

partnerships with entities from within and beyond the United Nations. Each partner, by virtue of its particular comparative advantage, has a significant role to play in coordinated action to ensure the rights, protection and welfare of children affected by conflict.

Among the key partners will be the following:

(i) Governments

The most important responsibility for applying international norms and domestic standards lies with Governments. While international human rights and humanitarian instruments are genuine landmarks and provide a basis for action to protect children victimized by conflict, the gap between these norms and their observance on the ground is unacceptably wide and growing. The primary task of bridging this gap lies with Governments and intergovernmental organizations. The Special Representative therefore calls on all Governments to exercise their responsibilities more fully and consistently, to observe local norms and international instruments within their domestic jurisdictions and, at the international level, to apply concerted political and diplomatic pressure on those who systematically violate the rights and protection of children.

(ii) The United Nations system

The role of the Special Representative will be that of a catalyst and advocate, highlighting this agenda and fostering concerted action on it within the United Nations system. The main responsibility for promoting the rights, protection and welfare of children rests with the agencies, funds, programmes, offices, bodies and mechanisms that have the expertise, resources and presence on the ground. The Special Representative will complement the activities of these bodies through public advocacy, and appropriate political and humanitarian initiatives.

When they adopt a concerted approach towards a common cause, such as the protection or rehabilitation of children, UN agencies, funds, programmes, offices, bodies and mechanisms can have a significant impact. In support of the Secretary-General's efforts to streamline UN activities both at headquarters and field levels, the Special Representative has begun to liaise very closely with all relevant UN departments, funds, programmes, agencies, offices, bodies and mechanisms in order to develop a common approach on the rights, protection and welfare of children in the context of armed conflict. The Special Representative is also working through existing consultative mechanisms in order to place this issue within the mainstream of United Nations policy-making and programme activities.

(ii) Regional organizations

Promoting the rights and welfare of children in situations of armed conflict is an agenda that should be developed with the active participation of regional and sub-regional organizations. A regional or sub-regional arrangement can provide a more concrete and local framework for the application of the universal norms and international instruments highlighted above. The Special Representative will encourage the development of appropriate regional and sub-regional commitments and initiatives. He will work to build strong partnerships with several regional and sub-regional