**SECURITY COUNCIL**

**STATEMENT AS DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCE AMBASSADOR HELDER LUCAS DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE.**

**Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict**

**JUNE 18th, 2015**

Mr. President,

Angola thanks the Malaysian Presidency of the Security Council for convening this Open Debate, over an issue of critical importance in international life: the fate of children caught in the middle of armed conflicts, the suffering they endure and the international community pledge to find solutions to this problem of extreme gravity. The adoption today of Resolution 2225 is a further step in such endeavor.

Children are supposed to live their lives as children, surrounded by love and care, and not have their childhood stolen by war, abduction and abuse.

We welcome the Distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia for presiding over this debate.

We also welcome and thank the remarks by the Secretary General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Ms. Leila Zerrougui; Equal thanks go to the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF Mrs. Yoka Brandt and Ms. Eunice Apio, Director of Facilitation for Peace and Development. We were deep touched by Ms. Apio testimony on the despicable actions of LRA and its consequences.

Mr. President,

We face daunting challenges in the protection of millions of children in countries affected by armed conflict. Just to mention the most notorious cases, in Central African Republic, Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine/Gaza, Afghanistan, Somalia, DRC, children are exposed to the most egregious violations of their fundamental rights, among which the denial of the most basic one – the right to life.

Extreme violence has risen to unprecedented levels. Too often, it targets Children, prompting worldwide outrage.

The latest report of the Secretary General gives a tragic account of such reality worldwide.

Mr. President,

Preventing the outbreak of conflicts is still the best measure to protect children but, unfortunately, the international community still misses the appropriate tools for effective preventive action. Meanwhile, the protection of children in armed conflict is best achieved through a comprehensive strategy of protection and humanitarian response.

The increasing trend in mass abductions, of children is a matter of utmost concern. Abduction is the precursor of other forms of children´s rights violations: abducted children are used as messengers and porters, as spies, as human shields and suicide bombers, they are held as sexual slaves, for ransom, retaliation, and indoctrination by extremist groups for the commission of horrendous crimes.

Devise ways to prevent the abduction of children by armed groups would be the most effective strategy to reduce the number of children combatants and under the yoke of terrorists. However, the success has been disappointing in preventing such trend: in Iraq and Syria over one thousand girls and boys were abducted by ISIL; in Nigeria, Boko Haram abducted hundreds of women and girls in major attacks in Chibok and across the country’s northeast. LRA is the most notorious and abbovient case. Violence and hatred against children seems to be the only motivation for LRA actions.

We condemn in the strongest terms mass abduction of children by armed terrorists groups and call on affected Member States, and the entire international community to do everything in its powers to chase the perpetrators and hold them accountable for such horrific crimes.

We urge for the immediate release of all abducted children and the provision of adequate support to permit them to rebuild their shattered lives, and fulfill their potential. Appropriate measures to rehabilitate and reintegrate those children should be put in place, by concerned States and by International Community actors as matter of priority.

Angola is particularly attached to this issue. We have been affected by the phenomenon and were able to find acceptable solutions for the reintegration of former child soldiers.

Mr. President,

We welcome the expansion of Security Council Resolution 1612 listing criteria, to include abduction as an additional reason for the listing in the annexes of the Secretary General Report, and for the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Children and Armed Conflict, ensuring that those responsible for abductions are identified and held accountable, without using double standards as you Mr. President have righteous pointed out in your Statement.

In this regard, resolution 2225 adopted today, which we were very honored to co-sponsor, expanding the listing criteria, will strengthen the Security Council response to this grave violation against the rights of the children, taking into account that abduction is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Secretary General report highlights liberty deprivation of children due to their alleged association with extremist groups, without due review of the legality of such detentions. The situation of these children should be carefully considered since, many of them, in fact are victims and should be treated as such.

Additionally, Member States must ensure that trial procedures are consistent with international juvenile justice standards, the principle of best interest of the child and their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

Mr. President,

Currently we witnessed an increasing trend of attacks to schools and hospitals. Military forces and Non-State Armed Groups have turned schools into shelters, detention facilities, barracks and war bases.

As a tactic of war, stemming from their basic obscurantism and fundamentalist hatred to the granting of universal education to children, extremist groups target schools, which constitutes an egregious social abuse, by depriving children of their basic right to education and endangering the lives and safety of students and teachers.

Member States and the International Community must do more to protect or help protect schools, students and teachers in situations of armed conflict and ensure that schools remain a safe place, while respecting its civil character.

We recognize that UN Peace Operations play a vital role in the protection of children, the fulfillment of which requires adequate training and we welcome the engagement and progress made by the Children not Soldiers Campaign in its first year of existence.

We further encourage Member States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and to adopt and implement legal measures to prohibit and criminalize the use and recruitment of child soldiers.

We conclude by praising the Malaysian delegation for its commitment, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and its efforts to advance the protection of children caught in the middle of armed conflict. We further praise Malaysia for the efforts to advance the fight against the criminal scourge that abduct children, abuse and use them to commit the most abominable crimes.

Once again we thank Malaysia for providing this opportunity to discuss this very important and critical issue.

I thank You Mr. President!