

(iv) Integrating standards into United Nations operations

United Nations and its agencies, particularly those with operational activities in the field, are important channels for building greater awareness and encouraging more consistent application of human rights and humanitarian norms to protect children affected by armed conflict. In order to achieve this, UN agencies, programmes, funds, bodies, offices and mechanisms should be encouraged to more systematically integrate these standards into their policies, procedures and operations, providing guidelines and training to their personnel whenever necessary, as well as setting the best example through their own conduct. This pertains to all UN personnel, civilian and military. The Special Representative applauds existing efforts in this regard and will encourage all UN bodies to further build into their internal cultures and operational activities greater awareness of and sensitivity to the rights, protection, and welfare of children.

(v) Impact of sanctions on children

In light of concerns expressed in the Machel Report and other recent reports about the ill-effects of sanctions regimes on children, the Special Representative will work closely with relevant UN agencies, programmes, funds, offices, bodies and mechanisms and non-governmental organizations to explore preventive measures, such as child-focused humanitarian exemptions, child impact assessments, and more targeted sanctions regimes. In addition, he will explore more effective ways to protect children living under sanctions regimes and measures to ensure their recovery from the adverse effects.

VII. LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Since his appointment in September 1997, the Special Representative has taken a number of steps to lay the groundwork for his activities. The following are some of the initial steps he has taken in the course of the last several months.

(1) Outreach and advocacy

• Consulting with Governments

The Special Representative has held discussions with political and government leaders from a number of countries. He has visited more than fifteen countries in this connection. He has also consulted extensively with Government delegations at the United Nations. The objectives of these visits and discussions have been to highlight the agenda outlined above and to mobilise political support for it. The Special Representative has called on these Governments to use their political influence to more systematically promote the rights, protection and welfare of children affected by armed conflict. Various Governments have expressed their commitment to make this issue a priority in their diplomatic, development and humanitarian policies.

Another important objective of the country visits has been to establish direct contact with and to seek the perspectives of key NGOs based in those countries.