



MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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

NEW YORK, 25 MARCH 2015

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to commend you for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict during your Presidency of the Council. We believe that the focus of today's debate on children victims of non-State armed groups is timely and important. We are also appreciative of your efforts to synthesize the discussion today and the proposals put forth in a non-paper, which we hope will provide a useful reference in our future work on this issue.

2. I wish to thank Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his remarks as well as Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict and Ms. Yoka Brandt, the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF for their briefings. My delegation also wishes to express our special appreciation to Ms. Julie Bodin and Mr. Junior Nzita for sharing their valuable and insightful experiences on the ground in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

3. Malaysia associates itself with the statement to be delivered by Viet Nam on behalf of ASEAN.

Mr. President,

4. There can be no doubt of our shared international commitment on the preservation and protection of children in situations of armed conflict developed over the past 15 years in the Security Council.

5. We are pleased to recognize that this year marks the 10th anniversary of Resolution 1612 (2005) which endorsed the establishment of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) to document grave violations against children in armed conflict and set up the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict,

which Malaysia is privileged to Chair. Successive Security Council Resolutions and Presidential Statements have further reinforced our resolve and expanded the range of instruments that can be used to shield children from the harms of warfare.

6. Yet the consequences of warfare remain a grim reality for millions of children affected by armed conflict. UNICEF reported that 2014 was the worst year for children with up to 15 million suffering the fallout from armed conflict in CAR, Iraq, South Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria and Ukraine.

7. For instance, last year's war in Gaza had led to the deaths of over 500 Palestinian children, some deliberately targeted and killed while playing at the beach or seeking refuge at UN centres. More than 3,000 children were injured or maimed for life, schools were attacked, 54,000 children were made homeless and at least 373,000 children in Gaza are currently in desperate need of psychosocial support.

8. Clearly more needs to be done to end impunity and prevent grave violations committed against children. In this regard, Malaysia strongly believes that all parties should be held accountable for gross violations of children's rights, be it state, or non-state actors. No one should be allowed to be above the law.

Mr. President,

9. We underline that Governments hold the primary responsibility for the protection of children within their territory. In this light, we are heartened by the progress made in the Children, Not Soldiers campaign which galvanizes Government action to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed forces in seven (7) countries. We call for the strong support of the international community to ensure that the objective of this campaign is achieved by 2016.

10. At the same time, we are conscious of the fact that the bulk of parties listed in the annexes of the Secretary General's report comprises of non-State armed groups. The listings are representative of a wide array of organizations, with a host of diverse motives and operating in vastly different circumstances. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that there can be no one-size-fits all approach in addressing non-State armed groups – each must be dealt with taking into account the unique contexts in which they operate. In this regard, we believe that further analysis on non-State armed groups would be valuable to ensure a tailored approach both by operational actors on the ground as well as at the Security Council.

Mr. President,

11. Our discussion today raises crucial questions on how the tools at our disposal can be best used to influence non-State armed groups to safeguard the lives of children. We wish to highlight several of non-exhaustive areas where we believe concrete action can be undertaken in this regard.

12. We emphasize the importance for the UN and Member States to consult and cooperate closely with each other in dealing with non-State armed groups to ensure that sustainable measures to improve the situation of children in armed conflict can be undertaken.

13. Malaysia views that peace processes provide a critical forum of engagement with non-State armed groups and calls for child protection provisions to be integrated into all peace processes, negotiations and agreements. In relation to this, we recognize the great value of the Guidance for Mediators in addressing conflict-related sexual violence in ceasefire and peace agreements issued by the Mediation Support Unit of the UN Department of Political Affairs in 2012. We believe that a similar guidance note to address grave violations against children would provide a much-needed reference to ensure that child protection concerns mainstreamed into ceasefire and peace agreements.

Mr. President,

14. In January this year, the international community was shocked by the use of a seven-year-old girl by Boko Haram as a suicide bomber, tragically killing herself and five others at a marketplace in Nigeria. We express our strongest condemnation over the gross violations and abuses committed by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and ISIL against children, including the recruitment and use of children as combatants, suicide bombers and executioners.

15. We are also deeply concerned over the alarming trend of abduction of children by terrorist groups and militias. Hundreds of children have been abducted in the past year by armed groups in Africa and the Middle East, many whose fates are still unknown, including the 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, Nigeria taken in April 2014. Others, such as the 89 boys abducted in South Sudan in February 2015 have been forcibly recruited for combat purposes.

16. While the horrific mass abductions have brought widespread attention to these occurrences at the international stage, abduction has long been used as a tactic by non-State armed groups and is often the precursor to other grave violations. We continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all children held captive by armed groups. In this regard, we believe that it is timely for the Security Council to underscore its condemnation of child abduction by recognizing abduction in armed conflict as a trigger for listing in the annexes of the Secretary General's annual report.

Mr. President,

17. We must be clear that ending and preventing grave violations against children is only one side of the coin. Equally important is ensuring that mechanisms and programmes are in place to facilitate the reintegration and rehabilitation of children that have been victimized by armed groups back into their communities. In this regard, the

Paris Principles remain an instrumental framework that continues to guide efforts in the release and reintegration of children associated with armed groups.

18. As the Principles themselves detail, the special needs of girls, who are at greater risk of rape and sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, must be taken into account in reintegration strategies. We also wish to highlight the plight of second-generation victims of armed conflict, namely the children born of war and the need to recognize this segment as a victim group in post-conflict settings.

19. We emphasise that reintegration is a long-term effort that requires the collective responsibility of all stakeholders, including the international community. In this regard, we also fully support community-based reintegration programmes that can foster a spirit of unity and reconciliation amongst communities that have been ravaged by war.

Mr. President,

20. In conclusion, the concerted efforts of all actors is vital in reigning in and ending the grievous violations and abuses committed against children, whether by states or non-state actors. I assure you of my delegation's commitment to play a constructive role towards this end.

I thank you.