



Statement

By

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Item 60 (a): Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children

Item 60 (b): Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children

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Mr. Chairman,

Our thanks go to the Secretary General and the Secretariat for the reports presented under item 60 promotion and protection of the rights of children and sub items.

Lebanon's commitment to promote and protect the rights of each child is unwavering. We are determined to respect the dignity and to secure the well-being of all children.

Lebanon acknowledges that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto contain a comprehensive set of standards for the protection of children. Our commitment to create a world fit for children rests on the principles of democracy, equality, peace and respect for human life that define our values as a Lebanese society.

Children First: Children and the best interests of the child always come first. Lebanon last year identified national planning for preventing and responding to violence against children as a priority. In 2006 a mechanism was put in place for the formulation of an action plan on the situation of children with representatives of the Government and civil society.

Promoting healthy lives: In Lebanon approximately 95 per cent of the population including children has access to basic health services; however, findings reveal that neither the infant mortality rate nor the under-five mortality rates have shown any significant improvement since 1996. The national health system, which is driven primarily by the private sector, tends to promote curative rather than preventive care. My Government has been focusing on developing more effective reproductive health information systems as a means of improving coordination and strengthening decentralization. The national reproductive health programme emphasizes the provision of quality reproductive health services, including emergency obstetric care, within primary health care systems.

In view of regional disparities within the country in key reproductive health indicators, the programme also supports 10 Centers of Excellence for referral services while focusing on underserved areas.

Leave no child behind: Girls and boys are born free and equal in dignity and rights in Lebanon. No forms of discrimination affecting children exist in legal processes. Lebanon has improved the gathering and analysis of data on children, as well as access to the existing legal framework vis-à-vis international human rights norms and standards relating to children.

Educate every child: Lebanon's educated children are one of its best known attributes. All girls and boys have access to complete primary and secondary education that is free and of comparatively very good quality. Education is compulsory at the elementary level. No gender disparities in primary and secondary education exist.

Protect children from harm and exploitation: Lebanon strives to protect its children against acts of violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination. Some legal reform efforts in Lebanon have been comprehensive in their coverage of violence against children, while others have focused on specific issues such as juvenile justice. Lebanon established a special committee to consider amending the juvenile justice laws, including raising the age of criminal responsibility.

Lebanon also established a new residential institution for girls who have breached the law, and a special police unit responsible for questioning delinquent minors and taking statements from young victims.

In Lebanon, efforts to promote non-violent and human rights values include governmental and non-governmental led public awareness campaigns. A national campaign for the protection of children from violence entitled: "Their rights are our duties" was launched in 2006. These efforts have also covered issues as replacing corporal punishment with positive non-violent forms of discipline, in addition to violence in the family, school and the media. Many television programs on violence against children have been broadcasted.

Lebanon during the previous session of the General Assembly played a leading role in the efforts to create an Office of a Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children.

We look forward for the quick establishment of the said office.

Ensure safe labor conditions: Lebanese legislation ensures best safety conditions for children at the workplace by setting the minimum age for employment according to the danger associated with a job and by listing industrial jobs that constitute the utmost danger to children.

Lebanon is undertaking a programme with the International Labor Organization for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor as well as introducing legislative and policy measures to address the economic exploitation of children.

A centre for child victims of sexual violence and another one to combat child labor were established lately. Similarly a children's ombudsperson is under consideration.

Protect children from war: The right to life constitutes the most fundamental of all human rights. Threats to the right to life of children are only the ultimate form of violence against them. This threat to life is clearly manifested against children in armed conflicts. Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict including foreign occupation in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law.

Listen to children and ensure their participation: Lebanon understands that its children are resourceful citizens capable of helping build a better future for all. Despite some social and traditional limitations, the Lebanese government respects the right of

children to express themselves and to participate where appropriate in matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

Several initiatives were undertaken aiming at offering forums for children to freely express their views. In 1996, Lebanon saw the establishment of the first children's parliament whereby children representing various regions and sectors discussed their priorities with the Speaker of the House.

Initiatives to integrate children's rights and children's participation in the school curricula were established, but their impact has not been assessed yet. Workshops aimed at school teachers and child caregivers within various settings were organized. Two training manuals on children's rights and children's participation were developed at the national level and used on various occasions. These initiatives in addition to the National Plan of Action that was formulated last year by the Higher Council of Motherhood and Childhood have contributed to advocacy efforts by making children's participation a main issue on the public agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Above and beyond all the dangers affecting Lebanese children, the biggest risk to the lives of children in South Lebanon is from unexploded ordinances (UXOs) which will take months if not years to clear. This directly harms our children.

Since the cessation of hostilities, hundreds have been killed or wounded by unexploded bombs, mostly sub munitions that landed indiscriminately in civilian areas.

Lebanon condemns the killing of children from all races, dominations and nationalities whether Arab or Israeli and to that end the killing of all civilians. We look forward for a day when children in our rejoin whether in Lebanon, Palestine or Israel can live together in peace.