

reinforced by the international norms I have cited earlier. Such a process of ethical renewal is indispensable if a society caught in the throes of a deep moral and political crisis is to recover, rebuild and move forward.

3. Importance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1261 (1999)

UN Security Council resolution 1261 (1999), was adopted by the Security Council on 25 August last year. This is an important milestone, a landmark, for the cause of children affected by armed conflict.

For the first time, the Security Council has devoted a formal and entire resolution to the protection of children affected by armed conflict. This resolution clearly establishes the protection and well-being of children as a major preoccupation that legitimately belongs on the agenda of the Security Council.

The resolution sets out a number of specific and important measures for protecting and ensuring the well-being of children in the midst of armed conflict and in its aftermath. If applied in specific situations, these measures could have a considerable impact for the benefit of children on the ground.

I call on ECOWAS States to press to the fullest advantage resolution 1261, by utilising and applying its provisions on the ground throughout West Africa.

4. Taking Measures to Protect Children in the Midst of Conflict or Adopting "Children as a Zone of Peace"

We must undertake concrete initiatives to prevent and mitigate the suffering of children who are actually caught up in the midst of ongoing conflicts. In other words, we must explore concrete ways to translate the concept of "children as a zone of peace" into practical arrangements on the ground.

In my visits to several countries, including Sierra Leone and Liberia, I have elicited commitments from parties in conflict on some of the following measures: to allow access to populations in distress in zones within their control; to observe humanitarian cease-fires for the benefit of children; not to attack schools or hospitals; not to use landmines; and not to recruit or use children as combatants.

I urge ECOWAS States to adopt "children as a zone of peace" within this sub-region, and to that end to develop a practice for eliciting and monitoring concrete commitments by parties to conflict.