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Statement by

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at the Open Debate on "Children and armed conflict" at the Security Council

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating Germany on its assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of July 2011 and for scheduling this open debate on children and armed conflict. I thank the Foreign Minister of Germany, Guido Westerwelle for chairing this important meeting. I appreciate the distinguished Ministers for their presence and statements, which is a clear testimony of the issue's importance to all of us. Allow me also to express our sincere thanks to the Secretary General, the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy and the ED of UNICEF, Anthony Lake, for their elaborative briefing this morning.

Mr. President,

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his tenth report on the issue, contained in document S/2011/250. We believe that his recommendations merit careful consideration and subsequent implementation and compliance by Member States and parties to armed conflict.

We commend the Security Council for their continued efforts in ending violations against children in armed conflict. These include, the Secretary General's "naming and shaming" list, the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM), action plans, the creation of a Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict through Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), application of sanctions and referrals to the International Criminal Court.

Those initiatives have yielded significant and tangible successes. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report, last year, too, several listed parties to armed conflict signed agreements to adopt action plans to end their recruitment or use of child soldiers. The United Nations system-wide response to this issue is also laudable. In that connection, I take this opportunity to thank UNICEF for its leadership role in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The SRSG and her team deserve our particular praise for their dedicated efforts.

Mr. President,

While addressing this matter, we have to focus a bit more on the supply side of the issue. The use of children by non-State armed groups does not take place in a vacuum. Conditions that might make children in those settings vulnerable to recruitment include poverty, discrimination, inequality, exclusion, hopelessness and desperate situations. They also include a culture of political violence, tensions over issues of religion and identity and a history of the use of child soldiers, all of which combine to create a situation where conflict is possible and where children can be used or abused by armed groups. Success in ending children's involvement in armed conflicts therefore depends largely on addressing the root causes of motivation and

desperation and on building societies where the rights and dignity and the hope for a better future of all children are upheld.

Needless to say, we still have a long way to go. While progress has been made through action plans to release child soldiers in several situations of concern, the overall situation of children in armed conflict remains grave.

Mr. President,

There are 61 entities on the list contained in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report, out of which, 16 have been there for at least 5 years. Some kind of enforcement criteria should be contemplated to make parties listed in the annexes, particularly persistent violators, comply fully with the action plans in a time-bound manner. Caution, however, has to be taken to make sure that such enforcement, in no way, hurts the very vulnerable group, we are addressing here: children.

The issues of child casualties in the course of military operations need to be appropriately addressed. In line with paragraph 220 of the Secretary-General's report, we hope that all parties in situations of armed conflict will adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

Apart from the above, in many armed conflicts, grave violations are being committed against children, in particular the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence against children, the abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to armed conflict in contravention of applicable international laws. In this regard, I particularly urge the concerned parties to protect education and health institutions and personnel from such attack. We also welcome the adoption of resolution today in this regard.

Mr. President,

It has been more than 9 years since the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict* entered into force. Bangladesh signed and ratified this protocol back on 09 September, 2000. However, we note with sadness that a total of fifty States Members of the United Nations are still not party to it. We would like to urge those States to become parties to the Protocol. Children are the future of our world and they bear the torch of the culture of peace. It is our solemn duty to protect their physical safety and their right to live on planet Earth with their minds free of fear and filled with hopes and dreams.

I thank you, Mr. President.