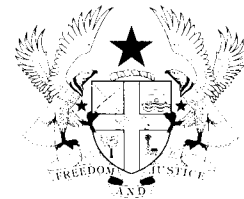


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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. LESLIE K. CHRISTIAN
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF GHANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON

AGENDA ITEM 66: (A) PROMOTION AND
PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN, AND
(B) FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE
SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN

AT THE

THIRD COMMITTEE OF THE 62ND SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 18 OCTOBER, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's comprehensive **reports** submitted under this agenda item. The contents of the report are of great interest to us. Ghana places a high priority on promoting and protecting the rights of the child. Accordingly, it has put in place measures aimed at addressing the core issues that will ensure a better future for children. In this regard, let me briefly address three issues that are of particular interest to my delegation.

A. Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children

In December, 2007, the General Assembly will review commitments set out in the final document of the special session on children, "A world fit for children". This will mark the fifth year after the adoption of this historic document. My delegation is encouraged by the Secretary-General's follow-up report indicating visible signs of progress in implementing the outcome of the special session. But at the same time we are wary of the observation that our failure to achieve the goals of 2002 will significantly undermine efforts towards achieving other equally important goals particularly, the United Nation Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

It is our expectation that this highly important review meeting will create the momentum for a scaled-up response by Governments and other stakeholders and proffer new ways of confronting the challenges that we face in order to expedite our efforts to attain the goals that we five years ago. Ghana reiterates its firm commitment to achieving these goals, and we would share our good practices at the forthcoming high-level meeting.

B. Violence against Children

My government welcomes the report by Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the Independent Expert directing the Secretary-General's first comprehensive in-depth study on violence against children. This report has provided us with information on the dissemination of the study on and progress made in the initial phase of follow up to the study. We appreciate that the study's recommendation has catalysed action globally, especially since it occurred at a very early stage. The future of our world depends to a large extent on the responsible actions we take today to safeguard the welfare and well-being of our children. Many countries have accepted international treaties that require them to guarantee the protection of children. Some countries, however, are yet to establish monitoring and response mechanisms.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on Children's Rights continue to provide an important monitoring instrument at the national level in Ghana. We have worked hard at the national level in the area of children's rights and developed various strategies to prevent all forms of violence against children.

The Government of Ghana fully recognizes the urgency of the task ahead and agrees that the study's recommendations offer a comprehensive framework for the protection of children from all forms of violence at the national, regional and international levels. However, we note also that Governments that are committed to this cause continue to be challenged by institutional capacity weaknesses. For these countries, the overarching goals of the study would be achieved if resource allocation were increased for actions on children.

C. Children and Armed Conflict

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her briefing and welcome her report as well as the Gracia Machel 10-year Strategic Review. My Government is particularly supportive of her advocacy and dialogue strategy with parties to conflict.

We are happy to note that over the years tangible progress has been made that has created a strong momentum for the children and armed conflict agenda and also provided a more extensive global awareness of the issue. The Security Council has played an important role in this area through its adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). The existing monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict is duly applied in the concerned countries and provides objective, timely and reliable information on violations.

Collaborative efforts among the Office, of Special Representatives, multi-stakeholders such as UNICEF, Member States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups as well as children themselves have resulted in admirable advances. Significant progress in the development of field programmes and training of field personnel, such as Child Protection Advisers to United Nations peacekeeping operations cannot go unmentioned.

The report before us acknowledges measures that have been taken to address the situation of children particularly through the progressive legislative structures and commitment to DDR programmes. However, in many situations of conflict considerable distance still exists between strong child protection standards and norms and the actual situation for children on the ground. We are alarmed that rape is being used as a weapon of war and, children particularly girls are the

target of grave sexual violence. More disturbing is the fact that the climate of impunity is flourishing and such violations go undetected and unpunished. In cases where the continuing recruitment of children is no longer a central issue, reintegration of children into society remains challenging. The SRSG in her report has highlighted emerging critical issues of concern such as the security of camps for IDPs and refugees where children are most susceptible and vulnerable to recruitment and other grave violations. The negative impact of armed conflict on children cannot be underestimated.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the delegation of Ghana wishes to reiterate its concern about the situation of children affected by armed conflict and urge all Member States that have not already done so to sign, ratify and fully implement the corresponding relevant international instruments. The various reports before this Committee propose excellent and comprehensive recommendations to improve the protection of children. As noted in the 1996 landmark Machel study, "war violates every right of the child"- the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to development of the personality and the right to be nurtured and protected". The international community must intensify efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict and mitigate their suffering from the atrocities of war.

I thank you.