

Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, Charge d’Affairs, at United Nations Security Council’s Open Debate on Children And Armed Conflict, on September 19, 2012

Thank you, Mr. President.

Let me at the outset thank you for organizing today’s Open Debate on the issue of Children and Armed Conflict. I want to congratulate Ms Leila Zerrougui on her appointment as the new SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict. We wish her great success and look forward to closely working with her. I would also like to thank our briefers today for their statements.

2. Mr. President, children constitute a third of humanity and the most important third as they represent our future. Being also the weakest and most susceptible, it is imperative that all of us nationally and as members of the international community act for their well being and development. Situations of armed conflict, per-se, are situations of suffering but children tend to be the worst affected. We, therefore, firmly believe that the international community has the responsibility, and indeed the obligation, to do its utmost to provide succor to children affected by armed conflict.

3. We have engaged constructively in the ongoing efforts to make the United Nations more relevant and effective in the area of children affected by armed conflict. We have also actively engaged in the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to address the plight of children in situations on the agenda of the Security Council.

4. As the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations over the past six decades, Indian peacekeepers have been at the forefront of creating an environment of peace and security in which national authorities can fulfill their obligations towards the most vulnerable sections of those affected by the armed conflict. Based on our wide-ranging experience, we wish to stress that the major challenge is the question of resources. While some members of the international community never tire of pushing to expand the mandate, they are unwilling to provide adequate resources even for meeting the requirements of the agreed mandate.

5. Mr. President, since the adoption of resolution 1379 that brought the issue of Children and Armed Conflict on the Security Council’s agenda in 2001, significant progress has been made and the United Nations deserves credit for the same. However, a lot more remains to be done. As the new SRSG commences her work, we think that it is the right time to take stock of the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council and consider the way forward. We are sure that today’s debate will allow reflection on the functioning of the UN processes and mechanisms, and help us identify gaps and address them.

6. Let me, therefore, underscore our key concern, which has also found an echo in the words of several delegations that have spoken before me today. We believe that the earlier this is addressed, the better the result will be for children in armed conflict. This will also help rebuild the consensus that the issue had so far had in this Council. And I must add that is important.

7. OP16 of resolution 1379 requested the Secretary General to report on situations that are on the Security Council's agenda or that may be brought to the attention of the Security Council by the Secretary General, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter, which in his opinion threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. All subsequent resolutions, including resolution 1882 that makes reference to other situations of concern, draw their legitimacy from OP16 of 1379. In spite of this clearly spelt out mandate, the Secretary General's reports include situations which do not meet the threshold of armed conflict or threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. The fact that the legal Counsel also has issues with such referencing should have led to their removal, not the continued inclusion of such situations with a blasé disclaimer. This should be rectified and the mandate strictly adhered to.

8. Mandate creep also distracts from urgently addressing the plight of children in situations of armed conflicts that are on the Council agenda, where lack of resources is the critical problem for relevant UN entities.

9. The monitoring and reporting mechanism of the UN envisages the involvement and close cooperation with the country concerned. In addition to ensuring the veracity and reliability of data collection, developing such capacity will significantly assist the country concerned in its fight against impunity and ensuring accountability. It is also important that UN access to armed groups is carried under the cooperation framework between the UN and the concerned government. This will be in keeping with both the letter and the spirit of the Council's resolutions.

10. Mr. President, it is important that there is regular and substantive consultation between the Working Group on children and armed conflict and the SRSG on the implementation of the relevant resolutions, including of provisions concerning listing, delisting, persistent perpetrators, impunity and accountability, etc.

11. In conclusion, let me reiterate India's strong support for the UN on issue of children and armed conflict and reaffirm that India will continue to work closely on the issue of children and armed conflict with a view to increasing efficiency, cost effectiveness and impact of UN efforts and those of Member States in dealing with this important issue.

I thank you.

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