



IRELAND

Statement by

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Ambassador

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**AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE
ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

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Mr President,

Ireland welcomes this opportunity to address the Security Council on the subject of Children and Armed Conflict. We fully associate ourselves with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset let me thank you Mr. President and the government of Vietnam for organising this open debate on so important a topic.

Since the issue of Children and Armed Conflict was formally placed on the agenda of the Security Council in 1998, the progressive engagement of the Council has yielded significant gains for children.

Ireland supports the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms on Children and Armed Conflict established by Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). In this regard, we welcome the annual reporting of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The creation of the Security Council Working Group gives firm evidence of the international community's commitment to address this issue at the highest level.

Ireland welcomes the Working Group's adoption, under the distinguished chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of France, of concrete conclusions, which contain increasingly specific requirements and recommendations. These remind States of their obligations and encourage them to take measures to strengthen child protection. We note that in many cases these conclusions have already had a positive impact, including with regard to drops in child recruitment, and enhanced dialogue between the parties to conflicts and the United Nations. Ireland calls upon all parties to implement the conclusions of the Working Group. We also call for the Security Council and the Secretary General to look into the need to give the Working Group the required means to enable it to effectively and transparently continue its work for the benefit of children.

Mr President,

Ireland is the current Chair of the Human Security Network, a position that we will hold until May 2009. The harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children has been one of the priority issues for the Human Security Network since its establishment almost ten years ago.

Ireland continues to be a strong supporter of the valuable work of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy. We would like to take the opportunity of this debate to commend Ms Coomaraswamy and her Office for their committed efforts in raising awareness, engaging with parties to conflict through her field visits and keeping this issue high on the international agenda.

Ireland also recognises the need to promote a broad-based approach to the problem and in this regard fully supports, in addition to the work of the Office of the Special Representative, the endeavours of UNICEF, other UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, along with Non-Governmental Organisations, regional organisations and national authorities.

Ireland would also like to underline the importance of the role that the International Criminal Court can play in the fight against impunity of perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out against children, including those who enlist and conscript child soldiers.

Ireland draws attention to the establishment of the European Union's own Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, which could be drawn upon by other actors, and the integration of this issue into EU development and humanitarian policies. In the context of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the issue is also integrated into external crisis management operations of the EU - such as EUFOR, which is currently in place in Chad, where Ireland is the second largest troop contributor with 400 Irish troops in theatre.

Mr President,

Children affected by armed conflict are among the most frequent victims of serious human rights violations and abuses. During armed conflict, girls in particular are subject to widespread, and at times systematic, gender-based human rights violations that have far-reaching repercussions. As Chair of the Human Security Network, Ireland has chosen to focus on the theme of Gender-Based Violence. In this regard we note in particular the recommendation of the Secretary General in his report of 21 December 2007 on Children and Armed Conflict, which recommends that **Quote** the Security Council give equal weight to all categories of grave violations, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children **Unquote**.

Successive resolutions of the Security Council have also recognised such grave abuses. Resolution 1325 (2000) recognises the human rights of girls and their right to protection, including protection from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Resolution 1325 also recognises the special needs of girls in post-conflict situations, and the necessity to take girls' rights and needs into account in designing peace agreements, refugee and IDP camps and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programs. Most recently, Security Council Resolution 1820 highlights the targeting of girls through the use of sexual violence and demands that all parties to armed conflict take appropriate measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

Mr President,

In closing, let me reaffirm that Ireland is committed to working closely with the United Nations System, as well as with other relevant national and regional organisations, to relieve the suffering of children in armed conflict and to bring an end to serious violations and abuses of children's rights.

Thank you.