



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

NEW YORK, 18 JUNE 2015

SECURITY COUNCIL – OPEN DEBATE

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

The Secretary-General's report once again shines a light on the many ways in which children are affected by armed conflict, the increasing number of horrendous crimes committed against them, and on the perpetrators of this violence. While Liechtenstein supports many of the recommendations already made here today – in particular on the need to include **abductions** of children as a trigger mechanism for listing in the annexes of the SG's report – I will focus on three points:

First, we are pleased to see a strong call for **accountability** among the Secretary-General's recommendations. It is of the utmost importance to demand full respect for international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. Troop contributing countries have to ensure speedy domestic investigations and prosecutions for violations committed by their nationals. Otherwise, the UN's role and its crucial function in the area of peacekeeping will be compromised. We are concerned about the sexual exploitation and abuse case in the Central African Republic and the systemic weaknesses within the UN system it has brought to light. We welcome the SG's decision to establish an independent investigation and look forward to its results. 30% of the victims of reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN

peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Liberia, South Sudan and DRC were minors. The UN's proclaimed "zero tolerance" policy will be ineffective as long as accountability mechanisms remain opaque or simply not in place, and reporting remains difficult or even dangerous. The challenges in ensuring accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse have been discussed for many years, but with little tangible result: There is a persistent danger that the important work of so many is publicly discredited owing to the unethical and criminal acts of few committed with impunity.

Second, the list of perpetrators in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report can be a very powerful tool to influence the behavior of conflict parties. However, for this to be the case, the listing and delisting process needs to be fair, consistent and transparent. The vast majority of parties listed are **non-state actors (NSAs)**, who can be difficult to engage with. The International Committee of the Red Cross as well as NGOs such as Geneva Call are uniquely positioned in this regard and their experience should inform the Council's work in this area. Some conflict parties seem to have made clear commitments to engage, are very eager to cooperate and have signed so called "deeds of commitment" to stop violations against children. Nevertheless, not a single NSA has been able to qualify for delisting so far, inter alia due to a lack of knowledge and assistance throughout the process. This has caused frustration and is also a missed opportunity to motivate other NSAs to follow the example of cooperative groups that have successfully been delisted. It is therefore important to support organizations that assist cooperative NSAs in their efforts to achieve delisting. Governments can further facilitate such processes through the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which creates the necessary framework for engagement with NSAs.

Third, I would like to briefly touch upon the issue of **under-age foreign terrorist fighters**. The international community is obviously struggling to find a response to this incredibly complex phenomenon. We have limited knowledge of the root causes, motivation and recruitment

processes in this regard. At the same time, we must not forget that we are talking about children. Their judgement and resulting behavior is that of legal minors. We are looking with great interest at “soft-handed” approaches which are based on the assumption that poverty, discrimination, lack of socialization and the absence of effective integration are generally at the root of radicalization. Instead of an exclusive focus on criminalization, these strategies make use of psychosocial counseling and help returnees find jobs or education opportunities. While we do not claim to know that one approach works better than the other, we see value in exploring a stronger focus on reintegration. What seems to be clear is that a comprehensive response is needed, covering prevention, psychosocial support and integration assistance to complement necessary legal measures.

Mr. President,

In closing, I would like to draw attention to the “**Safe Schools Declaration**” endorsing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use in Armed Conflict. We welcome this elaboration on existing IHL and call upon others to join those of us, including Liechtenstein, who have already endorsed the guidelines at the Safe Schools Conference in Oslo.

I thank you.