunnu had returned "to remind us of the horror" and obligations. Millions of
children had been killed, traumatized or rendered homeless. War was not a recent phenomenon and had
accompanied the evolution of the human race. Women and children had always suffered during wartime.
However, never had children been so targeted, massacred, maimed, abused, raped, mutilated and deprived
of their innocence, dreams and childhood as they had on the eve of the third millennium. What future could
they dream of when tens of thousands of them could only remember atrocities from their childhood.

He asked how had the world arrived at such a stage of senseless dehumanization and such wanton
desecration of life. While explanations abounded, there was a need to end the endless parade on television
stations of pictures steeped in brutality. It was not the regular armies that waged wars. It was armed groups
that forcibly conscripted adolescents into their ranks. Such groups were not bound by any code of honour --
often they did not target the military but innocent civilians. It was therefore hardly surprising that 90 per cent
of the victims of conflicts were civilians and a large proportion of them women and children. The flow of arms
continued despite massive declarations and cries of alarm. Those weapons were often put in the hands of
children. At the international level, instruments establishing the limits of war were often violated. The life of the
individual had lost its sacred nature -- everything had been abandoned and civilians were submitted to the
worst excesses. Today's debate, however, demonstrated that a real awareness of the issue of children in
conflict was developing.
He said that Africa alone could not resolve the problems of children affected by conflict. It certainly had the political will. The coming year had been declared the year of peace and stability in Africa. However, Africa's efforts to rebuild countries that had been ravaged by war would not succeed, given the absence of resources and without the effective mobilization of the international community. As long as plunder of resources, ruthless arms trafficking and circumvention of Security Council sanctions continued, Africa could do very little. The only solution was to address the roots of conflicts -- poverty, destitution and human distress. Those were often the breeding grounds for hate, intolerance and violence.

ARNE B. HONNINGSTAD (Norway) said international law had been developed which -- if adhered to -- went a long way towards protecting the basic rights of children in armed conflict. This included the various human rights instruments, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols. It was also important that the Statute establishing the International Criminal Court leave no doubt that those who conscripted or enlisted children under the age of 15 years into the national armed forces or used them to participate actively in hostilities might be punished as war criminals.

While civilians -- children being the most vulnerable among them -- were increasingly victims of armed conflicts, peace negotiations and settlements often did not address the situation of children, he said. Treating the needs of children affected by armed conflict as an afterthought might not only constitute a breach of their rights, but might also contribute to prolonging the difficult return to a normalized post-conflict situation. The needs of children should therefore be explicitly and adequately addressed in peace negotiations and treaties. The rights and needs of children should also be squarely addressed in the mandates and activities of United Nations-led peace negotiations and treaties, he added.

MARJATTA RASI (Finland), speaking for the European Union, and for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, as well as Cyprus, Malta, Iceland and Lichtenstein, said it was unacceptable that children should be among the principal victims of violent conflict and furthermore that they were directly exploited to serve the interests of warring parties. Adequate resources must be devoted to the demobilization of child soldiers and child rehabilitation programmes, she added, as an integral part of planning for post-conflict situations. In the view of the European Union, the situation of children in armed conflict should be a part of the Secretary-General's reports to the Council on individual countries. In preparing thematic reports to the Council on subjects relevant to children in armed conflict, the Secretary-General should consult with UNICEF and other concerned actors of the United Nations system.

She said the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be extended to provide adequate protection to all children. The European Union remained fully committed to the aim of concluding successfully the negotiations on the draft optional protocol related to the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Security Council should address the rights of the child when the Council was mandating a peacekeeping mission with tasks to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate combatants. Whenever sanctions were adopted in the handling of crises, their impact on children should be assessed and monitored. The spread of small arms and light weapons led to a steady increase in the use of children as soldiers. International, regional and national efforts to curb the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons were welcome. ANWARUL KARIM CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said no other issue had the same urgency and longer-term impact on problems relating to international peace, security and development as that of children in conflict. Bangladesh strongly believed that, given the seriousness and crucial importance of the issue, the time had come for the Council to adopt an appropriately articulated resolution giving real meaning to the determination to address the issue. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict needed to be strengthened to be effective and produce results. Abuses of the rights of children were most common in present-day wars and armed conflicts. That had been rightly termed as the modern day version of child sacrifice. It not only robbed children of childhood but also destroyed the productive human potential for...
He said that the international community had the ability to work together to heal the scars of war on children. Mobilization of a coordinated response to post-conflict situations was absolutely essential. The healing and rehabilitation of children should constitute a central element and not an after-thought of post-conflict peace-building programmes. Humanitarian standards and commitments must be translated into action that concretely helped endangered children. Governments should incorporate forceful child protection elements in their domestic and foreign policies. His delegation felt that in armed conflicts, facilities like schools which were meant for children should be considered as free zones. The concept of children as "zones of peace" needed to be realized, through concrete action at all levels.

The cause of children could best be served, not by the actions of States alone but by all women and men through the fostering of a culture of peace and non-violence in every human being and in every sphere of activity. The objective of a culture of peace was the empowerment of people. It celebrated diversity and advanced understanding and tolerance. It worked against poverty and inequality and promoted development.

YUKIO SATOH (Japan) said that the activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had shed light not only on the plight of children, but also on the brutality of armed conflicts themselves. That lent the cause of conflict prevention yet another forceful persuasion. The Security Council focus on the issue would help greatly enhance the level of concern of the international community about children in armed conflict.

For its part, Japan, with cooperation of the office of the Special Representative, the United Nations University and the Japan Committee for UNICEF, had hosted a symposium last November entitled "Children and Armed Conflict" which had called for an urgent concerted action to protect children from being victimized in conflicts. From the viewpoint of protecting children from the impact of armed conflicts, it was imperative to tackle the issues of landmines and small arms. Japan advocated the "Zero Victims Programme" on the question of landmines and had pledged approximately 10 billion yen for mine-clearance and victim assistance for the five-year period starting last year.

The most effective way of protecting children was to prevent conflicts, he continued. While conflict-prevention was one of the most pressing, but most difficult issues in many parts of the world, a better realization of the plight of children victimized or abused during the course of conflicts would hopefully work to make all concerned more seriously committed to the cause of conflict prevention, as well as to the efforts to eliminate the dangers of landmines and small arms. Protection of children from all kinds of danger and mistreatment was at the heart of human security considerations.

JENO STAEHELIN, observer for Switzerland, said that children were doubly vulnerable in conflict. They could be victims of conflicts which affected them physically and psychically at a time when they were still developing. As combatants, however, they became legitimate targets under international law. Because of their age, they could be indoctrinated or given drugs.

He said that with the rapid breakdown of social values, it was increasingly necessary to develop better protection. That included the reinforcement of the legal framework and legal mechanisms for the protection of children. Growing attention had been focused on the social reintegration of combatants recruited before the age of 18 years.

Better coordination among the relevant organizations was necessary while avoiding overlaps in the structures for providing protection, he said. The Security Council could ensure that its peacekeeping operations included specialists versed in international humanitarian law. It could also encourage States to ensure that their armed
forces had the means to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups.

BERND NIEHAUS (Costa Rica) said that in a report last year it had been stated that millions of children had been affected by armed conflict, including over a million dead, 12 million with lost homes and 40 million handicapped. Those figures had increased since then. In such situations, it was impossible to describe the terror or pain felt, to grasp the dreams or hopes of the 2 million assassinated or to measure the loss of happiness. The time for action had come. What was needed was avoidance at all costs of the participation of minors in conflict. At the international level, all States must agree to refrain from recruiting minors. Governments must demobilize the minors who were in their armed forces or support staff. On a national level, Government authorities must apply penal sanctions to those who used or promoted the use of minors in conflict. It was indispensable for the international community to declare unacceptable the practice of using minors in armed forces opposing Governments. Governments must also promote the social reintegration of demobilized minors and provide social and psychological assistance. He said it was necessary to adopt an additional protocol for the Convention on the Rights of the Child which would declare 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces. It was also necessary to adopt additional measures to prevent children from becoming victims of armed conflict. Any targeting of civilian populations must be prohibited by international law. Efforts must also be made to deactivate anti-personnel mines which were still buried. In addition, before the Council imposed a sanctions regime, the impact of such measures on vulnerable populations should be assessed. Additional efforts were necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to minors in conflict. To properly address the issue of children in conflict there must be adherence to all the provisions of international law. The international community must create a real culture of peace, where all differences were resolved by peaceful and democratic means.

LEE SEE-YOUNG (Republic of Korea) said that from the lessons learned during recent conflicts, it had become clear that the problem of child soldiers required a comprehensive approach ranging from peacekeeping to post-conflict peace-building activities. It was indeed a daunting task to disarm child soldiers and to keep them from rearming. The Security Council should take a more pro-active role in ensuring the long-term rehabilitation of child soldiers from the planning stages of peacekeeping operations.

It was important to widen and strengthen the institutional safety net to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers, he continued. His delegation welcomed the prevailing recognition by the international community of the need to raise the existing legal standards. The United Nations had taken the lead in announcing its unilateral decision not to recruit peacekeepers below the age of 18 from Member States. In particular, the Working Group on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been considering raising the minimum age of recruiting child soldiers. He hoped that the Working Group would put forward practical recommendations acceptable to the majority of the United Nations membership. The Security Council should also be vigilant against the supply of small arms and light weapons in conflict areas. The need for appropriate monitoring and strict enforcement of arms embargoes could not be overstated.

KAMALESH SHARMA (India) said democratic governments did not recruit children for warfare; the non-State actors -- armed rebels, insurgent outfits and terrorist organizations -- recruited children, often forcibly, because they were malleable and strangers to danger, and therefore convenient instruments for mindless violence. What should be addressed was the recruitment and use of children by terrorists and insurgents. The Council was as impotent as any other body when it came to holding these malign forces accountable, he said. Frequently those groups had State sponsors, without whose support they would not be able to survive. Council action against this phenomenon would be appropriate.

While in principle India supported the humanitarian diplomacy of the Special Representative for better protection of children in armed conflict, he continued, great care should be taken to ensure that nothing in that work inadvertently lent legitimacy to terrorists, criminals and others who used violence to destabilize or
challenge democratically elected governments. The vast numbers of children traumatized by armed conflict cast a long shadow over future generations, he said. But the economic and social marginalization of the poorest nations was driving hundreds of millions more into the kind of childhood that could well make them part of tomorrow's problems. He said that unfortunately this broader picture of destitution and desperation did not attract the attention of the international media.

Children should not be indoctrinated or trained to fight, he said. To his regret, some schools and seminaries, including in his region, were being misused to instil in young and impressionable minds negative passions of hatred and intolerance. Those youngsters were then sent to Afghanistan, and elsewhere, as cannon-fodder. Those who survived had skills for nothing else, he said.

ANTONIO MONTEIRO (Portugal) said he welcomed the intention of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to undertake a mission to Sierra Leone later this month. He hoped that a coordinated and concerted response to the dramatic situation of children in that country could be achieved as soon as possible. He noted that since last year's presidential statement, the Council had shown an increasing awareness of the impact of armed conflict on children. That statement was a first step towards raising the awareness and the relevance of such concerns in the field of international peace and security. The UNICEF had also carried out a notable effort to alert the international community to the dimensions of the problem of children in conflict and to promote action designed to counter it.

He said there was need for a global effort to address the issue of children in armed conflict. States, the United Nations system and other relevant humanitarian organizations should give priority to the respect for the rights of the child in complex humanitarian emergencies. While setting a standard for the universal determination of States to protect the rights of the child, the Convention on the Rights of the Child reflected an ideal world that was still not a reality. "We must find a way to breach the gap that exists between the commitments of so many States and the reality, including those participating or suffering from the effects of armed conflicts", he said. The Council must play a particular role in the matter. It must be vigilant and active and it must urge and help the parties concerned to comply with their freely assumed obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other instruments of international law.

SAEED HASAN (Iraq) said the protection of children was at the heart of the purposes for which the United Nations had been created -- protecting future generations from the scourge of war. Regrettably the instruments created for that purposes were not being implemented. There existed poverty, deteriorating socio-economic conditions and a widening North-South gap in which the North alone had the advantages of power and wealth while the South was left with hunger and poverty -- fertile ground for conflict.

He said that given the structure of the General Assembly, and the present balance of power in the Security Council, the Council was unable to come up with creative solutions. Since the presidential statement of 29 June 1998 on children in armed conflict, the Council's conduct had only given rise to defective aspirations. On the other hand, the Council itself constituted part of the problem. Under pressure from the United States, the Council insisted on continued sanctions against Iraq, the victims of which were not only children, but also more than a million Iraqi citizens, particularly women and the elderly. The effects of sanctions were the same as those of armed conflict.

Prior to the imposition of sanctions against Iraq, he said, the country had achieved a level of development surpassing that of any other in the region as well as that of developing countries in general. The imposition of comprehensive sanctions had moved Iraq from relative prosperity to all-out poverty. The matter was inextricably linked with children, who constituted the main victims of the sanctions.

The infant mortality rate in Iraq was now among the highest in the world. Only 41 per cent of Iraqis had
potable water. Most schools needed major repair. According to the report of UNICEF, the death of more than half of Iraqi children below the age of 5 years could have been avoided had it not been for the sanctions. The use by the United States and the United Kingdom of depleted uranium weapons in 1991 had led to the deaths of 50,000 Iraqi children who still suffered from leukaemia and other forms of cancer.

He asked how the Council could ignore crimes perpetrated in its name by the United States and the United Kingdom. The Council, and the United Nations in general, had to undertake the responsibility to overcome that situation.

PETER TOMKA (Slovakia) said experts estimated that children were suffering from the effects of conflict in approximately 50 countries around the world. A major problem had been the failure of States to bring to justice those who violated international humanitarian law. His delegation concurred with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who underscored that rather than writing new laws, what was needed today was to implement what already existed.

He said the crucial factor contributing to the worldwide culture of violence and indiscriminate killings, as well as putting arms into the hands of young children, was a booming trade in small arms. The proliferation of these weapons had made it possible for young children to be the perpetrators of violence. Governments, local warlords and rebel groups were spending enormous amounts of money on arms deliveries, thus impoverishing their own countries and depriving civil populations, including children, of basic needs. The Council should explore ways and means in order to ensure that an arms embargo, once established, was implemented effectively. Economic sanctions should prevent war criminals from enjoying the fruits of their evil without harming innocent women and children.

"The issue before us", he said, "has a very important socio-economic impact, since poverty facilitates the recruitment and participation of children in armed conflict". Children were sometimes even sold to armies and guerrilla groups by families thrown into poverty by ethnic conflicts. The Council, in mandating peacekeeping missions, should pay special attention to the programmes of demobilization and social reintegration of child combatants, their psychological recovery, return of the displaced and refugee children, and restoration of access to health care, food and education.

A.G. RAVAN FARHADI (Afghanistan) said the Islamic State of Afghanistan had once again become victim of an undeclared and imposed conflict by neighbouring Pakistan, and one of the disastrous dimensions of the conflict was the victimization of the children. On 20 August, the United Nations Information Centre from Islamabad reported how young students, some as young as only 14, were being recruited for war in Afghanistan. The UNICEF representative in Pakistan had reported last week that "the Taliban delegation in Pakistan over the last two weeks appears to have recruited between 2,000 and 2,500 [young students] in expectation of a new offensive".

He said Afghanistan firmly believed that wars had a tragic impact on civilians, especially children and women. Afghan children deserved adequate health care, a decent education, nutritious food, a secure and loving family and a life of friendship and opportunity. Afghanistan shared the idea of a new peace and security agenda for children and women, ending the use of children as soldiers and the provision of better protection for children and women in conflict situations. He said the defence forces of Afghanistan recently had captured 63 children ages 13 to 16. Some had been recruited, but others had been forced to participate in combat at the front line. The children had been released to their families.

PETER KASANDA (Zambia) said that poor children, sometimes without parents or without access to education, were lured into armed groups by promises of payment, food and protection. Some were forcibly conscripted but told to say they had volunteered. The distinction between forced, compulsory
and voluntary recruitment was blurred, hence the need for a complete prohibition of child participation in combat.

The phenomenon of small arms and light weapons had introduced a new and disturbing dynamic in modern warfare, he said. It had led to a vast expansion in the involvement of under-age children as both victims and perpetrators. Handguns, rifles, machine guns, grenades and anti-personnel landmines were all weapons of choice in conflicts where children were used as soldiers. The issue of small and light arms should, therefore, be a matter of international public concern, particularly to the Security Council.

He said that in war-torn countries the world over, the existence of international humanitarian law and human rights law had not led to a better life for ordinary innocent civilians, including children. There was but a mockery of those international standards by warlords and their supporters. More effective ways should be found to hold the culprits to account and to ensure that all concerned abided by their obligations under international law.

JACQUES LOUIS BOISSON (Monaco) said the armed conflicts afflicting so many of the world's regions were all the more horrifying because the rules of warfare and humanitarian law seemed increasingly to be ignored, paving the way for a return to barbarism. The plight of a growing number of children involved in armed conflicts reflected a phenomenon whose causes were not always clear. Indoctrinated and used as messengers, spies, combatants, torturers, human bombs and worse, children were no longer their own masters but unresisting instruments of arrogant and unscrupulous warlords.

He said there was a crisis in the values of civilization whose causes were uncertain but whose consequences were increasingly serious, not only for the communities concerned but more so for future societies, whose youth would have no moral or ethical foundation for their social behaviour.

The consequences of technological progress, he said, notably the increasingly deadly nature of arms, as well as their greater lightness and ease of handling, had serious implications for the growing number of children in conflict. Children's relative weakness, inexperience and lack of military training were no longer a serious handicap in the transportation and handling of small-calibre weapons.

VOLODYMYR YEL'CHENKO (Ukraine) said present day conflicts, even when they involved regular armed forces, were mostly civil, inter-ethnic or of an internal nature. The main purpose of the warring sides was not to subdue the rival group but rather to exterminate it or banish it. Children were not simply collateral victims of atrocities committed by either side, but a direct target. While there was no single remedy to resolve the problem, the best solution would certainly be to eliminate internal warfare altogether, as it constituted the most significant cause of crime against children. What was important and attainable today was to create a universal mechanism that would effectively and inevitably penalize the perpetrators of crimes against children. The diplomatic conference in Rome laid a firm foundation for a strong effective criminal court which would have jurisdiction over crimes against children.

Secondly, he said, there should be regional mechanisms and arrangements for the prompt and impartial investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for crimes against children. A global "search and capture" system should also be established. It would create conditions where perpetrators would not be able to find safe havens for themselves anywhere. The existing tools of international law constituted a sufficient legal basis for the adequate protection of the rights of children. The main task now was to ensure their consistent implementation. That required greater collective efforts by Governments and international organizations. There was also need for more integrated work by the Council, the Economic and Social Council and other bodies, in order to move emphasis beyond humanitarian assistance towards the areas of economic and social development.
DUMISANI S. KUMALO (South Africa) said more children continued to be dragged against their will into war as he spoke. Those abductions were accompanied by sexual abuse and cruel usage of children which defied description. Disturbing reports that young girls were forced into sexual slavery and other practices that exposed them to diseases such as HIV/AIDS were continually received. "This must be stopped", he said. "Enough is enough." He said that his Government supported the creation of "zones of peace" in situations where children were caught in armed conflicts, with a view to protecting them and to address their special needs.

It was his Government's firm belief, he said, that a global catastrophe of that magnitude required resolute will from the international community to arrest and eventually annihilate it. The recruitment and use of child soldiers was not only an affront to human values, it was also a fundamental impediment to socio-economic development. The social and economic challenges imposed on countries by this practice would continue to frustrate socio-economic development and social transformation, he said. Last July, the African Heads of State and Government meeting at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit held in Algiers recommitted themselves to combating all forms of child exploitation and, in particular, put an end to the phenomenon of child soldiers, he said.

JARGALSAIKHANY ENKHSAIKHAN (Mongolia) hoped that the Council would adopt a strong, practical resolution, to send a clear message that protection of children affected by wars and conflicts was high on its agenda, and that strong, effective domestic and international measures were needed to cope with the problem. He said it was futile to talk about human security if the international community could not ensure protection of children in armed conflicts, protection of their rights under the international humanitarian law.

The United Nations must play an important role in the efforts to combat violations of international law, where the children were drawn into armed conflicts or affected by them, he continued. He favoured an early adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflicts. A strong International Criminal Court would not only prosecute perpetrators of criminal acts, but would also play a preventive role. In a broader context, the most efficient means for protecting children would be prevention of conflict situations. Mongolia attached great importance to preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peace-building measures of the United Nations. The Council should not only strongly condemn the targeting of children in armed conflict, but take concrete legal, political and other steps to combat it.

ELFAITH MOHAMMED AHMED ERWA (Sudan) said armed conflicts continued to cause suffering to vulnerable groups such as women and children. The solution lay in tackling the root causes of the conflicts. Necessary attention should be given to children in such situations. He said his Government paid special attention to the issue of children in conflict as part of a continued effort to find a comprehensive solution to the war in Southern Sudan. It had granted the right of self-determination to Southern Sudan and had cooperated fully with the United Nations. The Government was now ready to negotiate a permanent ceasefire. He said the movement in Southern Sudan had been abducting children for induction into their ranks. Those practices were known by the International Red Cross for years, yet no action by the international community had been taken to address the situation.

He said his Government had affirmed its full and principled commitment not to recruit children under the age of 18 for military service. There were national laws to support that commitment. His Government had cooperated with relevant agencies of the United Nations in tracking and releasing children who had been abducted by forces in neighbouring countries.

Last week, he added, many Sudanese had met to commemorate the passing of one year since the United...
States aggression against a medical factory in Sudan. A super-Power like the United States should have been able "to give us a lesson" in humanity and justice, and to recognize the mistake it committed. It should compensate the children of Sudan for depriving them of the source that had given them 70 per cent of their medication every year.

ROSELYN RUTH ASUMWA ODERA (Kenya) said that despite widespread condemnation of the senseless targeting of innocent children in armed conflicts, the international community was still witnessing repeated accounts of such horrors in many parts of the world. The media had helped to highlight unspeakable crimes against children in armed conflict, and only decisive action could arrest the pattern and cycle of violence.

She said the Security Council had the capacity to take a lead not only in preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, but also in ensuring the protection of their rights as children. In fact, since the Council's Presidential statement on children in armed conflict on 29 June 1998, some progress had been made in defining elements of crimes under the statutes of the International Criminal Court, including crimes which affected children in armed conflict situations.

Increasingly, it was necessary to look beyond disarmament and demobilization of child soldiers, she continued, and to consider how to establish and encourage training and capacity-building in trauma counselling and rehabilitation at local levels in post-conflict situations. The international community must be able to assess and address the impact of the emotional damage resulting from the violation of children's rights. A holistic, integrated action-oriented approach combining the elements of social policy, political will and economic and financial commitment was one way to make a positive difference. Every effort needed to be made to mobilize adequate funds to support the efforts of the Special Representative on behalf of that special category of children.

AHMED ABOUL GHEIT (Egypt) said that despite achievements over the past decade, the world had seen a number of factors that had negatively affected children, including economic crisis, increase in the debt burden and expansion of armed conflict, which had influenced their very existence.

The Security Council must consider the precarious balance between the roles of the General Assembly and other bodies inside and outside the United Nations system. While it was important that the Council find solutions to problems threatening international peace and security, the implementation of international humanitarian law should not contradict the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

He said the gap between the establishment of international norms and their implementation was vast and growing. Despite the fact that national governments bore the primary responsibility for protecting their citizens, the international community had an important role to play in providing assistance. There must be an end to impunity on the part of those who used children as targets. The adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was an important development, since it described the use of children in armed conflict as a war crime.

MAKARIM WIBISONO (Indonesia) said children whose minds were just beginning to take shape were being used as tools for warfare. Many, if not all of them, were not fully aware of the reasons and objectives of the armed conflict in which they were participating. The linkage of children to violence, especially in areas affected by conflict, was largely due to the accessibility of small arms. The international community had taken the right track in endeavouring to institute controls for the transfer of illicit arms, especially in zones prone to conflict. Much more, however, needed to be done. Millions of children had already become victims of armed struggles. Many had lost years of education, youth and normal life.
A sustained programme of assistance in a post-conflict peace-building period was critically important in order to consolidate peace and to support rehabilitation. It was crucial to focus on the needs of children, who were both instruments of an armed conflict as well as the victims of such conflicts. A holistic approach was necessary while maintaining the unique characteristics of each and every culture and society.

He said measures could not be undertaken solely by governments who experienced armed conflicts; concerted, systematic and organized efforts were needed from all actors in the regional and international community. The use of children in armed conflict cast a shadow on their future. Children who were exposed to violence tended to carry fear and hatred in their hearts and minds and that had long-term effects.

JOSEFA COELHO DA CRUZ (Angola) said her country was one of the many that had faced the problem of children in armed conflict for several years. Efforts by the Angolan Government to protect the children caught in the vicious circle and to alleviate their suffering had been consistently hindered by the actions of the bandits that continued to pursue the war in Angola as a means to reach their goals. In spite of the other challenges it faced, the Angolan Government had not spared any efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of those institutions that provided assistance to children as well as to war victims in general.

He said that every year her Government allocated a special budget to social development and reintegration services, and to the Children's National Institute to support specific projects. Those projects related to the placement of war orphans with members of their own families; to building shelters and temporary lodging facilities to shelter those children whose families might take longer to be located; to building schools and health centres in areas created for the temporary accommodation of displaced people; to providing food safety; to providing funds for the national non-governmental organizations that cared for child victims of the war who suffered from trauma and other psychological problems; to manufacturing prosthetic limbs and sending child victims of anti-personnel mines and other explosives to other countries for treatment. Owing to the lack of appropriate resources, the Government's efforts were far from meeting projected needs.

DAUDI MWAKAWAGO (United Republic of Tanzania) said his country had experienced firsthand the plight of children fleeing from situations of armed conflict in neighbouring countries. In today's international relations, the change in the nature and scope of conflict had invariably drawn children, who were least responsible for the conflicts, into the power struggles of the adversaries.

He cited the Secretary-General's April 1998 report to the Security Council on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa: "poor economic performance or inequitable development have resulted in a near-permanent economic crisis for some States, greatly exacerbating internal tensions and greatly diminishing their capacity to respond to those tensions". The alleviation of poverty should therefore be a common concern as a necessary step towards ending conflicts and protecting children's rights.

The recognition of the important work being done by Ambassador Otunnu, he said, needed to be elevated to tangible action by giving him the requisite financial, human and material support to fulfil his mandate. What was crucial now was to intensify the cooperative efforts of UNICEF, UNHCR, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the non-governmental organization community who were playing critical roles. It was a huge undertaking that could not be handled by a single entity.

FRED BEYENDEZA (Uganda) said nothing could be more painful to his country than the systematic abduction, torture, detention, enslavement, mutilation and killing of its innocent children, as had been happening for 12 long years in northern and western Uganda. In October 1996, 139 schoolgirls had been abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army, the majority of whom were still missing to date. In June 1998, an
attack by the Allied Democratic Forces in western Uganda had resulted in the burning to death of 80 children and the abduction of 100.

He said the terrorist groups often targeted defenceless women and children between 11 and 16 years of age, at times abducting younger ones of 5 to 9 years, often after massacring their parents and relatives. As a result, fear and uncertainty had become permanent features of life in northern and western Uganda. What the rebels had done and continued to do was alien to African culture, traditional values and way of life. It was a unique and exceptional situation that demanded extraordinary action. Violations against children should be classified as crimes against humanity.

To date, he said, two important resolutions on children had been passed by the Commission on Human Rights and had been adopted, but they had not been translated into freedom for children in armed conflicts. Uganda called on the international community to implement those resolutions fully.

In June 1998 the Security Council had held an open debate on the same issues, he said. On that occasion, the Council had issued a presidential statement. Uganda hoped that this year would not be "business as usual" and that the Council would send a clear message to the international community and to those responsible for crimes against children. It was hoped that the Council was resolved to address strongly the predicament of children in armed conflicts, whatever the causes of such conflicts.

CESAR GOUVEIA (Mozambique) said that the Rome Peace Agreement that had ended his country's long years of war and destabilization had resulted from the genuine willingness of the Mozambican people to end the cycle of war and violence. The decision of the Government of Mozambique to bury the hatred and heal the wounds of war had resulted in the peace and sustainable development that had ensured the development of policies for the welfare of the child.

He recalled that in the presidential statement following the June 1998 debate on children and armed conflict, the Security Council had pledged to support efforts aimed at obtaining commitments to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts in violation of international law; to give special consideration to the disarmament and demobilization of child soldiers; and to the reintegration into society of children maimed or otherwise traumatized by armed conflict. The time had come to foster the political will to establish national and international legislation to prevent the use of child soldiers.

Current national and international efforts aimed at preventing the use of child soldiers could only be successful with international assistance and cooperation, he said. Mozambique appealed to the international community to spare no effort in providing all kinds of assistance to the countries in need.

MICHAEL POWLES (New Zealand) said shielding children from the effects of armed conflict, both as victims and as participants, was an inseparable part of the United Nations responsibility to the world's children. New Zealand welcomed the fact that the use of children in armed conflict was a war crime over which the International Criminal Court would have jurisdiction. He said New Zealand welcomed recognition by the Council that attention to the special needs of children affected by conflict was an essential aspect of efforts to build lasting peace.

It was for the Member States of the United Nations to set the standards which would shelter children from the anguish and suffering of wars, large and small, he said. Current negotiations on an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning children in armed conflict were particularly important in raising the legal standard of protection for children in this regard. He said that efforts to bridge differences and reach consensus on the Optional Protocol should be redoubled.
S.R. INSANALLY (Guyana) said most animals, even the lowest forms, instinctively protected their young from harm. Yet man, with a supposedly superior level of intelligence and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, had been known to subject his progeny to unimaginable horrors. Children died daily as a result of being dragooned into war. Every day and everywhere there were televised images of the young, maimed and made old by constant exposure to abduction, forced labour and violence. Among the measures which needed to be taken by the international community to deter the further involvement of children in armed conflict was firm action to bring to justice those responsible for such crimes. Rape and other forms of sexual violence, in the context of armed conflict, should be deemed as criminal acts subject to harsh punishment.

He said Guyana reiterated its call for an international ban of anti-personnel mines and for continuing efforts to expand mine-clearance and mine-awareness programmes. The victims of that type of brutality must be afforded every chance for physical and psychological comfort and rehabilitation.

He said many adolescents, especially girls exposed to rape, sexual exploitation, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases including the HIV/AIDS virus, were scarred for the rest of their days. They were being robbed not only of their childhood, but also of their prospects for adult life. It was imperative that there be a strengthening of the international legal instruments that had been forged to protect the rights of civilians in conflict.

FELIPE MABILANGAN (Philippines) said armed conflicts and wars violated every right of a child -- the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to the development of the personality and the right to be nurtured and protected. Children were among the first victims in armed conflicts. They were tortured, raped and often killed. Those who survived suffered immeasurable damage to their moral and psychological development.

He said the Secretary General's Report on the progress in the implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children, comprising goals in reducing child mortality rate, maternal mortality, malnutrition and increasing provision of water and sanitation, basic education and special protection for children by the year 2000, estimated the cost of meeting these goals to represent less than 1 per cent of global output. "Collectively, the cost is a very small investment in building a better, brighter future for our children, for ourselves, and for all the world!", he concluded.

JOSEPH W. MUTABOBA (Rwanda) said the first victims of bad leadership and the politics of exclusion in his country were innocent children who were not allowed access to education because of who they were and where they were born. It was the same children who had grown up amidst the process of rampant injustices, who were naturally mobilized and ready to be recruited as first-hand witnesses of that bad leadership and of those unjust policies that prevented people from enjoying their basic rights.

He said children who witnessed such a situation were potentially the ones to fight injustices directed at them, only when they were given the chance and means to do so. Unfortunately, it was in the name of defending those rights that most children had lost more of their rights -- the main one being the right to be a child. In Rwanda, the magnitude of suffering that children went through was difficult to describe. The trauma they still showed could tell how much they suffered inside themselves even when their rights had been recovered.

It was the duty of the Council to ensure that "this does not happen again not only in Rwanda but anywhere else in the globe". Many children had suffered the harsh environment of war and the need to kill -- to save themselves and their future, or because they had been told to do it. Many had survived mine blasts and bore scars with amputated legs and arms; they still lived with such traumatizing experiences long after the war was over.
He said the resolution sought by the Council today could prevent more of those killings in the future. His delegation strongly hoped the Council could stand firm in its duties and protect the peace and security of children. He appealed to the Council to think of the most vulnerable group of children in armed conflict today, the orphans. Not only did they experience the trauma of witnessing the death of their parents and relatives, they also survived the worst events. Some had been lucky to find foster families, some others had not. The message was the same. As much as there was need for a world order, "we should be aware of one important thing: there is no world after us if children are not taken care of".

ALYAKSANDR SYCHOV (Belarus) said the recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General deserved particular attention and should be translated into practical action by the United Nations. Despite significant efforts by the United Nations, UNICEF and other international organizations, children remained the most vulnerable victims of armed conflicts in different parts of the world. It was necessary to consider a new strategy, which should reduce the influence of armed conflicts upon children and exclude the under-aged from the number of armed combatants. It was also necessary to ensure children's access to humanitarian aid and develop effective mechanisms to prevent violence against child victims of armed conflicts.

Improvement of the legal basis for the interests of the children should become one of the major elements of such a strategy, he continued. Strengthening of the status of the International Criminal Court, which would have jurisdiction over all kinds of crimes against children, should become an important step in that direction. Special attention should be devoted to sanctions, which continued to have a significant effect on children. The Security Council should permit special humanitarian exceptions, which would help minimize the consequences of economic coercion.

ALFONSO VALDIVIESO (Colombia) said the present meeting was an additional demonstration of the importance of the current humanitarian topic. Children in armed conflict was an issue about which each and every member of the Council had serious concerns. The Government of Colombia was convinced that the most effective way of protecting children and civilians in conflict was to end the conflict by a negotiated solution. That would end displaced peoples and mitigate the effects of the illegal traffic in arms.

He invited members of the Council and the other States who had participated in today's debate to continue the present forum in the natural scenario of the General Assembly. That would provide the proper place for debate. It would also enable a real world consensus to buttress the issue of children in armed conflict.

Action on Draft

The Council then unanimously adopted resolution 1261 (1999) (document S/1999/911), which read as follows:

"The Security Council,

"Recalling the statements of its President of 29 June 1998 (S/PRST/1998/18), 12 February 1999 (S/PRST/1999/6) and 8 July 1999 (S/PRST/1999/21),

"Noting recent efforts to bring to an end the use of children as soldiers in violation of international law, in International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour which prohibits forced or compulsory labour, including the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, and in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in which conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen into national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities is characterized as a war crime,"
"1. Expresses its grave concern at the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children and the long-term consequences this has for durable peace, security and development;

"2. Strongly condemns the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction and forced displacement, recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law, and attacks on objects protected under international law, including places that usually have a significant presence of children such as schools and hospitals, and calls on all parties concerned to put an end to such practices;

"3. Calls upon all parties concerned to comply strictly with their obligations under international law, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the obligations applicable to them under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, and stresses the responsibility of all States to bring an end to impunity and their obligation to prosecute those responsible for grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949;

"4. Expresses its support for the ongoing work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), other parts of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations dealing with children affected by armed conflict, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to develop coordination and coherence among them;

"5. Welcomes and encourages efforts by all relevant actors at the national and international level to develop more coherent and effective approaches to the issue of children and armed conflict;

"6. Supports the work of the open-ended inter-sessional working group of the Commission on Human Rights on a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and expresses the hope that it will make further progress with a view to finalizing its work;

"7. Urges all parties to armed conflicts to ensure that the protection, welfare and rights of children are taken into account during peace negotiations and throughout the process of consolidating peace in the aftermath of conflict;

"8. Calls upon parties to armed conflicts to undertake feasible measures during armed conflicts to minimize the harm suffered by children, such as "days of tranquillity" to allow the delivery of basic necessary services, and further calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to promote, implement and respect such measures;

"9. Urges all parties to armed conflicts to abide by concrete commitments made to ensure the protection of children in situations of armed conflict;

"10. Urges all parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to protect children, in particular girls, from rape and other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict and to take into account the special needs of the girl child throughout armed conflicts and their aftermath, including in the delivery of the humanitarian assistance;

"11. Calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to ensure the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children affected by armed conflict;

"12. Underscores the importance of the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel to the alleviation of the impact of armed conflict on children, and urges all parties to armed conflicts to respect fully the status of United Nations and associated personnel;
13. Urges States and all relevant parts of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to ensure an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law through political and other efforts, including promotion of the availability of alternatives for children to their participation in armed conflict;

14. Recognizes the deleterious impact of the proliferation of arms, in particular small arms, on the security of civilians, including refugees and other vulnerable populations, particularly children, and, in this regard, it recalls resolution 1209 (1998) of 19 November 1998 which, inter alia, stresses the importance of all Member States, and in particular States involved in manufacturing and marketing of weapons, restricting arms transfers which could provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing tensions or armed conflicts, and which urged international collaboration in combating illegal arms flows;

15. Urges States and the United Nations system to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children used as soldiers in violation of international law, and calls upon, in particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, UNHCR and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts in this regard;

16. Undertakes, when taking action aimed at promoting peace and security, to give special attention to the protection, welfare and rights of children, and requests the Secretary-General to include in his reports recommendations in this regard;

17. Reaffirms its readiness when dealing with situations of armed conflict:

(a) to continue to support the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilian populations in distress, taking into account the particular needs of children including, inter alia, the provision and rehabilitation of medical and educational services to respond to the needs of children, the rehabilitation of children who have been maimed or psychologically traumatized, and child-focused mine clearance and mine-awareness programmes;

(b) to continue to support the protection of displaced children including their resettlement by UNHCR and others as appropriate; and

(c) whenever adopting measures under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their impact on children, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;

18. Reaffirms also its readiness to consider appropriate responses whenever buildings or sites which usually have a significant presence of children are specifically targeted in situations of armed conflict, in violation of international law;

19. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that personnel involved in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building activities have appropriate training on the protection, rights and welfare of children, and urges States and relevant international and regional organizations to ensure that appropriate training is included in their programmes for personnel involved in similar activities;

20. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Council by 31 July 2000, a report on the implementation of this resolution, consulting all relevant parts of the United Nations system and taking into account other relevant work;

21. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.
MARK MINTON (United States) said the misleading substance of the Iraqi statement earlier warranted a right of reply. The current leadership in Iraq was the only party responsible for the inadequacies in that country. It was the unwillingness of Iraqi leadership to follow Council mandates that resulted in the current situation in the country. All available evidence showed that the Iraqi leadership had nothing but contempt for its own people. Clearly the Government of Iraq did not concur with assessments made by the Secretary-General and UNICEF and had ordered only a fraction of the critical food supplements needed by women and children.

He said the deliberate under-ordering and non-ordering of critical foodstuff by the Iraqi Government had resulted in the lack of caloric nutrients. Where the Government was responsible, mortality had increased. Where the United Nations was in charge, mortality had decreased. The Government of Iraq had also refused to increase spending on necessary pharmaceutical items. It seemed determined to deny the Iraqi people the benefits of a humanitarian programme while blaming everything on the sanctions. It was time for the Iraqi leadership to start putting the health of its people before its own narrow interests.

Mr. HASAN (Iraq), also speaking in right of reply, said his country had cooperated with the oil-for-food programme, but the programme could not end the deteriorating humanitarian situation. The American Executive Director of UNICEF had said that the sanctions imposed on Iraq had led to the death of half a million children.

Why did the United States insist that the emperor was wearing the fanciest of clothes? he asked. Iraq said the emperor was naked. The emperor was an arms trafficker and a bloodsucker. The Iraqi people stood by their leader, Saddam Hussein, despite the siege by the United States and despite their hunger. Hunger could not make a great people kneel.

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