



UGANDA

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STATEMENT BY

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**a.i. of Uganda to the United Nations
on Children and Armed Conflict**

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Madam President,

Thank you for coming to New York to preside over this important meeting. We welcome the Secretary-General and commend him for the comprehensive report which covers compliance and progress towards ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and other grave violations.

We also thank Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, and the Representative of UNICEF for their briefing. My delegation welcomes, in our midst this morning, Ms. Grace Akallo who has shared her experience as a former abducted child on the plight of children in armed conflict.

Madam President,

My delegation is pleased to note that the preparation of the Report involved broad consultations with all the key stakeholders, especially the Country-level Task Forces on monitoring and reporting. We are convinced that focus on this participatory approach will yield better results in ensuring more effective protection for children affected by conflict in situations of concern.

Madam President,

Uganda is fully committed to, and supports the various efforts by the United Nations, including those of the Security Council, to promote the protection of children in armed conflict.

My delegation condemns the continuing recruitment, use, and abuse of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law. The negative psycho-social consequences on the mental health of the affected children cannot be overemphasized.

While we acknowledge that there has been some significant progress, as indicated in the Report, we are deeply concerned at the slow pace of implementation. We have noted, for instance,

that out of a total of seventy two (72) parties listed and those not listed in Annexes I and II of the Secretary General's Report S/2007/757 only four (4) parties had signed Action Plans, one signed an Action Plan that did not meet the required minimum standards, and three or four cases of ongoing dialogue to translate commitments into Action Plans.

The foregoing statistics clearly demonstrate that quite a lot of work remains to be done. We therefore call upon the Member States, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Country-level Task Forces, United Nations Peacekeeping and Political Missions, as well as non-governmental organizations to redouble their efforts.

Madam President,

The government of Uganda signed and implemented an Action Plan regarding children associated with armed forces, and continues to allow regular access to the United Nations to any UPDF facilities upon request to monitor compliance.

The Report of the Secretary General clearly attests to this by pointing out that there were no cases of recruitment and use of children by the Uganda People's Defence Forces or the now disbanded Local Defence Units (LDUs), and that the UPDF has been accordingly delisted.

Uganda continues to be vigilant in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and tremendous progress has been made resulting in the release and reintegration of formerly abducted children into their families and communities.

The latest example of this commitment was the rescue, reintegration and ongoing rehabilitation of Ms. Catherine Ajok, the last of the 139 Aboke Girls who was abducted by the terrorist Lords Resistance Army rebels, alongside Ms. Akallo.

As we have heard from the testimony of Ms. Akallo, one of the most disturbing issues that is unfortunately common in most

armed conflict situations considered in the report, concerns sexual and gender based violence with young girls as the largest and most vulnerable group of victims.

Madam President,

Uganda strongly supports the recommendations by the Secretary General and the working Group on children and armed conflict that the Security Council should consider, at a minimum, including rape and other grave sexual violence as an additional criteria for inclusion in the Annexes.

My delegation also expresses concern at increase in the reported cases of indiscriminate killing of children caught up in situations of armed conflict and war, as well as attacks on schools. We condemn these inhumane acts and call upon the perpetrators to desist from carrying out such gross atrocities.

We call upon the international community to take decisive action against all those committing crimes and violations against children, including the LRA.

Madam President,

Finally, my delegation, calls upon parties to the Convention on the rights of the Child to strengthen measures geared towards prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces.

We welcome the Secretary General's recommendation that effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are vital for the well-being of children associated with armed forces and groups.

It is therefore imperative that the respective Governments and donors ensure that such programmes, including provision of social services and amenities, should be community-based and receive adequate and timely resources and funding for their long-term sustainability. We agree with the observation that this is an increasingly critical factor for durable peace and security.

We are grateful to the delegation of Mexico for preparing the draft Presidential Statement which Uganda fully supports.

Thank you.