



Malaysia²⁵

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

STATEMENT BY

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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA

ON

AGENDA ITEM 101: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION
OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

AT

THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF
THE 59TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK

WEDNESDAY, 20TH OCTOBER 2004

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

1. My delegation would like to express appreciation to Mr. Dileep Nair, Under-Secretary-General for OIOS, Ambassador Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the SG (SRSG) on Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Kul Gautam, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Bacre Ndiaye, Director of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro for presenting their reports to the Third Committee last Monday.

2. Having co-sponsored resolution 58/245, which called for the activities under the mandate of the SRSG to be supported through regular budgetary funding, my delegation had waited with eagerness for the OIOS report to be issued. The report, however, is silent on the issue of funding, other than to state that Member States might wish to consider the best means of financial support for the Office. Having waited almost two years for the report, we find its contents to be rather disappointing.

3. The report makes clear reference to the fact that there continues to be a need for the office of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and that the mandate for such an office should remain as it is now, with perhaps some of the details being spelled out more clearly. In short, the status quo should remain. Having said that, the report does not explain why the SRSG's Office was initially set up outside the ambit of regular budgetary process. Further, the report fails to explain why having subsisted on voluntary funding for close to 8 years, the Office is now faced with the problem of lack of funding. While bearing in mind that the mandate should remain the same, why should there be a need to explore alternative means of funding now? These questions have not been responded to, either in the report or during the dialogue with the Under-Secretary-General for OIOS. We do hope that we can get a further response from the Secretariat on this matter.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The Secretary-General, in his progress report, has described the global picture toward meeting the goals set in the Plan of Action for "A world fit for children" as significantly encouraging in the last one year. This is attributed to a greater number of countries that have taken action to incorporate the goals and commitments agreed during the 2002 Special Session into their national policy and planning instruments. We are indeed encouraged by this development. We nonetheless share the view that despite the various achievements registered by many countries in the promotion and protection of the rights of children, much remains to be done. Millions of children continue to face various challenges in many parts of the world and are subjected to abuse and exploitation, prostitution, poverty and hunger, and deprivation of their rights, including health and education, security and personal protection. Children remain a soft target of criminal activities, including child exploitation. Domestic and sexual abuse, child pornography, prostitution and trade in persons are among crimes that seriously threaten the rights and dignity of children, perpetrated by those who take advantage of the vulnerability and the defenselessness of children.

5. Malaysia reiterates the need for concrete actions to be taken by the international community to ensure that the rights of children are respected and protected. While serious efforts must be taken at the national level by every State to ensure that children are protected from being the target of criminal exploitation, many issues faced by children are closely related to under-development, poverty and conflicts in developing countries. These cannot be solved unless the underlying developmental issues are seriously addressed and the countries concerned provided with the required resources and assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

6. Being a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1995, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to the efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of children. The Malaysian government has successfully embarked on various measures and programmes to ensure that the welfare and social needs of children are well taken care of while protecting their rights.

7. Malaysia's Second National Plan of Action for Children, adopted in 2000, sets out a broad framework of actions and measures to be taken by the Government in addressing all areas of concern affecting social and developmental needs as well as the protection of the rights of children. The introduction of the Child Act 2001 is a crucial step in providing maximum legal protection to children, while other laws have been amended and strengthened to prevent and eliminate the criminal exploitation of children, such as trafficking in children and prostitution. Under the Second Plan of Action, various programmes have already been carried out to strengthen the role of the parent and the family to ensure that children receive adequate parental care and protection.

8. As a developing country, Malaysia has registered remarkable success in providing education to all children. At the rate of 98% enrolment in primary school, the Government has now moved a step further by embarking on the provision of quality education to ensure that children have access to the best learning system to enable them to cope with the rapid progress of the information age. Efforts undertaken in this regard include modernizing schools, ensuring well-trained teachers and equipping all schools with computer laboratories and ICT equipment. The Government's commitment to ensuring the provision of excellent education service to children is further manifested during a Cabinet restructuring exercise carried out in March 2004, which led to the creation of two ministries responsible for education, one for primary and secondary education and a second dedicated to higher education.

9. The adoption of the National Social Policy has further helped to consolidate the Government's commitment towards the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Officially launched on 19 August 2003, the National Social Policy goes a step further in establishing a Malaysian society which is progressive, where every citizen has the opportunity to develop his potential in a healthy social environment based on unity, strength, democracy and fairness, with a view to achieving the goal of a fully developed nation by 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.