

**Clustered interactive dialogue with the  
SRSG on Violence against Children, Ms Marta Santos Pais and the  
SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui**

**12 March 2014**

**Ireland Statement**

Thank you Mr President.

Ireland would like to thank the Special Representative on Violence against Children for her valuable annual report and her continuing tireless efforts to promote the protection of children from violence.

The focus of your annual report on restorative justice is a very valuable contribution to the strengthening of child protection by emphasising the recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have committed an offence through a non-adversarial and voluntary process, based on dialogue and problem solving. While restorative justice and informal justice or conflict resolution mechanisms can play an important role in the protection and reintegration of children, we fully agree that it should not preclude children from having access to the formal justice system and should never jeopardize children's rights.

We thank you for the many practical examples and recommendations in your report and would like to ask how could civil society's contribution to the implementation of restorative justice be better promoted to strengthen policy action in this area?

Special Representative Zerrougui,

Ireland commends the work that you have undertaken for the benefit of children affected by armed conflict. We welcome your efforts to progress a number of key areas, including the implementation of international law to protect children's rights, through engaging in dialogue with government forces and non-State armed groups in areas of conflict.

The importance Ireland attaches to the issue of children and armed conflict is reflected in Ireland's new policy for International Development, 'One World One Future'. This policy, which was launched in 2013, places emphasis on human rights and stability in fragile states and makes a commitment to increasing our engagement on the issue of children and armed conflict.

Ireland currently engages on this important issue in a number of ways including through the core work of our overseas development programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa in addressing poverty and under-development. Ireland also supports the ongoing work of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mary Robinson, and we welcome the introduction of the Zero Child Soldier in the Great Lakes Region campaign, announced in November 2013.

We are particularly interested in the field visits you have undertaken as a key advocacy tool. *We would welcome receiving some further information regarding the recent trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, specifically in relation to the progress which is being made on the implementation of the action plan signed in October 2012 by the Government there and the UN to end the recruitment and use of children by national security forces, and sexual violence.*

In light of the recent horrific attack by Boko Haram on a boarding school in northern Nigeria, Ireland wishes to draw the Council's attention to the ongoing trend of attacks on education around the world. We note the recent publication of the Global Coalition to Protect Education From Attack's report, "Education Under Attack 2014," which identified thirty countries worldwide where there was a pattern of deliberate attacks on schools, universities, students and teachers in the past five years. The importance of ensuring that the right of children to education is ensured during and after conflict, not least for its impact on future peace and development, cannot be overstated. *We would be grateful if you could elaborate on the operational strategy developed by your Office to reduce the military use of schools and to mitigate the impact of this on children.*

Finally, the horrific reports of the murder, torture and violation of human rights against children in Syria are, as the Secretary-General has already stated, "unspeakable". These reports represent a violation of every legal and moral code and the people of Syria must have accountability and justice for the desecration of Syria's youth.

I would like to reiterate to both Special Representatives, Ireland's support for your ongoing work and we look forward to engaging with your offices in the future.