



I T A L Y

Informal meeting of the GA to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

H.E. SebastianoCARDI
(NEW YORK, 8 February 2017)

Mr. President,
Ms. Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict,
Mr. Executive Director Anthony Lake,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the PGA for the organization of this commemoration and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for her work and passion in identifying ways that help us in better preventing and responding to the scourges that continue to affect children in armed conflict.

Italy aligns itself with the statement (to be) delivered by the European Union and by the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict and wishes to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

The celebration this year of the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Special Representative's mandate for Children and Armed Conflict – that we strongly support - represents an invaluable occasion to assess the developments, and the failures, made by the international community in this field.

During this period, remarkable progress has been registered in the demobilization of child soldiers and in their reintegration into their communities of origin. Most of all, during these 20 years, we particularly welcome the evolution of a stronger normative and institutional framework for the protection of children in armed conflicts, mainly through the institution of the **Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism** established by UNSCR 1612 (2005). Last year, two more remarkable steps have been taken: the adoption of **UNSCR 2225** that recognizes abduction in armed conflict as a “listing criterion” in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report, and the adoption of the **2030 Agenda** in which Member States have committed themselves to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers (Goal 8.7).

But much more relevant than these documents and resolutions is their concrete implementation. In this regard, **Italy's contribution** to this very sensitive issue is multifaceted.

First, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2007-2008, we strongly supported the inclusion of specific provisions on the protection of children in the mandates of the UN peacekeeping operations, which is now the standard practice of the SC, and we actively participated in the drafting of UNSCR 1820 (2008) on Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict, which is the first resolution that openly recognizes that sexual violence, when used as a tactic of war, may exacerbate conflicts and impede the restoration of peace and security. **We stand ready to do our part again as member of the Security Council in 2017.**

Second, we continue to be engaged through our training centers on this. The Peace Operations Review has provided useful recommendations on how this important topic may be considered in planning and conduct of peacekeeping operations. We believe that targeted training of UN personnel on children's rights has to remain paramount to ensuring effective peacekeeping on the ground.

Third, we renewed our political commitment to humanitarian law, threatened by the involvement of non-state actors in conflicts. In this spirit, Italy joined the "**Safe Schools Declaration**", which supports the "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict", promoted by a coalition made of countries, UN actors and NGOs. In line with our commitment, we also support campaigns like "**Children, Not Soldiers**", launched in 2014 by the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflicts and UNICEF. Campaigns like this are an essential instrument for guiding the action of the international community in bringing an end to violations against children.

Fourth, given the growing trend of abuses and violence committed against children in the current crises, we are promoting and implementing long-term initiatives for the **recovery and social integration** of former child soldiers and victims of conflicts through our development cooperation programmes, in particular in the Middle East and in Africa.

Fifth, given the unprecedented and steadily rising in mixed **migration** flows on the Mediterranean central route, we are putting in place a new and ad hoc legal framework in order to better assist and grant reception to minors coming from conflict areas, strengthening the implementation of their rights. In particular, after having increased the financial resources dedicated to unaccompanied minors from 90 million Euro in 2015 to 170 million Euro in 2016, Italy is committed to increase the quality and quantity of receptions for unaccompanied minors: 2.000 more reception places will be available for them by the end of 2018, while highly specialized services will be granted, based on the principle of the best interest of the child.

Mr. President,

let me conclude by saying that all these commitments and measures cannot be decoupled by the need to bring perpetrators to justice. Accountability at national and international level is

key to ensure that no more children are involved or used as soldiers in armed conflicts. With the SDGs we committed ourselves to end recruitment and use of child soldiers by 2030. Let's work together to transform this promise into reality.

I thank you.