

the United Kingdom has now convened a high-level meeting of Governments and key NGOs, to be held in London in June 1998, to discuss this agenda.

- Engaging non-governmental organizations

The Special Representative has now held meetings collectively and individually with the leadership of some 200 international non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations in over 15 countries, mainly drawn from the humanitarian, human rights, and development sectors. He has sought their active participation in shaping this agenda and their perspectives on his proposed activities. Several NGOs have undertaken to develop new programme initiatives and to launch special public awareness campaigns in their countries in response to this agenda.

- Outreach to media and opinion leaders

The Special Representative has held a series of briefings for the international and national media to sensitise them about the abuse and brutalisation of children in the context of armed conflict and inform them about his activities. These briefings have generated broad media coverage in different parts of the world. As follow-up, some key international media outlets have offered to work in collaboration with the Special Representative to develop special programmes and features focussing on some of the themes highlighted in this agenda.

The Special Representative has also made particular efforts to get this message into important circles of opinion leaders. He has addressed several major international gatherings of political and opinion leaders in different parts of the world. More such encounters are planned in the context of on-going awareness building and public advocacy.

(ii) Selected initial projects

- Input into the draft statute for a permanent International Criminal Court

The Special Representative plans to play an active role in the on-going deliberations for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court. His concern is to ensure that the rights and interests of children affected by armed conflict are fully taken into account in the drafting of the Statute of the Court. He is now consulting with various delegations and relevant NGOs in preparation for his active participation in the forthcoming final session of the Preparatory Committee in New York and the Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rome next June. Among the child rights questions at issue in the drafting of the statute are the designation of the use of children in hostilities as a war crime; the classification of rape and any other forms of sexual violence as a war crime; the designation of the age of criminal responsibility; and the protection of child victims and child witnesses in the prosecution of war crimes.