

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



The Special Court took part yesterday in The Hague International Day. For more photos, see today's 'Special Court Supplement'

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Monday, 24 September 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

Local News	
Beyond The TRC: The Case of Sierra Leone / <i>Standard Times</i>	Pages 3-4
Sierra Leone: Koroma Unveils Women's Situation Room Today / <i>Concord Times</i>	Page 5
International News	
Security Council Adopts Resolution Stating Readiness to Impose Sanctions... / <i>UN News</i>	Pages 6-25
No liberty for Liberian Women as Rapes Continue / <i>GlobalPost</i>	Pages 26-28
Special Court Supplement	
The Special Court at The Hague International Day / <i>OPA</i>	Page 29

Standard Times

Monday, 24 September 2012

Beyond The TRC: The Case of Sierra Leone

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

*(Courtesy Professor George Carew, Vice
President for Academic Affairs, United
Methodist University Monrovia, Liberia)*

PART THREE

For quite some time I have been brooding over the relationship between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court since we had both in this Country.

I have been considering the Link between a TRC and any Special Court as being complimentary. And furthermore, whether it addressed the constitutional and political issues adequately that are so crucial in reconciliation and justice. Well Prof. George Carew, a Philosopher has thrown light on it using the case of Sierra Leone. Please read his piece in series under this column. Now Part Three:

The Invention of the Sierra Leone State

Arthur Abraham, in his critical survey of the history of pre-colonial Sierra Leone, exposed the methodical device employed by the colonial power to absorb territories into colonial space. Pre-colonial "Sierra Leone" was in the process of state formation when it was absorbed into colonial space and christened Sierra Leone. It took many decades to complete the process of transformation into a colonial entity because the process did not only incorporate disparate ethnic groups but also two distinct nations into a colonial state. This was at the heart of the colonial state's weakness. It was in the interest of the colonial power to keep their colonies structurally weak because it made them incapable of mounting any serious challenge to colonial authority. By playing one ethnic group against the other, it sowed the seed of disunity in the state; consequently the growth of civil society was stifled because of the lack of opportunity for freedom of expression and dissent. In diverse ways the colonial authority perpetuated the myth of ethnic particularity and distinctness to foster separatist tendencies. The ultimate goal was to render their colonial subjects powerless and voiceless. Because they succeeded in this venture, civil society under colonial rule was underdeveloped.

These structural constraints were evident in the way the colonial authorities dealt with Sierra Leone. "Rather than constructing a unified Sierra Leone" Rothenberg concludes, "the colonial government effectively created two nations in the same land." That constitutional provisions provided for two independent entities, the colony and protectorate, did not prevent the colonial government from harnessing the support of one state against the other state on all matters of interest to the colonial government.

Ultimately treaties of friendship with rural chiefs subsequently became articles of surrender in the final stages of the consolidation of colonial statehood. The taxation of protectorate and the brutal actions taken to crush legitimate opposition to its sealed the fate the protectorate as an integral part of the colony of Sierra Leone. Yet the refusal to formally recognize the homogeneity of the Sierra Leone



Author



colony remained a sore point with the educated elites in the colony of Freetown. As early as 1924 Shorunke Sawyer, a prominent lawyer in Freetown urged without success, the colonial government to legalize the union of the two "nations". The division between the colony and the protectorate crystallized eventually into political fault-lines as the state of Sierra Leone approached independence. Consequently, the emerging political parties under a unified constitution were divided along national and ethnic lines.

At the behest of the colonial government, the various ethnic groups in the protectorate came together to form the Sierra Leone people's party, (SLPP). This was a momentous occasion in the history of Sierra Leone politics because the colonial government for the very first time allowed all the chiefs in the protectorate to assemble in Bo and together with the educated elites in the protectorate they decided the leadership of the SLPP. Milton Margai was elected head of the SLPP.

However, the 1947 constitution unified the colony and protectorate had arrived too late despite numerous requests earlier for this reform. In his inaugural address to members of the SLPP in Bo, Milton Margai, a man of admirable qualities, expressed what the unifying principle of his party was: "If the 30,000 non-natives in Freetown attempted to sabotage our government, even the seats in Freetown will be occupied by our countrymen." On the other side of the political divide, Bankole Bright was echoing almost identical opposing sentiments. He expressed objection to what he referred to as "the preponderance of foreigners in our legislature." By foreigners, he meant people from the protectorate. It is undoubted ominous that of the eve of independence what was manifested was not a unified nation-state but rather two un-reconciled nations set on a collision course.

The internal dynamics of the Sierra Leone Colonial state, with its deep ethnic and national cleavages, was the outcome of a deliberate colonial policy. As Sierra Leone approached independence, it was becoming obvious that the Freetown colony which had only a fraction of Sierra Leone's population was at a great disadvantage. Fearing political domination and exclusion, prominent members of the creole ethnic group took the matter to the Privy Council, the highest court of appeal in Britain. It was a futile exercise because the colonial government was fully committed to an independent Sierra Leone. The tragedy was that the colonial powers did not have a coherent response to the problem that was to be posed by the politics of domination. Liberal procedural democracy which was adopted

at independence was grounded in the conception of a unified homogenous state. This idea, however, is conceptually hostile to difference and cultural pluralism.

The implications of the 1957 Elections

The 1957 elections which the SLPP won decisively confirmed the worst fears of the Western area of the colony, namely, political marginalization. The colony of Freetown which coexisted with the colonial protectorate in colonial times resigned itself to the possibility of political oblivion after the 1957 elections. The victorious SLPP on the other hand, had a crisis of its own in the making that threatened the very unity of the party. It was about the pace of Africanization. The leader of the SLPP, Milton Margai, defended a cautious approach to the question. He argued that colonial civil servants should be replaced by Sierra Leonean only after the latter had acquired sufficient training and experience. He envisioned an efficient and independent bureaucracy as vital to the progress and development of Sierra Leone. But most of the young professionals in the party, including his own brother, Albert, saw little merit in Dr. Margai's strategy.

The opposition to Dr. Margai's policy launched a leadership challenges which eventually altered the part Sierra Leone's politics was to follow. Milton Margai had promised to lead Sierra Leone to independence "with clean hands". He delivered on that promise.

Yet on the important question of an efficient bureaucracy free from political interference, Milton Margai did not have the support of the majority in his party who in their natural eagerness to occupy the positions vacated by the expatriate staff did not consider the implications of the politicization of the civil service. The irony is that while Milton Margai was able to lead Sierra Leone to independence with clean hands, he could not after independence guarantee that Sierra Leone would follow the party accountability and good governance. The fact that Milton Margai was defeated on a principled issue represents the failure of Sierra Leone's political elite to escape the trap of patrimonial politics. The alternative to an administrative state, which is patronage politics, would no doubt bankrupt the state at the same time as it corrupts its officials.

From the standpoint of my analysis, the decision to follow the path of patrimonial politics was the beginning of the slippery slope that culminated in the collapsed state.

Subsequent heads of state who came after Milton Margai, that is, Albert Margai, Siaka Stevens, and Mornoh were unable to alter the path politics. With

the help of an enclave economy, the politics of Sierra Leone utilized the proceeds of the diamond industry to support the complex network of a patron-client system. But as the resources of the diamond industry diminished, state offers dried up, undermining the political leadership's capacity to sustain the patron-client network. Thus the path of state collapse was now inevitable.

In sum, following the 1957 elections, the Freetown colony as a nation was subdued by the dominance of the SLPP in the political life of Sierra Leone. The SLPP however was faced with a crucial choice between an accelerated process of Africanization and a gradual process of Africanization. Its choice of immediate Africanization is at the heart of the current crisis in Sierra Leone's politics.

Most independent African states are on record for choosing the path of immediate Africanization in all areas of public life. They wrongly presumed that independence might be compromised if the colonial bureaucracy was not completely dismantled. But not all African states shared this view. Botswana is a case in point. Like Sierra Leone, it inherited a weak state. The skilled expatriate labour that manned its civil service had deliberately stifled the development of the local labour force. Yet Botswana, unlike Sierra Leone, made the strategic decision to adopt a gradual approach to develop an efficient and transparent bureaucracy.

This was key to its democratic future and economic development. According to G. Gunderson, Botswana was experimenting with an "administrative state". He comments: from the natives" (Gunderson 1970).

The political leadership led by two men in particular, Seretse Khama and Quett Masire, understood than an efficient and professional civil service was vital for transcending the structural weaknesses of the colonially inherited weak state. An efficient and transparent civil service will uncouple the weak state's affinity for personal rule, creating an environment for grounding democratic norms and practices. As one commentary puts it, "this political-bureaucratic relationship produced a relatively strong state system in Botswana where probity relative autonomy and competence have been nurtured and sustained" (Raphaeli et al, 1984; Picard, 1987 P. 10). The politicians set out clearly defined goals and objectives, which the bureaucrats implemented. This proves that the gradual approach to the Africanization of the administrative state was the correct policy.

Botswana has transcended the weak state status and is today one of the few consolidated democracies in Africa. Because of its stable political climate and efficient bureaucracy Botswana has not only able to absorb aid, but has also attracted a great deal of foreign investment. By contrast, Sierra Leone had followed the path of neopatrimonialism

Therefore, rather than transacted the weak state status, it actually reinforced it. The institutionalization of corruption which is the logical outcome of this short-sighted policy undermined the state's capacity to absorb aid and to undertake meaningful developmental projects. Thus, state collapse was inevitable, but for donor intervention.

In sum, the historical analysis of the weak state explains its affinity for personal rule.

This connection, as the case study of Botswana showed is contingent. Nevertheless, if the weak state status is not repaired, as the case of Sierra Leone has demonstrated, it creates a culture that institutionalizes such practices as corruption, neologism and prebendalism (the use of public office for personal gain). This means a post-conflict state is not really out of danger if it remains grounded in the politics of personal rule. Since the TRC report had failed to highlight the structural factors of the crisis, choosing instead to ground the problem in socio-economic factors, it did not establish the foundation for meaningful constitutional reform. How and in what way then is it possible for the TRC to reclaim its mandate? Formulating a response to the question requires that we consider civil society as an alternative site for locating the TRC.

The taxation of
correctorate and the
brutal actions taken
to crush legitimate
opposition to its sealed
the fate the protectorate
as an integral part
of the colony of
Sierra Leone

Concord Times (Online)

Friday, 21 September 2012

Sierra Leone: Koroma Unveils Women's Situation Room Today

By Hawa Amara

President Ernest Koroma will today unveil the Women's Situation Room at the Family Kingdom in the western part of Freetown.

The event will also witness the signing of the peace cloth as a commitment to peaceful elections by President Koroma and all political leaders across the board.

According to the Communications Officer of United Nations Women, Emma Vincent, the Women's Situation Room initiative originated from among women in the country to mobilize, harness and employ the expertise and experiences of women to take actions to prevent or mitigate potential conflicts and other threats before, during and after the November 17 elections.

"It will create a space for consultative engagements with all electoral stakeholders and women to be involved in peace advocacy, political analysis, observation and documentation," she said.

She disclosed that high level dignitaries from the sub-region, UN officials, key stakeholders in Sierra Leone and thousands of women from across the country will attend the ceremony **which will be chaired by the Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Madam Binta Mansaray.**

"The UN family in Sierra Leone is also celebrating another UN Open Day in close collaboration with the women in this country. Women will deliver their messages to the Executive Representative of the Secretary General, Jens Anders Toyberg-Frandzen at the Family Kingdom today," she disclosed.

United Nations News Centre

Wednesday, 19 September 2012

Security Council Adopts Resolution Stating Readiness to Impose Sanctions on Armed Groups Persistently Violating Rights of Children

Resolution 2068 (2012) Passes by 11 Votes in Favour, 0 Against, 4 Abstentions

The Security Council today stated its readiness to adopt targeted sanctions against parties that persistently violated the rights of children in armed conflict, strongly condemning their recruitment, killing, maiming, sexual abuse, abduction and denial of aid, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals, ahead of a debate on the topic that drew some 60 speakers.

Adopting resolution 2068 (2012) by a vote of 11 in favour, to none against with four abstentions (Azerbaijan, China, Pakistan, Russian Federation), the Council expressed deep concern that certain perpetrators persisted in committing violations, and called on Member States to bring them to justice through national judicial systems and, where applicable, international mechanisms.

In addition, the Council called again on the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to consider within a year, with the support of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, "a broad range of options for increasing pressure on persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict". Also by the text, it welcomed the appointment of Leila Zerrougui as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

According to the Secretary-General's latest report and the concept note by Germany, which holds the Council's rotating Council for this month, despite evidence of progress on stemming abuse of children in situations of armed conflict, particularly through action plans for their release by armed groups, there is grave concern over the growing number of parties to conflict listed for five years or more as perpetrators, currently 32. They are named in annexes to the Secretary-General's report.

After the vote, China's representative said he had abstained because the draft had been hastily put to the vote without adequate consultation, adding that the Council should help States in fighting terrorism rather than creating additional obstacles for them. Azerbaijan's representative, mentioning violations committed in his country, said he had abstained because the text had not succeeded in avoiding selectivity when comprehensively addressing the situation of children in armed conflict, and also served to increase uncertainty. Colombia's representative said that while he had voted in favour, greater emphasis was needed on strengthening national capacity-building to help Governments achieve effective child protection through policies instituted in open consultative processes.

Delivering briefings following the action were Ms. Zerrougui as well as Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Anthony Lake, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and David Tolbert, President of the International Centre for Transitional Justice.

"There has been tremendous progress, more than we have seen in previous years," said Ms. Zerrougui in presenting the Secretary-General's report. "However, violations continue to be committed against children, and the number of persistent violators has increased." Action plans for the release of children held by armed groups and the end of their recruitment, negotiated with listed parties, had been shown to be an effective tool, she added.

Mr. Ladsous emphasized the partnership between Ms. Zerrougui's office and his own, saying that current multidimensional peacekeeping operations, deploying child protection advisers, provided a platform to

combine political, justice, human rights, gender, child protection and other civilian expertise with military, police and correction experts as well as myriad logistic and operational capabilities.

Mr. Lake outlined the close cooperation between UNICEF, Governments and communities in protecting and rehabilitating children affected by conflict and stressed the magnitude of the task of ensuring a future for them.

Mr. Tolbert said it was critical to "leverage" international judicial decisions, such as the conviction of Thomas Lubanga for recruiting children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in order to spur national action against impunity. He urged international support for national court decisions awarding reparations to victims, as well as other support for victims and those affected by forced child recruitment.

In the debate following those presentations, many speakers expressed disappointment that the Council had been unable to reach consensus on the resolution adopted today, while most welcomed the progress made on protecting children, particularly through action plans for their release by armed groups. At the same time, most speakers stressed their continuing deep concern over the plight of children remaining in the grip of armed groups, as well as those affected by violence. Particular concern was expressed over the situation of children in Syria.

On specific measures for dealing with persistent perpetrators, many speakers supported measures through existing sanctions committees and some supported the establishment of a thematic sanctions committee. Colombia's representative, expanding on his explanation of vote, said it was important to differentiate situations on the Council's agenda from those not on it, and underscored the difficulty of international measures to target non-State armed groups. Most speakers, however, emphasized the need to consider a range of approaches for ending impunity, stressing the urgency of the effort. "Any boy or girl that we save from the scourge of war represents hope for a better future," said Italy's representative.

Also speaking today were representatives of the United States, Morocco, Russian Federation, France, Portugal, South Africa, Togo, United Kingdom, Pakistan, India, Guatemala, Germany, Japan, Brazil, Israel, Canada, Argentina, Mexico, Luxembourg, Switzerland (on behalf of the Human Security Network), Finland (on behalf of the Nordic Countries), Estonia, Republic of Korea, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liechtenstein, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Thailand, Belgium, Syria, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand, Uruguay, Philippines, Viet Nam, Sudan, Afghanistan and Malaysia. The representative of the European Union delegation also delivered a statement.

The meeting began at 10:20 a.m. and suspended at 1:20 p.m. Resuming at 3:12 p.m., it adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Resolution

The full text of resolution 2068 (2012) reads as follows:

"The Security Council,

"Reaffirming its resolutions 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, 1314 (2000) of 11 August 2000, 1379 (2001) of 20 November 2001, 1460 (2003) of 30 January 2003, 1539 (2004) of 22 April 2004, 1612 (2005) of 26 July 2005, 1882 (2009) of 4 August 2009 and 1998 (2011) of 12 July 2011, and all relevant Statements of its President, which contribute to a comprehensive framework for addressing the protection of children affected by armed conflict,

"Reiterating its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and, in this connection, its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children,

"Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 26 April 2012 (A/66/782-S/2012/261) and stressing that the present resolution does not seek to make any legal determination as to whether situations which are referred to in the Secretary-General's report are or are not armed conflicts within the context of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, nor does it prejudge the legal status of the non-State parties involved in these situations,

"Stressing the primary role of Governments in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict, and reiterating that all actions undertaken by United Nations entities within the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be designed to support and supplement, as appropriate, the protection and rehabilitation roles of national Governments,

"Stressing the importance of comprehensively protecting children in all situations of armed conflict,

Acknowledging that the implementation of its resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011) has generated progress, in particular the demobilization of thousands of children, the signing of action plans between parties to armed conflict and the United Nations and the delisting of parties to conflict from the Annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report,

Remaining deeply concerned over the lack of progress on the ground in some situations of armed conflict, where parties to conflict continue to violate with impunity the relevant provisions of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict,

"Recognizing the importance of strengthening national capacities for the protection, reintegration and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict, bearing in mind national ownership,

"Recalling the responsibilities of States to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children,

"Stressing the need for alleged perpetrators of crimes against children in situations of armed conflict to be brought to justice through national justice systems and, where applicable, international justice mechanisms and mixed criminal courts and tribunals in order to end impunity,

"Noting also relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,

"1. Welcomes the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and highlights the importance of her work in carrying out her mandate for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions;

"2. Strongly condemns all violations of applicable international law involving the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict as well as their re-recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and/or hospitals as well as denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict and demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children;

"3. Expresses deep concern that certain perpetrators persist in committing violations and abuses against children in situations of armed conflict in open disregard of its resolutions on the matter, and in this regard:

(a) Calls upon Member States concerned to bring to justice those responsible for such violations through national justice systems, and where applicable, international justice mechanisms;

(b) Reiterates its readiness to adopt targeted and graduated measures against persistent perpetrators, taking into account relevant provisions of its resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011);

"4. Invites the SRSB to brief the Security Council on questions relating to the delisting process and progress made, enabling an exchange of views;

"5. Reiterates its call upon the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to consider, with the support of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, within one year, a broad range of options for increasing pressure on persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflict;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to submit annual reports to the Council on the implementation of its resolutions and Presidential statements on children and armed conflict, and to submit his next report by June 2013;

"7. Decides to remain actively seized of this matter."

Background

The Security Council had before it the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (document S/2012/261), which provides information on grave violations against children in the period from January to December 2011, including recruitment, sexual violence, killing, maiming, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to conflict. The report also describes progress made by parties to conflict on dialogue and action plans to halt such violations, as well as on the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups. It covers 23 country situations, 16 of which are on the agenda of the Security Council and 7 which are not. The situations of Libya and Syria have been added since the last such report, while those in Haiti and Burundi have been removed.

Reviewing progress, the Secretary-General welcomes the signing of action plans by the Afghan National Security Forces in Afghanistan, the Armée nationale tchadienne in Chad, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in South Sudan and parties in the Central African Republic. He also welcomes progress made by parties in releasing children, and in addressing impunity for perpetrators through investigations and prosecutions. He strongly urges listed parties who have not concluded action plans to do so without delay, in conjunction with the respective country task forces on monitoring and reporting. With an increase of action plans signed and under negotiation, he urges donors to address, as a matter of priority, the funding gaps for their implementation.

In addition, he calls for increased humanitarian and monitoring access to children in conflict situations, more action by parties to end violations of children's rights, pressure on parties in conflict by Member States in that regard and review of tactics by all combatants to ensure that children's rights are protected. He also welcomes the ongoing campaign to encourage universal accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

The Council also had before it a concept note for the debate by the German Presidency (document S/2012/685), proposing the theme: "Children and armed conflict - increased accountability for violations and abuses committed against children." The note says that the Secretary-General's report shows evidence of progress, but also evinces grave concern over the growing number of persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children (currently 32 parties listed for five years or more).

The Security Council, according to the note, has repeatedly underlined its intention to increase pressure on persistent perpetrators and discuss ways and means to better address issues of impunity and

accountability. Today's open debate, it says, will give all United Nations members and observers an opportunity to discuss ways to increase accountability for perpetrators, and other ways to better protect children in armed conflict.

Statements

LEILA ZERROUGUI, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, introducing the Secretary-General's report (see Background), said that "There has been tremendous progress, more than we have seen in previous years." However, violations continue to be committed against children, and the number of persistent violators had increased.

Action plans had been generally accepted by listed State and non-State parties as a unique tool that could successfully lead to delisting, she said, noting that in 2011 alone, two parties, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist in Nepal and the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal in Sri Lanka, had been delisted. "But this is not just about adding or removing a party from a list," she said. "This is about children."

Action plans were both a process and a tool to bring parties into compliance and stop violations against children. To date, 20 action plans had been completed and were in the process of being implemented. Most recently, she said the action plan with the Democratic Republic of the Congo was expected to be signed in the coming weeks.

Maintaining sufficient and dedicated child protection capacities in peacekeeping and special political missions was key to the implementation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and to the successful conduct of dialogue with parties to conflict, she said. "Though much positive process has been achieved, our work is hardly accomplished," she said.

Highlighting some of the Secretary-General's report, she noted that of 52 parties listed, 32 persistent perpetrators had been listed for 5 years and the "cost of inaction has been too high." It was time for the Council to act. She then mentioned proposals requested by her predecessor and proposed, in a paper by former French representative Jean Marc de la Sablière on the way forward, following the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011), notably a menu of options that could be considered by the Council against these persistent perpetrators. These included increased tailored political engagement of the council, strengthened accountability measures and targeted measures, if necessary, she said. That could be done in an incremental manner, starting with those individuals in situations for which a sanctions committee was already in place.

"It would send a strong signal that the resolutions of this Council are not only words on paper, and that vigorous action can be taken when they are not implemented," she said.

She then pointed to the tremendous changes and challenges, including new threats against children in Libya, Syria and Mali that the Council and her office must address. For her part, she had met with representatives of Syria and Libya and had focused on other areas of concern, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the border between Sudan and South Sudan.

Accountability remained an integral element both to address and prevent violations against children, she said. It should begin with the criminalization of under-age recruitment and the domestication of international norms and standards and accompanied by domestic enforcement through national rule of law institutions. "Achieving accountability must be a common effort," she said. "While the primary responsibility lies with the Government, donor countries should support, and help to strengthen, national efforts by providing assistance to capacity-building."

"I believe that the protection of all children from grave violations is within our reach," she said. "If we stand firm and united, we can move forward and deliver on what is expected from us."

HERVÉ LADSOUS, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, underlining the "unique partnership" between Ms. Zerrougui's office and his own, said that current multidimensional peacekeeping operations provided a platform to combine political, justice, human rights, gender, child protection and other civilian expertise with military, police and correction experts and a myriad of logistic and operational capabilities. The deployment of Child Protection Advisers had enabled the leveraging of all such capabilities at all stages of peace processes, including negotiations with parties to conflict, as had occurred in negotiations with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in Sudan.

Military peacekeepers had an important role as well, he said, citing the information, security and logistic support for the release of children held by groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo, by military units of the Stabilization Mission there known as MONUSCO. From the beginning of this year, he added, some 1038 children had been handed over to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for reintegration support.

Child Protection Advisers, he said, were also working closely with all civilian components such as human rights, demobilization, rule of law, justice, women protection advisers and security sector reform to promote synergies and a child-sensitive approach to their work. A multiple of capabilities were harnessed, in addition, in the implementation of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, which referred cases and provided critical information to United Nations country task forces. All those efforts could have a real and sustainable impact through close collaboration with national authorities, such as was witnessed in the renewal of the Action Plan to end recruitment and use of child soldiers signed by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

In moving forward, resources must be maximized through training, he said, noting that this year alone over 9000 peacekeepers had received awareness training on child protection. Another priority was the update of the peacekeeping office's policy on child protection, which was in progress. In conclusion, he reiterated his firm commitment to the protection of children in conflict under the leadership of the Special Representative and in partnership with UNICEF, and he looked forward to achieving "tangible and lasting peace" for vulnerable children whose lives were disrupted by conflict.

ANTHONY LAKE, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said while the world was making progress in holding perpetrators of acts against children accountable, governments also needed to be held accountable, "and so do we." The seven Security Council resolutions passed since 1999 represented a clear commitment to accountability and action on behalf of children trapped in the horror of conflict, and the United Nations Monitoring and Reporting mechanism likewise was built around accountability.

For its part, UNICEF was working closely with Governments and communities to protect and rehabilitate children affected by conflict. Yet, the future of these children hung in a balance. "We cannot leave them to fend for themselves," he said. "This is our commitment and our accountability."

Governments must support efforts to monitor, report and respond to grave violations, and must allow United Nations involvement to help them to establish national systems to prevent and sanction violations and deliver the right response to those who need them. Active engagement was needed, including in negotiations with armed forces to secure the release of children who have been recruited.

"When you meet one of these children face to face, as many of us have, you notice something extraordinary," he said. "A few kind words, a welcoming ear of an adult who is not there to take advantage of them or cast judgment, an offer of food, water or medicine, these simple gestures can bring her or his guard down, even for just a moment. Despite the horrors endured, there is a resilience there, a glimmer of gritty hope."

"These children are not beyond our reach. Our message to them must be that we will not turn away, that our resolve to bring perpetrators to justice will not falter, that we do accept the burden of accountability - all of us."

DAVID TOLBERT, President of the International Center for Transitional Justice, said to advance the aims of greater accountability in contexts where action plans had been signed or were being negotiated, there were two critical steps the Security Council and its members could take. They were to leverage international resources and expertise to support national processes, and to include a greater focus on an integrated approach to accountability for violations against children once action plans were implemented.

While most believe accountability connotes criminal prosecutions, it was essential to ensure a comprehensive approach to justice that addresses both the perpetrators' responsibility and the rights of victims, he said. In addition, it was critical to understand the underlying causes and patterns of occurrence, which could be addressed through truth-seeking mechanisms, such as truth commissions. When these and other approaches were applied, they worked to promote civic trust and strengthened rule of law.

The International Criminal Court's first judgment convicted Thomas Lubanga-Dyilo for the war crime of recruiting and enlisting children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but the trial was never intended to address all perpetrators. Many perpetrators enjoyed impunity, he said, and the Security Council had the opportunity to use that step forward in international justice to leverage the verdict to strengthen national processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He called on the international community to support victims' efforts to enforce existing national court decisions awarding reparations and to encourage donors and the Congolese Government to help the Trust Fund for Victims to implement reparations for communities affected by forced recruitment.

In addition, the Working Group should urge donors to support national processes that sought to achieve comprehensive accountability, and could draw on the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In the same way the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism brought together the United Nations and partners to document violations, "we need to create synergies to provide remedy to the victims of those violations once documented," he said.

Turning to his call for a greater focus on accountability, he provided an example in Myanmar, where the consequence for recruiting children was less than the consequence for not bringing in enough recruits. That was one example of an incentive structure that needed to be "turned upside down" to guarantee that the recruitment of minors was stopped, he said. Truth commissions could be used to address and identify the multiple ways children were affected by conflict.

He urged the Council to consider action plans as a starting point and to support an integrated approach to accountability, which pursued perpetrators, provided acknowledgement and remedy for violations suffered by victims, and initiated a process of institutional reform, he said. Further, the Council should continue to recognize that the protection of children was part of its role in upholding peace and security.

LI BAODONG (China) condemned violations against children in armed conflict and supported continued efforts of United Nations agencies to combat them in accordance with mandates that have been adopted. The Security Council should address the issue as a priority, as part of its efforts to prevent and end conflicts, addressing in particular the root causes of conflict and peaceful settlement of disputes. Only such efforts, along with reintegration of affected children, will produce the desired result of protecting children. Politicization of the issue must be avoided and approaches applied equally in all cases. Stressing that parties to armed conflict bore the ultimate responsibility for protecting children, he added that sovereignty of States must be respected. In that context, capacity-building for child protection must be prioritized. Sanctions must not be a priority approach. Finally, he stressed that the Council must listen carefully to all parties concerned in formulating policies.

JEFFREY DELAURENTIS (United States) said that the Secretary-General's report showed some encouraging developments and real and tangible results. He called action plans a proven tool for alleviating the plight of child soldiers and others affected by armed conflict. The report, however, showed that many instances of appalling abuse of children continued, including those by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which was notorious for abducting and recruiting children, as well as by Al-Shabaab in Somalia. The carnage in Syria was particularly distressing in this regard, as depicted in the report, and indicated that the Council should do more to support humanitarian efforts in Syria. In addressing persistent violations of non-State armed groups, the United Nations must work with such groups only in close cooperation with national authorities, as stressed by the resolution. A broader range of measures to increase pressure on violators should also be considered. He encouraged the Special Representative to provide a thoughtful analysis of proposals in that regard. The commitment to end impunity should be redoubled.

NÉSTOR OSORIO (Colombia) assured the Special Representative of his country's commitment to the protection of children. He drew attention to existing instruments on child protection and called for an assessment of their implementation and effectiveness before new ones were instituted. Each conflict must be analyzed individually, and distinctions drawn between situations on the Council agenda and others and mandates in each case taken seriously. So-called "other cases of concern," involving situations not on the Council's agenda, must be dealt with in other ways, including the strengthening of national capacities for protection of children. Such protection was an ethical and moral imperative for his country, he stressed, describing policies instituted to prevent the recruitment and other abuse of children. He said sanctions were extremely problematic when they involved non-State actors; targeted sanctions were only applicable to situations already on the Council's agenda. In all cases, consultations with national Governments were of primary importance.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) said the magnitude of the atrocities affecting children in conflict situations demanded action and no reason or pretext could ever legitimize recruiting a child in an armed conflict. Prosecution practices against perpetrators must be supported by strategies to prevent such acts, which should address problems in a comprehensive manner, nationally and locally, including job training that would offer young people viable options for their futures.

He endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation to provide assistance for prevention strategies. It was also necessary to strengthen and build capacity in affected countries with ample assistance to ensure success. He hoped an international consensus on the protection of children would benefit from cooperation and dialogue.

SERGEY N. KAREV (Russian Federation) said that despite measures undertaken at national and international levels, children continued to be one of the most vulnerable groups in the context of armed conflict and post-conflict situations. The primary role in protecting children continued to rest with national Governments, and support should aim at complementing their efforts, he said.

Noting that the parameters for protecting children in armed conflict had been set out in a previous Security Council resolution, one of the key roles on the international level was played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, whose mandate covered areas within the Security Council's scope. Working out a plan of action was not the sole response to the issue, he said, as it was well-known that the existence of this type of document did not mean it was being implemented. Turning to today's vote, he regretted that the resolution was not adopted unanimously. When negotiating such an instrument all views of members should be taken into account, he said, adding that he hoped to reach a consensus text in the future.

GÉRARD ARAUD (France) said the existing provision on children and armed conflict had led to successes, including the demobilization of about 10,000 children per year and the increasing numbers of

action plans. The current path needed to be followed to ensure there were no more child soldiers, he said. However, not only were there persistent perpetrators, but new ones, with reports in countries including Syria.

In addition, there were no means to effectively sanction such violators, which undermined child protection mechanisms. To address that, measures should be strengthened to combat impunity. He supported Mr. de la Sablière's suggestions in a paper mentioned by Ms. Zerrougui, and said that targeted measures should be taken. He also said the Working Group could become a sanctions committee when the situation demanded so. In closing, he regretted the disagreement in the Council, and said unanimity could have been achieved had positions not been politicized.

JOSÉ FILIPE MORAES CABRAL (Portugal), endorsing the statement to be made by the representative of the European Union, noted progress in obtaining the release of children held by armed groups and strengthening the normative framework to prevent and end further abuse. The Council needed to address the persistent perpetrators to ensure the credibility of its efforts. Targeted measures for perpetrators of grave violations - in situations that did not already have sanctions regimes - should be considered, possibly through a thematic sanctions committee, although sanctions should only be considered as a last resort. As the ultimate responsibility lay at the State level, national protection and accountability mechanisms were fundamental. Where national capabilities were not effective, international justice mechanisms had begun to show their capabilities in the fight against impunity.

NOZIPHO MXAKATO-DISEKO, Deputy-Director-General, Multilateral Affairs, Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, believed that each of the six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict, identified by the Council, deserved equal attention. In that regard, he welcomed the expansion of the trigger mechanism for punitive measures. It was imperative that all warring parties refrain from any action that violated children's rights and from attacks against civilian targets, especially where children might be present. Being on the so-called "list", as well as efforts by the Council, had led some actors to modify their behaviour, but there were still State and non-State entities that persistently perpetrated the violations. State actors, in most cases, had worked constructively to prepare and implement a time-bound action plan to end those violations; the major challenge was bringing armed opposition and rebel groups into compliance, while ensuring the effectiveness of the compliance measures.

Despite all efforts to address persistent violators in a non-punitive way, he said, there had been a dramatic increase in their number, from 13 to 32. It was crucial, therefore, to assess whether the actions taken so far were sufficient and effective. The Secretary-General had provided some concrete measures, and it was up to the Council to take positive action. For example, the 15-member body could list violators based on recommendations from both the working group and the country-specific sanctions committees. He also favoured closer cooperation between national and international courts. Regrettably, many persistent perpetrators were in Africa, he said, pointing in particular to the Lord's Resistance Army. It was, thus, vital for the United Nations to work with the African Union and subregional organizations to address that challenge and to evolve a broad strategy on conflict prevention, which addressed the root causes and created an environment conducive for the promotion of children's rights.

KODJO MENAN (Togo), noting that there were still over 250,000 child soldiers around the world, said that such recruitment often resulted from gaps in national policy, as well as lack of capacity to implement relevant international instruments. He commended the listing mechanism of the United Nations, as well as the work of the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, and said that, as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, his country was working actively to protect children, through policy implementation and awareness campaigns. Accession and compliance with the Convention and other international instruments should be encouraged globally, and child protection provisions included in all peacekeeping mandates. Persistent perpetrators must be tracked down and brought to justice, through close cooperation between States. When there was no impunity or safe havens for perpetrators of abuses,

then the world would be able to effectively protect children. In that context, he regretted that unanimity had not been reached on the resolution adopted today.

AGSHIN MEHDIYEV (Azerbaijan) said that the war unleashed against his country had primarily affected vulnerable groups, including children. There were many children who were refugees. He strongly condemned all human rights violations against children and supported compliance with international human rights law in all circumstances, as well as compliance with all existing mechanisms for that purpose, including the office of the Special Representative. Protection efforts must be free of selectivity and politicization, however. More resolute and targeted measures were needed for the most serious and persistent violations against children. Combating impunity was critical. Particular consideration should be given to internally displaced children affected by foreign occupation, as well as children taken hostage and reported missing. All possible measures should be taken to rescue such children and return them to their homes.

MARK LYALL GRANT (United Kingdom) said the Secretary-General's latest report contained ample evidence of the grave violations committed against children. Action plans had resulted in the release of thousands of children caught up in fighting, and the Lubanga conviction had sent a strong message to perpetrators.

He welcomed the adoption of resolution 2068 (2012), which reflected the Council's intention of taking the issue forward. He would have preferred a unanimous adoption, and disagreed with assertions that insufficient efforts were made to find consensus, adding that compromises had been made during negotiations. He was concerned about impunity and emphasized that the Council should not be tolerant in that respect. Children and armed conflict was an issue the Council should be advancing, and resolution 2068 (2012) reflected those efforts.

RAZA BASHIR TARAR (Pakistan) said his country had made proposals during negotiations on the resolution adopted today, but they were not taken into account. Working within the mandate was at the heart of the problem, and Pakistan had made a proposal to address that issue. Discrimination and double-standards and the exercise of different mandates were a reality, he said, noting that his country's proposals in that area were again not taken into account. As a result, Pakistan had abstained from voting on the resolution, he said, noting that he did appreciate the concern and attention of certain Council members.

The love of children transcended political matters and the United Nations Charter aimed to ensure due protection of children. The rights of children needed to be protected in all circumstances. However, recent reports of the Secretary-General had ventured outside the current mandate. Such situations presented challenges for the United Nations system as a whole. The misleading section on Pakistan was a case in point, he said. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict's practice of condemning acts of violations on child rights was selective, he said. Pakistan wanted to strengthen the position around the Council's mandate. Listing and delisting should be objective and balanced, he said. Perpetrators should be brought to justice in national and international arenas. His country strongly condemned any use of children by extremists or other groups to promote their nihilistic objectives. He hoped future Secretary-General reports would be objective in that respect.

MANJEEV SINGH PURI (India) said the international community was obliged to do its utmost to help children affected by armed conflict, noting that India was engaged in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to address situations on the Council's agenda. As the largest contributor to United Nations peacekeeping over the past six decades, India had helped create environments in which Governments could fulfil their obligations towards the most vulnerable to armed conflict. The major challenge was resources, with some States pushing to extend mandates, yet unwilling to provide adequate resources to meet their requirements. Much more remained to be done, he said, stressing it was time to take stock of the Council resolution implementation and identify gaps in the functioning of United Nations processes

and mechanisms. "The earlier that this is addressed, the better the result will be for children in armed conflict," he said.

Recalling that resolution 1379 (2001) had requested the Secretary-General to report on situations that were on the Council's agenda or might be brought to its attention, he said the Secretary-General's reports included situations that did not meet the threshold of armed conflict or threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. That should be rectified and the mandate strictly followed. "Mandate creep" also distracted from urgently addressing children's plight in situations of armed conflict that were on the Council's agenda, noting that the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism envisaged cooperation with the country concerned. Along with data collection, developing such capacity would help the country in its fight against impunity. It was also important that United Nations access to armed groups was carried out under the cooperation framework. The Working Group must work with the Special Representative on the implementation of resolutions, including vis-à-vis listing, delisting and persistent perpetrators.

GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) said "naming and shaming" had not affected the armed groups, nor were those groups accountable for their acts or in compliance with human rights or humanitarian law. In fact, they did not seem to care about their image or reputation. They might be oscillating between political motives and criminal objectives, with the latter among them even less responsive to incentives or deterrents. The Council must reaffirm its willingness to act, while also emphasizing State responsibility to end impunity and prosecute the perpetrators. It must be ensured that States developed national legislation that penalized the crimes via their national institutions, or the cases must be referred to international tribunals. The convictions of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo by the International Criminal Court and of former Liberian President Charles Taylor by the Special Court for Sierra Leone had demonstrated such courts' capacity.

Another option, he said, was the more frequent use of sanctions, although everyone was aware of the difficulty those posed. He supported monitoring their implementation, but felt that further efforts were needed to ensure that those measures were imposed against individuals or entities that committed grave violations against children. In that regard, he supported an expanded architecture, in particular, for the committees seized with Al-Qaida and the Taliban. Sanctions sent a powerful signal to the perpetrators and contributed to greater compliance with the Council's agenda on children and armed conflict. He hoped the recently appointed Special Representative would strengthen cooperation with the sanctions committees and continue to inform both the Council and the working group on emerging situations. The issue of persistent perpetrators should be on the agenda of the working group, which should issue recommendations to ensure that grave violators were held accountable for their crimes.

PETER WITTIG (Germany), aligning with the European Union and speaking in his national capacity, said that the increase in the number of action plans signed by parties to conflict, the consequent release of tens of thousands of child soldiers and the recent convictions of Thomas Lubanga and Charles Taylor were significant achievements in the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict. Despite those developments, however, the number of children suffering in armed conflict is a "shocking reminder," he said, of the need for continued collaboration to "stop and prevent heinous crimes committed against children." He pointed to the listing of new parties for recruitment and use of children, the listing of a new party for killing and maiming children, and first listings for attacks on schools and hospitals as clear indicators that the situation remained troubling.

"What can we do better?" he asked. First, he stressed the need to improve the existing protection framework and to address the issue of accountability. To improve the framework, he urged the inclusion of child protection and child protection training as key components of all peacekeeping and special political missions and the systematic inclusion of child protection issues, specifically the release and reintegration of children, in peace negotiations and agreements. To address the issue of accountability, Mr. Wittig said that perpetrators of crimes against children must be held accountable, especially given the

"alarming number of so called persistent perpetrators", and that the Security Council must consider new ways to address the issue. Citing the report of the former French Ambassador de la Sablière, Mr. Wittig supported the recommendation to increase political engagement by the Security Council through sessions focused on the issue and the recommendation to increase use of targeted measures against individual perpetrators through Sanction Committees.

He noted that Germany would have preferred a consensus decision on the resolution, given its huge effort, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group. to accommodate all delegations' concerns. And mindful that there were differences of opinions on the matter, the desire to strengthen the existing United Nations framework to protect children in armed conflict "should unite us all", he said.

TSUNEO NISHIDA (Japan) was among the delegations welcoming the listing in the Secretary-General's report of attacks against schools and hospitals. Such attacks, as well as the unjust occupation of those facilities, could lead to the killing or maiming of children, deprive them of their right to education or prevent them from accessing health services. All such outcomes could have long-term impacts on the societies concerned, he said, demanding that attacks on schools and hospitals cease immediately. Turning next to the issue of persistent perpetrators and the fight against impunity, he said that Japan was gravely concerned that the number of such parties had increased drastically.

Currently some - though not all - of the Council's sanctions committees maintained designation criteria for serious crimes against children; however the de la Sablière report presented various, in-depth options to address the issue, including through the creation of a thematic sanctions committee. The Council should assess the viability of that and other options and exercise practical measures against persistent perpetrators. "Otherwise the annex lists will be at the risk of losing substance," he said, stressing that the Council must act with a sense of urgency to cement the gains that had been made thus far. While such political matters remained important, the role of judicial organizations was also critical to the work in the area, and he highlighted recent decisions taken by the International Criminal Court against Charles Taylor and Thomas Lubanga. Further, improving existing mechanisms to fight impunity beyond the issue of children and armed conflict would require deepening substantive dialogue between the Council and the Court.

REGINA MARIA CORDEIRO DUNLOP (Brazil) said the international community needed to persevere in finding ways to keep the children from bearing "the brunt of wars adults choose to fight". Commending the results achieved through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and the Working Group, and the "significant steps" towards greater accountability for perpetrators, she said the International Criminal Court's verdict against Thomas Lubanga testified to the international determination of fighting impunity.

In other areas, she said a special legal regime for the protection of children in armed conflict must remain within the scope of international humanitarian law and be consistent with other legal mechanisms aimed at protecting civilians. The Council should be careful when considering coercive measures in contexts for which no sanctions regime existed. Chapter VII measures could only be adopted in cases that constituted a threat to international peace and security, as determined by the Council. She was concerned that situations that were not "armed conflict" had been mentioned in Children and Armed Conflict reports. Attention also should be given to helping States strengthen the rule of law. She urged not losing sight of the importance of cooperation with Governments and parties to conflict. The structural causes for the recruitment of children by armed groups must also be tackled, including poverty and social exclusion.

THOMAS MAYR-HARTING, Head of the Delegation of the European Union, said the international community had seen continuous progress on key fronts, including through the conclusion of several action plans that had led to the release and subsequent reintegration of children into their societies. Yet, some situations remained troubling or were deteriorating, like in Syria, where many children were among the victims of egregious crimes. "As long as children are still suffering from armed conflict we are reminded that we still have to further intensify our work," he continued, noting that for the first time the report

included in its expanded list of "triggers" attacks on schools and hospitals, which should provide yet another effective tool for the Council's Working Group on children and armed conflict.

At the same time, he said, the Secretary-General's report and that of the Special Representative spotlighted the "severe problem" of persistent perpetrators. That issue required more attention, because while it was important to continue the practice of naming, the Council must also look for effective ways to take action, combat impunity and prove that those 32 perpetrators would eventually be held accountable for their heinous crimes, included by imposing targeted sanctions. He drew attention to some encouraging steps that had been taken on the matter by the International Criminal Court, such as its recent judgement against warlord Thomas Lubanga for using child soldiers. He went on to encourage the Council to make use of the tools of its Working Group and to regularly invite the Special Representative to brief members on conflicts that affected children. Overall, it was crucial to implement existing commitments, and he updated the Council on several relevant steps taken by the European Union on the issue, including, among others, the regional bloc's systematic inclusion of child protection issues in all its foreign policy missions, operations and training. The European Union had also spent some 200 million euros between 2009 and 2012 to assist several of the countries listed in the Secretary-General's report, including Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

RON PROSOR (Israel) said: "When we fail to protect children, we fail to protect our future." Describing his pride as a father raising his three children in Jerusalem, he noted, however, that for more than a decade terrorists in Gaza had deliberately targeted children with rocket attacks on schools and civilian areas. Across the Middle East today, terrorists and extremists were poisoning the minds of the next generation, teaching them to hate Israelis and Jews. In view of the past week's attacks and riots across the region, those who taught fanaticism today were creating a tinder box that would inevitably ignite tomorrow, he warned, stressing that the international community had a duty to end that culture of incitement. "We need education that promotes peace instead of hate, tolerance instead of violence, and mutual understanding instead of martyrdom."

GUILLERMO E. RISHCHYNSKI (Canada), on behalf of the 38 member States of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, reaffirmed his strongest support for the Council's effort to ensure children's full protection from grave violations committed against them in armed conflict. Eight consensus resolutions and countless presidential statements had been passed on the issue since 1999. He looked forward to working with the Special Representative and called on the Council to ensure she regularly briefed the Working Group, as well as the Council directly, including on emerging situations such as Libya, Syria, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Mali.

He went on to say that the Secretary-General must continue to provide an annual report on children and armed conflict to the Council, including the two annexes listing parties that recruited, used, killed, maimed, committed sexual violence against children or engaged in attacks on schools and hospitals. The listing of perpetrators and the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, among other measures, formed the international framework to better protect children. The issue of persistent perpetrators was a fundamental challenge, with more than half of the parties listed by the Secretary-General chronically violating children's rights. He urged the Council to ensure that such violations triggered the imposition of sanctions.

Speaking next in his national capacity, he said the "despicable" acts documented in the Secretary-General's report must be stopped and Canada was deeply committed to the Council's work on the issue. Since the creation of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and adoption of resolution 1998 (2011), the evidence of grave violations against children had improved, with more perpetrators being held accountable. He urged the Council to strengthen existing mechanisms, abide by its obligations and address accountability gaps at the global and country levels.

Voicing deep concern at reports of senseless killing, torture, sexual abuse and use of children as human shields in Syria, he pressed the Council to oppose such actions. He also expressed deep concern about the

growing number of persistent perpetrators, urging that more be done to hold State and non-state actors accountable. Commending the Sanctions Committees on Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Sudan for including grave violations against children in sanctions criteria, he urgently called on them to take steps to impose sanctions on perpetrators for crimes including the killing and rape of girls and boys. He commended the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia for signing an action plan on the recruitment and use of children, and looked forward to a similar plan to be signed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

MATEO ESTREME (Argentina), while recognizing significant progress in protecting children through monitoring mechanisms and action plans, said all the Secretary-General's recommendations on persistent perpetrators of violations must be discussed in detail - without disposing of any of them out of hand - with the aim of persuading all parties involved radically to change their conduct. Tangible short-term results could be realized through more focused discussion in the Security Council, which could explore various kinds of cooperation with the International Criminal Court with a view to leveraging the latter's recent decisions. Argentina would support further progress in a manner consistent with its past efforts, he said.

CESARE MARIA RAGAGLINI (Italy), endorsing the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, called on Governments to follow up concretely on their commitments, affirming also the critical importance of sustainable funding for the release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups. Expressing deep concern over continuing abuse, particularly of girls often exposed to unspeakable violence, as well as children in Syria, he said the international community must not remain silent; it must ensure that perpetrators of such violence knew that they would be held accountable. In dealing with persistent perpetrators, the Council must step up its political engagement, he said, stressing that the cooperation of national and international courts was also critical. Targeted measures should be considered, and existing sanctions committees should also consider violations committed against children in their mandates. "Any boy or girl that we save from the scourge of war represents hope for a better future," he said.

YANERIT MORGAN (Mexico) said the Council had developed a series of mechanisms whose main goals were accountability and guaranteeing that actions against children in situations of armed conflict were not repeated. The Lubanga case was a positive precedent, and other important successes had seen the release of thousands of children, yet there were increasing numbers of indiscriminate attacks and mutilations, in violation of international humanitarian law, urging the Council to strengthen its mandates with the protection of children in mind. The Working Group should continue its efforts, including field visits. The sanction committees should also consider grave violations of children's rights, she said. The adoption of resolution 2068 (2012) was an important action, yet the regrettable lack of unanimity was another sign of the need to reform the Council's working methods.

SYLVIE LUCAS (Luxembourg) said that since the last open debate on children and armed conflict, efforts had moved forward significantly, leading to the creation of case law by the trials against perpetrators such as Thomas Lubanga. The Council had also widened the criteria for inscription in the annex to the Secretary-General's report, notably by including attacks on schools and hospitals. However, much remained to be done over the coming years, especially in light of the rising numbers of perpetrators, she said. There was a need for closer cooperation with courts, and for greater ability to impose sanctions on parties responsible for violations. The adoption of resolution 2068 (2012) this morning was proof that the Council would continue to make efforts to end violations of children's rights, she said.

PAUL SEGER (Switzerland), speaking on behalf of the Human Security Network, encouraged the Council to further involve the Special Representative in its activities on children in situations of armed conflict. Reverting to his national capacity, he said it was encouraging to see new action plans signed on behalf of children affected by armed conflict, but the situation remained alarming on a global scale as grave violations continued. Abductions and the denial of humanitarian assistance to children should be

included as "trigger violations", he said, urging States that had not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

More effective measures must be taken against non-State actors, he said, citing an instance in which the Government of Myanmar had prevented the negotiation of an action plan between the United Nations and two armed non-State actors, after which the non-governmental organization Geneva Call had been able to facilitate the signing of a commitment by the same actors. Such alternatives must be encouraged in difficult situations, he stressed, inviting all parties to encourage complementary activities by States, international organizations and civil society, for the benefit of child victims on the ground.

JARMO VIINANEN (Finland), speaking also on behalf of fellow Nordic countries Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, recognized the progress made towards ending grave violations of children's rights in the context of conflict, with 19 action plans signed. Commending the efforts of the Council and cooperating parties in that regard, he called on all those listed in the report and who had not yet committed to action plans to do so. As for persistent perpetrators, he encouraged the Council to make full use of the toolkit on children and armed conflict to increase pressure on them. In cases where national trials were not possible, the International Criminal Court was indispensable, as shown by the recent conviction of Thomas Lubanga, which had helped to raise awareness and set a precedent, and hopefully would prevent the future recruitment of child soldiers.

MARGUS KOLGA (Estonia) said his Government was applying for membership of the Human Rights Council in the years 2013-2015 and looked forward to advancing the agenda of children's rights in that capacity. Strongly condemning all kinds of violence against children and violations of their rights, he expressed concern about reports of children being tortured and targeted in Syria, where children made up half of the 1.2 million internally displaced persons, according to the Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. Estonia welcomed the verdicts against Thomas Lubanga and Charles Taylor as important steps in advancing the rights of children, he said.

The role of civil society and local non-governmental organizations could not be underestimated, he stressed, adding that local communities played a key part in collecting information on possible violations. Social media and modern information and communications technology should be used more broadly in disseminating such information, he said, welcoming a smart-phone application launched by the Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein alongside Watchlist for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Quoting a former Sierra Leonean child soldier, he said: "We as the human beings, as nations, as the international community, have the capacity to end the use of children in war. We must not waste another minute."

SHIN DONG-IK (Republic of Korea) hailed recent achievements on the issue of children and armed conflict, including the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) and the first inclusion in the Secretary-General's report of parties that had attacked schools and hospitals. But he remained concerned at the growing list of persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children, which had doubled over the year, calling for immediate action against them. Expressing hope that all sanctions regimes would contain designation criteria including grave violations against children, as the Sanctions Committee on Somalia and Eritrea had done, he said United Nations efforts to mainstream children's protection must be strengthened. Also, listed parties should conclude action plans as soon as possible, in the hope that perpetrators would be brought to justice through investigations and prosecutions. Finally, he called for greater cooperation between the Special Representatives on Children in Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict to better address the difficulty of collecting and systematizing information on sexual abuse against children in such situations.

OCTAVIO ERRÁZURIZ (Chile) said that despite some gains, the global reality was "mixed", with delisting and newly signed action plans to end violations through verifiable procedures existing amid reports of new perpetrators of violations against children. The situation in Syria and the Secretary-

General's report's citing of a new category of perpetrators responsible for attacks on schools and hospitals were just two examples of grave concern. The report's revelation of persistent perpetrators and groups listed for five or more years should spur the Council into action, he stressed, urging that body's sanction committees to take into account the rights of children in conflict situations, a topic the Council urgently needed to consider.

IGNACE GATA MAVITA WA LUFUTA (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that following his country's democratic elections in 2006 and 2011, populations in North and South Kivu had had good reason to hope for a lasting peace, citing successful joint military operations and improved security as having been among the encouraging factors. Today, armed groups were threatening that peace, the fundamental reason being that the Congolese Government had cooperated with the International Criminal Court in pursuing those responsible for war crimes, particularly crimes against children. The most frequent violations included sexual violence, torture and abduction, he said, recalling that Human Rights Watch had reported recently that the M23 rebel group had murdered 15 civilians and raped 46 women, the youngest being only eight years old.

Describing himself as the voice of those children and their families, he said they should be given reparations and provided with education, especially given that security issues had affected 85,000 students in North Kivu alone. New Government provisions, including laws criminalizing forced marriage, forced prostitution or female genital mutilation, were among the steps forward, he said, calling for increased donor support for the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those who had attacked schools and hospitals should be brought to justice, he said, adding that the Lubanga verdict had acted as a deterrent for crimes against children. Reparations, as well as the reinstatement and protection of children should be encouraged, he said, announcing that his country would sign an action plan on children.

STEFAN BARRIGA (Liechtenstein) called on the Council to expand its focus to include abduction and the denial of humanitarian access. The Secretary-General's report made for disturbing reading, notably the list of persistent perpetrators annexed to it. The Council should expand its focus, where relevant, and consider allowing the Working Group to apply direct measures against individuals. The recent sentence against Thomas Lubanga showed the International Criminal Court's relevance, he said, calling for greater efforts to strengthen the capacity of national courts. Ultimately the responsibility to protect the rights of children rested with the parties themselves, he said, adding that States should allow direct contact between the Special Representative's office and non-State actors.

GARY QUINLAN (Australia) welcomed the Council's expanded set of triggers for listing perpetrators, and the introduction of designation criteria for grave violations against children by four sanctions committees. Urging other committees to adopt similar measures, he also welcomed the mainstreaming of children's protection into country-specific actions by the Council, noting his country's contribution to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, which was a valuable tool. He encouraged additional affected States to conclude child-protection action plans and to devote the necessary resources to their full implementation. **The convictions of Thomas Lubanga and Charles Taylor had sent important messages on ending impunity**, he said, calling on the Security Council to take appropriate action against persistent perpetrators of violations against children. However, he said he was deeply concerned that grave violations persisted, particularly in Syria and in many situations involving non-State actors. Donor contributions, such as those provided by Australia, were essential in helping States strengthen their child-protection frameworks.

MIRSADA ÄEOLAKOVIÄ, (Bosnia and Herzegovina) underlined the need to keep the issue of children in armed conflict high on the Council's agenda, and emphasized that all parties to conflict must comply strictly with the relevant international obligations. States must strengthen their legal frameworks and judicial systems accordingly, she added, pointing out that if national judiciaries failed to act effectively international justice mechanisms could be valuable tools for ending impunity. Violations should not go unpunished, and to deal with persistent perpetrators, sanctions committees should continue to receive

focused briefings. Schools and hospitals must be protected, she stressed. Expressing support for the negotiation of action plans, she affirmed the importance of all United Nations efforts to enter into dialogue with parties to armed conflict, emphasizing that specific provisions on child protection must be included in all relevant peacekeeping mandates, and existing child-protection capacity strengthened. Bosnia and Herzegovina had endorsed the Paris Principles and Commitments, as an additional step to show its commitment to the protection of children, she noted.

SANJA ÂŠTIGLIC (Slovenia) said her country would continue its efforts to rehabilitate children affected by armed conflict through its ITF Fund, a human security organization. Welcoming the signing of action plans in 2011 and 2012, she said that in order to enact them, it was crucial for Governments to facilitate United Nations access to non-State armed groups. Children in armed conflict must be considered as part of the "larger picture" when addressing a specific country's situation, she said, encouraging the Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to continue receiving regular briefings from the Special Representative, including on emerging situations. Grave violations against children should be a basis for imposing sanctions, she said, encouraging the Working Group to make full use of its toolkit. Emphasizing that grave violations should be investigated and perpetrators brought to justice, she said the Lubanga and Taylor convictions were important for future cases in national and international courts concerning child recruitment.

NORACHIT SINHASANI (Thailand) stressed that it was incumbent upon Member States to help the United Nations protect children in situations of armed conflict as efficaciously as possible. To that end, the Organization should strengthen collaboration within its own system, as well as between itself and concerned Governments. It should also ensure that the mandates of its many children-related agencies, committees and treaty bodies were clearly defined, and that they carried out their work in a transparent and accountable manner. Urging the Council to clarify the criteria for listing and delisting perpetrators, he noted that it had never formally endorsed them, pointing out that once a country was placed on the list, it was not clear what it must do to be removed. "The list thus becomes a 'hall of shame' rather than a potential tool to encourage countries to work with the United Nations" he said. Emphasizing the importance of the information forming the basis for the Secretary-General's report, he said the data must be accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable. Bad information could lead to the misdirection of resources and effort, "not to mention much more serious consequences", he said, cautioning: "The road to hell, it is said, is paved with good intentions." Good intentions were not enough, he said, adding that reliable information and a "willingness to listen and learn" were also critical.

JAN GRAULS (Belgium), while acknowledging the important successes achieved and the important progress made in addressing grave violations against children in armed conflict, said the biggest challenge remained the growing numbers of persistent perpetrators who deliberately continued to ignore the relevant resolutions. The only option left to the Council was to exert even more pressure on those perpetrators and to continue considering the application of targeted measures against them. Sharing the concern of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative over the use of explosive weapons, especially in densely populated areas, he deplored the use of such weapons in direct physical attacks against schools and hospitals, which constituted a grave violation of children's rights. Belgium also welcomed the increased cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), particularly in the field of training, awareness-raising and the conduct of operations. Urging all States that had not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, he also appealed to the Security Council in particular to support without hesitation or reluctance the Special Representative's mandate as it stood.

BASHAR JA'AFARI (Syria) said the Secretary-General's report contained inaccurate information, much of it due to the contributions of the outgoing Special Representative. The report sought to tarnish Syria's reputation, he said, denouncing the politicization of the important humanitarian issue of safeguarding children, and calling for substantiation of the information included in the report. The authors should have acquainted themselves with the Syrian Government's viewpoint, he said, adding that accusations of

bombing schools and other actions conflicted with other accounts that demonstrated the use of children by armed terrorist groups in carrying out attacks. Syria was a signatory to the relevant international instruments and remained committed to its obligations, he stressed.

The report ignored the many actions committed by armed terrorist groups, in violation of the rights of children and supported by foreign entities, he continued, citing attacks on more than 2,600 schools and health centres. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator had affirmed that schools were being used as places of refuge, not for quartering Syrian soldiers. Also missing from the report were rape cases that had taken place in Turkish refugee camps, as well as the harm caused to Syrian children by sanctions against the country's banks. The suffering of Syrian children in the Golan, occupied by Israel, was also left out, as was the suffering of Palestinian children under occupation and that of children in Iraq, Libya and Lebanon due to attacks by outside forces. Those who supported terrorists in Syria must be told to refrain from doing so, he said, calling for the lifting of sanctions placed on his country.

HAMID AL-BAYATI (Iraq) said the concept of armed conflict did not apply to his country, according to the Geneva Conventions, because there were no more than sporadic acts of violence and terrorist attacks. Highlighting a number of observations in the Secretary-General's latest report, he said certain information was incorrect or misleading. While it described Al-Qaida and affiliates such as the ISI as "armed groups", it was important that such descriptions were consistent with the Secretary-General's and Security Council's descriptions of them, notably that their violent actions were recognized as "terrorist attacks". Only verified figures should be included, he said, pointing out that according to the Ministry of Health, 96 children had been victims of terrorist attacks in 2011, and not 341 as mentioned in the report.

He went on to say that, contrary to the report's information on two groups that had apparently recruited children, the Awakening Council had merged with the Iraqi Armed Forces, in which children were legally prohibited from serving, while Al-Qaida's Birds of Paradise was no longer active. Regarding a passage on indictments against a number of children convicted of terrorism-related charges, he said "legislations from all over the world permit the indictment and conviction of children who commit crimes". The report also mentioned that the last three months of 2011 had witnessed an increase in the number of detainees awaiting trial on charges of being members of armed groups and committing crimes related to terrorism. "We would like to point out that those trials are handled by the independent judicial authorities under related Iraqi laws against terrorists who attack civilians and innocent people and cause their death," he said. " Iraq today is not Iraq prior to 2003," he stressed. " Iraq today is a constitutional, parliamentary and federal democracy ruled by a Government elected by the people, which protects the rule of law and protects human rights, especially the rights of Iraqi children."

MACHARIA KAMAU (Kenya) said the protection of children was firmly anchored in the socio-cultural fabric of his country, which had invested considerable efforts and resources in advocating, promoting and protecting children's rights. The protection of children in times of conflict must begin long before a conflict was even anticipated, he said, noting that the triggers of conflict must be addressed in a similar manner as the underlying causes of strife, conflict or civil intimidation that threatened peace and security. The international community must work in tandem to "dim the embers of conflict", he said.

To achieve that, he continued, urgent, sustained and accelerated development and a rise in prosperity would be needed. Kenya was also concerned about Somali children living under Al-Shabaab, he said, adding that after decades of violence, the international community had taken concrete steps to ameliorate the situation. He urged continued support from the African Union and neighbouring countries to pacify Somalia and guarantee the future of its children. "Life for children will be much better if we not only recognize the interconnectedness between security, human rights and development," he said, "but also if we dedicate resources to improving children's lives everywhere and supporting countries to do so."

USMAN SARKI (Nigeria) welcomed the Security Council's priority attention to the plight of children in armed conflict, to which his country had an opportunity to contribute through the Working Group. Nigeria

also welcomed the growth in the number of action plans as well as the increasing attention to international humanitarian law. In order to make further progress, national and international efforts must be intensified and accountability ensured, in the interest of justice and prevention of future violations. Independent access must be allowed for monitoring violations, and there was a need for close collaboration among all actors. Adequate resources for rehabilitating children released from recruitment were also needed, as were mechanisms for paying reparations to victims of grave violations. Child protection should be addressed in all relevant peacekeeping mandates and other processes, he said, adding that the Council should take the lead in mobilizing political, financial and legal resources for all those efforts.

JIM MCLAY (New Zealand) said his delegation was a member of the Group of Friends of Children in Armed Conflict and endorsed fully the recommendations to be made by Canada on its behalf. It was clear from the reports before the Council that over the past year, the specialized offices and reporting mechanisms on the issue continued to perform their essential functions in dealing with appalling situations requiring the Organization's urgent attention. Yet, while the Secretary-General's report highlighted some commendable successes in child protection, New Zealand wished to see not only more specialized reporting, but also greater mainstreaming of the "children and armed conflict" agenda - including across all areas of the Council's work - and greater use or threat of sanctions. Indeed, such measures would be a useful tool by which to address in a meaningful manner the most serious crimes against children, especially those committed by persistent perpetrators. In situations where sanctions were already in place, political will was required to address specific child-protection issues, he said, adding that in the absence of sanctions, "a degree of innovation" would be required regarding the Council's working methods.

JOSÉ LUIS CANCELA (Uruguay) said the impact of armed conflicts and the increase in the number of perpetrators remained a source of grave concern. Uruguay recognized the Council's role and its resolutions on specific actions to end the illegal recruitment of children in conflict-affected areas. It was essential to tirelessly combat the impunity of perpetrators, he said, encouraging the Council to refer such cases to the International Criminal Court. Cooperation with international courts was a fundamental step towards ensuring accountability in such situations. The rehabilitation and reintegration of affected children was also important, he stressed, adding that such efforts must enjoy adequate financial resources and be community-based.

LIBRAN N. CABACTULAN (Philippines) said the listing and delisting criteria for offending parties should be clear, transparent, objective and balanced. The Council might wish to assess, among other things, the level of commitment on the part of parties seeking delisting. The Council might also consider a stronger focus on the encouragement that delisting could bring to child-protection efforts. The issue of persistent perpetrators must be in keeping with the mandate of the Security Council and the Working Group, he said, adding that current monitoring efforts must follow resolution 1612 (2005), which stressed that dialogue with non-State armed groups must be conducted in the context of peace processes where they existed, and within the cooperation framework existing between the United Nations and the Government concerned. More frequent and regular interactions, and deeper engagement by the Special Representative with stakeholders, could also help to move relevant processes forward and to identify possible solutions to standing issues, he said.

PHAM VINH QUANG (Viet Nam) said that while supporting resolution 2068 (2012), he remained concerned that armed conflicts continued to escalate worldwide and children continued to be killed, maimed and used as soldiers, most recently as suicide bombers, with some "victim bombers" as young as eight years old. While Viet Nam was pleased with the Council's attention to the issue, and supported continuing United Nations efforts, there was a need for a preventive strategy that addressed the root causes of armed conflict. Such a strategy would promote sustained development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights, alongside the reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

DAFFA-ALLA ELHAG ALI OSMAN (Sudan) said the situation of children in armed conflict in his country had improved due to political agreements reached in many conflict zones, as recognized in the Secretary-General's report. In Darfur, however, armed movements that had not signed on to the peace process continued to recruit children. Sudan had sent a letter to the Council strongly condemning such activity, he said, emphasizing that the situation must not be ignored. He reiterated that movement by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) required notification, not authorization, in regard to its protection activities. Sudan's armed forces had signed on to a working plan for the further protection of children, he said, expressing hope that such progress would lead to the delisting of his country.

Reiterating his request that the Secretary-General's reports should contain only verified information, he said pointed out that Sudan had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, the relevant provisions of which had been incorporated into domestic law, among other legal progress. Police and other security services responsible for protecting children had been created, helping to prohibit the recruitment of children below the age of 18 years. Other measures had been taken under the Ministry of Social Protection and in coordination with United Nations agencies. Targeted initiatives had been instituted in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States, he said, pledging to cooperate with the Special Representative and all relevant agencies, while expressing hope that cooperation would lead to bolstering national capacity.

ZAHIR TANIN (Afghanistan) said that the 53 per cent of Afghans under 18 years of age suffered the consequences of the terrorism and violence of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other groups, such as poison-gas attacks against girls' schools this year. In 2011, a total of 1,396 Afghan children had been killed or maimed, he said, noting that 74 per cent of that number was due to the activities of armed groups. Children were also used as suicide bombers and in other ways. Any action to protect Afghan children must also focus on diminishing the influence of terrorism and extremism in the country. The Government was drafting legislation, in coordination with UNICEF, on the establishment of the General Directorate of Human Rights Protection and the expansion of birth registration to cover all provinces. The recruitment of children under 18 had been prohibited, he said, adding that training centres for children leaving military service had been established. In addition, a ministry had been tasked with designing an effective strategy to coordinate efforts against the sexual abuse of children.

HUSSEIN HANIFF (Malaysia) expressed his country's deep concern at the increasing number of persistent perpetrators of severe violations against children. While agreeing with the Secretary-General's recommendations urging the Council to ensure that specific protection provisions were included in the mandates of peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding missions, he said Malaysia was disturbed by the significant increase in the number of deaths in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where 20 Palestinian children had been killed and 448 injured in 2011. It was also gravely concerned about the unending cycle of violence and detention of Palestinian children, subjected to cruel and degrading treatment by Israeli security forces.

Given the crucial need to strengthen child protection in the United Nations system, he said, Malaysia had co-sponsored a resolution during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly on the matter. Pleased with the verdicts of the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, he said they sent a clear signal to commanders that child recruitment was a war crime and perpetrators would be held accountable. Governments, for their part, should strengthen their judicial capacity and criminalize under-age recruitment, he said. Accountability was a duty under both domestic and international law, comprising not only careful investigation and prosecution, but also a broader undertaking by individuals and institutions of political, legal and moral responsibility for past abuses.

GlobalPost

Friday, 21 September 2012

No liberty for Liberian women as rapes continue

Violence against women and girls is still a massive problem in Liberia, despite its current state of relative peace and the recent conviction of despot Charles Taylor for war crimes. A new report shows how deep the damage goes.

By Alex Pearlman

Violence against females is the most widely reported violent crime in the West African country of Liberia, affecting hundreds of thousands of women and girls, says a new report from the Small Arms Survey.

Such violence has been used as a weapon of war throughout Liberia's tumultuous recent history.

According to Liberian peace and women's rights activist Leymah Gbowee, there is little education, or justice, in the areas of sexual violence and sexual health in Liberia. Although she says the country has "done well" since the civil war ended in 2003, "there's still a long way to go" in the country with the worst teen pregnancy rates in West Africa – 3 out of 10 teenage girls get pregnant, she told students at Northeastern University this week.

Many believe the violence ended with the peaceful election of the current president, Africa's first democratically elected female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the truth is that violence against women and girls (shortened to VAWG for the purposes of the brief report) continues in the country, although steps are being taken by both the government and international organizations to end the trend.

Liberia is a unique country in that it was founded by freed American slaves, and was a generally stable sub-Saharan country until the late 20th century, when a series of civil wars, mostly fueled by ethnic strife and political corruption engulfed the country under the leadership of convicted war criminal Charles Taylor, who made rape and sexual violence cornerstones of his tyranny.

But despite Taylor's May conviction at the International Criminal Court and subsequent 50-year sentence for "aiding and abetting, as well as planning, some of the most heinous and brutal crimes recorded in human history," according to the New York Times, Liberia still bears the scars of years under Taylor's influence.

The resulting culture is one where rape and outrageous forms of sexual violence are incredibly prevalent. Reports differ, but somewhere between 60 and 70 percent of women in Liberia have suffered some kind of sexual violence, and Time magazine reports the number could be as high as 90 percent.

More from GlobalPost: Students can save the world: Annual conference focuses on sustainable development

The Small Arms Survey report, "Liberia Armed Violence Assessment: Peace Without Security," [PDF] which compiled data based on nearly 3,000 interviews in both urban and rural areas of Liberia "indicates that the majority of victims are young girls who are on average just under 19 years old.

However, the victims are some-times far younger. A rape counsellor at the Du Port Road Clinic in Monrovia observes that most of her rape cases involve girls and young women between five and 17 years old.

The report includes excerpts from interviews with survivors, some of whom have not yet reached adolescence.

"Survivors of sexual violence tend to be far younger than survivors of domestic violence and other violent crimes, averaging 16 years of age," says the report. "However, rape of girls less than 10 years old is not uncommon. This compares to an average age of 27 for survivors of domestic violence and 28 for survivors of all other violent crimes."

It's difficult to know why this particular part of wartime culture has endured, because there is no existing study on perpetrators of sexual violence that seeks to "gain insights into why they inflict such abuse on women and in particular on young girls—sometimes even on girls below the age of five."

Economic vulnerability may play a significant role, as women and girls are often sent to live with relatives because their immediate family cannot provide for their welfare. Many live in urban areas and beg on the streets in a country where the majority of the population lives below the poverty line.

More from GlobalPost: Liberia's entrepreneurial women start small

Some believe gender-based violence stems not only from cultural traditions predating the war, but also "cases are sometimes related to 'ritual-istic practices' and beliefs that sexual intercourse with a virgin can lead to professional and financial success," says the Small Arms Survey.

During the second civil war, Gbowee, who won the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize along with then-soon-to-be President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, organized the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace group, which has been noted for playing a large role in precipitating peace negotiations by peacefully assembling the women of Liberia to band together against the violence of men, using a sex strike and other similar threats, the women were successful in ending the war, officially. But there is still work to be done, paying attention to the residual effects.

Gbowee is now an internationally known speaker and activist who runs the non-profit Women Peace and Security Network Africa (WISPEN-A), said this week at a conference in Boston that the "moral voices in the country are shrinking" and there is still much work to be done in Liberia and in Africa in general, when it comes to calling attention and finding solutions to problems like VAWG.

Another large problem is the stigmatization that follows a survivor of sexual violence can impact the rest of her life, sometimes to the point of suicidal tendencies and an inability to provide for herself and her children.

More from GlobalPost: Liberia's ex-President Charles Taylor to appeal war crimes conviction

The situation is marginally improving now, since President Sirleaf implemented a National Gender-Based Violence Plan of Action, which has devoted \$15 million between 2006 and 2011 to education, health services and economic empowerment for women who have been victims of VAWG, as well as legal system reforms, which badly needed because "available statistics show that 45.3 per cent of rape and sexual assault cases resulting in an arrest end up in court," according to Small Arms Survey, and most rapes and gender-based violent crimes go unreported.

International funding helps, certainly, but Gbowee believes the West must set an example with actions not just money.

"From our perspective in Africa, women in the US and the western countries lead the trends - just as they lead the trends for fashion and style," Gbowee told GlobalPost at the Millennium Campus Conference this week. "There is a lot of responsibility on their shoulders to guide some of these discussions, because the

way it is shaped in their countries will help to shape it substantively in other countries. A lot of the governments of countries across the world take cues from the US and other developed nations."

Part of the National Plan of Action included setting up UNICEF-trained officers in Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS), offering services such as safe houses, and medical and psychiatric care, in police stations around the country. According to the report, "by 2008, WACPS units had been opened in all 15 of Liberia's county capitals" and they seem to be working.

That said, it's the women that need to fight for themselves, following the example of Western women, says Gbowee, not just rely on institutions to do the work, especially because international, often Western, aid workers have been accused of perpetuating the problem in a number of African countries, including Liberia.

"If the issue of women's rights is still a contentious issue in [the US], and if the women who these issues are affecting are silent or almost silent on it, the trend is that we will see some of these things rise up in our own communities," said Gbowee, explaining that when American women are silent on issues of women's rights, that attitude permeates the developing world. "We also need the media to speak about these issues and speak about the global trends. Because we need to stop telling our women back home that this is the trend, and this is what we need to prepare ourselves to fight."

For more of GlobalPost's coverage of women's rights, check out our Special Report "Life Sentence: Women & Justice in Afghanistan."

Special Court Supplement

The Special Court at The Hague International Day

Sunday, 23 September 2012

