

Human Rights Council - 28th session
(3rd March – 27th March 2015)

**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**

11 March 2015

Statement by Ireland

Thank you Mr Vice-President,

Ireland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and makes the following additional remarks.

In 26 September 2014, Ireland signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure. This will strengthen and complement national mechanisms allowing children in Ireland to submit complaints for violations of their rights.

The promotion and protection of children's rights is central to our aid programme, as articulated in Ireland's Foreign Policy Review, *Global Island* published this year, and our Development Policy, *One World, One Future* published 2013. This policy emphasises human rights and stability in fragile states and commits to increasing our engagement on the issue of children and armed conflict. We welcome both special representatives and thank them for their reports.

Our first question is for the Special Representative for children and armed conflict. Just last month hundreds of children were kidnapped by an armed group and forced to become child soldiers in South Sudan; "going from the classroom to the front line", as stated by UNICEF's Representative in South Sudan.

Ireland is deeply concerned by the continued use of children in armed conflict as well as by attempts to radicalise teaching or exclude girls or religious and other minorities from education.

The increase in public statements and command orders issued by non-State armed groups prohibiting the recruitment and the use of children in armed conflict, as noted in your report, is a positive development. *How does your Office intend to consolidate progress achieved and to advance dialogue with non-State armed groups in order to obtain further commitments to end grave violations against children?*

Our second question is for the Special Representative on Violence against Children,

As stated in your report, “freedom from violence is indispensable to sustainable development, to a future in which children can grow up healthy, well-nourished, resilient, well-educated, culturally sensitive and effectively protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation”. During the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, Ireland promoted the inclusion of targets to eliminate violence, particularly against women and children.

Looking ahead, how does your Office intend to continue its work to ensure that the protection of children from violence remains at the heart of the sustainable development agenda once the negotiations are concluded? And, how can States best mobilise action and leverage progress in the years to come in order to meet the target on violence against children?