

Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade



Ministère des Affaires étrangères
et du Commerce International

VISIT TO CANADA OF

H.E. OLARA A. OTUNNU

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

APRIL 1-2, 1998

BRIEFING BOOK

**PEACEBUILDING AND HUMAN
SECURITY DIVISION (AGP)**

**VISIT OF H.E. OLARA A. OTUNNU
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT**

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CAC on his Mandate**

1-2 April 1998

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AGENDA

AMENDED 01/04/98 (10:00)

***UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR CHILDREN
AND ARMED CONFLICT,
H.E. MR. OLARA A. OTUNNU***

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY APRIL 1

18h02 H.E. Mr. Otunnu arrives at Macdonald-Cartier International Airport (Flight AC-325) - He will be accompanied by Mr. Moncef Khane, Programme Officer (SRSG-CAC).

Arrival at the Canadian Government Guest House
7 Rideau Gate

18h45 Meeting with The Honourable Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Secretary of State (Children and Youth)

Venue: Canadian Government Guest House
7 Rideau Gate

19h30 for 20h00 Dinner given by Dr. David Malone, Director-General of Global and Human Issues

Venue: *9th Floor, Tower A, Lester B. Pearson Building*

Departure for the Canadian Government Guest House

THURSDAY APRIL 2

08h00 Newsmaker Breakfast

Venue: Dining Room
National Press Club

09h15 Meeting with The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs Office of the Minister

Venue: House of Commons
Room 418-N, Centre Block

- 10h30 Meeting with NGOs
Venue: Lester B. Pearson Building, 125 Sussex Drive, Tower A, 8th Floor, Room 126
Chair: Dr. Lois Wilson, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (ICHRDD)
- 12h00 Cocktail given by The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Venue: Parliamentary Restaurant
House of Commons, Centre Block, New Zealand Room
6th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario
- 12h15 Luncheon given by The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Venue: Parliamentary Restaurant
House of Commons, Centre Block, New Zealand Room
6th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario
- 13h45 Roundtable with officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency.
Venue: *Lester B. Pearson Building, 125 Sussex Drive, Tower A, 8th Floor, Room 126*
Chair: Mr. Scott Wade, Director, Political and Social Policies, Canadian International Development Agency
- 15h15 Meeting with members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Venue: *House of Commons, Room 237-C, Centre Block*
- 15h45 Joint meeting with the Media, The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Olara A. Otunnu, U.N Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, and The Honourable Diane Marleau, Minister for International Cooperation and Minister for La Francophonie
Venue: *Foyer of the House of Commons*
- 16h30 Meeting with The Honourable Diane Marleau, Minister for International Cooperation and Minister for La Francophonie
Venue: *Mrs. Marleau's Office*
Place du Centre
200 promenade du Portage
12th Floor
Hull, Quebec

18h00

Departure for Macdonald-Cartier International Airport

SCENARIO BRIEF

SCENARIO:
VISIT OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT,
MR. OLARA OTUNNU

The UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG)

Delegation consists of:

UnderSecretary and SRSG, Mr. Olara Otunnu

SRSG Programme Officer, Mr. Moncef Khane

The purpose of their visit is to solicit Canadian support for the Office of the SRSG, and to seek your views on his proposed mandate.

This note contains a list of points to register at each meeting, which are shorter versions of the talking points contained at the end of each brief. The briefs are arranged to reflect the schedule of your meetings including detailed talking points for your meeting.

09h15: Meeting with SRSG delegation in your office, Rm. 418-N, Centre Block

AGP/Carmen Sorger will escort the SRSG delegation to your office. Mr. Paul Heinbecker will also attend. The informal meeting will provide a good occasion to register that Canada is a strong supporter of the SRSG and register that Canada intends to offer more than just moral support to his mandate by actively pursuing funding for his Office in the new fiscal year.

During this conversation, you may want to register four principal points: (i) the role of SRSG as an advocate on behalf of children; (ii) the creation of mechanisms within the UN system; (iii) the importance of tackling the appalling plight of child soldiers (broadly defined); and (iv) the Optional Protocol and Canada's support of the NGO Coalition.

POINTS TO REGISTER:

- * WE ARE DELIGHTED WITH YOUR APPOINTMENT TO THE POSITION OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT.
- * MY GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN TO BE A PRIORITY BOTH IN CANADA AND ABROAD. MINISTER MARLEAU AND I, AND OUR OTHER CABINET COLLEAGUES ARE COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH YOU AND OTHER CORE COUNTRIES TO ADDRESS THE COMPLEX AND HEINOUS SITUATION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN ARMED CONFLICT.

Advocate:

- * AS AN ADVOCATE ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS, YOU HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY ON THE GROUND AS A NEGOTIATOR WITH GOVERNMENTS AND NON-STATE ACTORS TO PROTECT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND TO CREATE POLITICAL SPACE FOR HUMANITARIAN NGOs AND UN AGENCIES TO ASSIST CHILDREN AFFECTED BY CONFLICT.

Mechanisms:

- * AT THE UNITED NATIONS, YOU CAN ALSO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE AS AN ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF CONFLICT WITHIN THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND OTHER POLITICAL ORGANS. WE WELCOME AND SUPPORT YOUR EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH MECHANISMS WHICH WOULD ALMOST AUTOMATICALLY ENSURE ATTENTION TO CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES IN DISCUSSIONS FOCUSED ON CONFLICT, ON PEACEKEEPING, ON THE ROLE OF CIVILIAN POLICE AND IN PEACE AGREEMENTS. IN THIS REGARD, WE APPLAUD YOUR CURRENT INITIATIVES WITH PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS.

Child Soldiers:

- * CANADA DEFINES CHILD SOLDIERS IN A BROAD SENSE, AS OUTLINED BY THE MACHEL STUDY. WE ARE NOT JUST SPEAKING OF CHILD FIGHTERS WITH WEAPONS, BUT ALSO OF THE MANY GIRLS AND BOYS WHO SERVE IN ARMIES AND REBEL GROUPS AS COOKS, PORTERS, MESSENGERS, SPIES, LABOURERS AND AS SEXUAL SLAVES. CANADA SEES THE PLIGHT OF GIRL SOLDIERS WHO ARE USED AS SEX SLAVES AS A CRITICAL PEACEBUILDING ISSUE.

Optional Protocol:

- * CANADA HAS PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN NEGOTIATING A DRAFT OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, WHICH AIMS AT RAISING THE AGE OF PARTICIPATION IN HOSTILITIES AND THE AGE OF RECRUITMENT IN ARMED FORCES AND MILITARY GROUPS. WE'VE TAKEN A STRONG POSITION IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AGAINST CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18 PARTICIPATING IN HOSTILITIES.

12h00 Cocktails: New Zealand Room, Parliamentary Restaurant

You will meet the SRSB delegation in the New Zealand Room, where your lunch guests will have gathered for cocktails. You will have 10 minutes to mingle before proceeding to a sit down lunch.

12h15

Lunch, New Zealand Room, Parliamentary Restaurant

Around the table, your guests will include Minister Eggleton and Secretary of State Blondin-Andrew, as well, two representatives from civil society: Reverend Lois Wilson, Chairperson of the Board of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development and Ernie Regher, Programme Director of Project Ploughshares (see attached guest list). At this time, you may wish to engage in a conversation about the Optional Protocol.

Canada has taken a strong position in pushing for an early adoption of the Draft Optional Protocol. As you know, Canada supports 18 as the minimum age of involvement in hostilities. The Department of National Defence is considering policies that might preclude placing individuals under the age of 18 in direct or indirect support of hostilities. On the age of recruitment, current Canadian legislation allow recruitment of persons aged 17 and 16 under certain conditions.

At the Child Soldiers Roundtable and in recent media interviews, you have spoken out in support of the NGO-led Coalition against the use of child soldiers. You are also supporting that Geneva-based Coalition through a \$50,000 dollar contribution.

You may want to ask the Minister of Defence to outline DND's position on recruitment. You may also want to solicit views around the table regarding the legislation of other countries towards recruitment and deployment of under 18 (see Child Soldier Brief).

POINTS TO REGISTER

- * LAST MONDAY (March 23) MY DEPARTMENT HOSTED A ROUNDTABLE ON CHILD SOLDIERS WITH LEADING NGO EXPERTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. THEY ASKED CANADA TO JOIN IN A GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY-LED COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS AND RAISE THE AGE OF RECRUITMENT INTO ARMED FORCES.
- * WHILE CANADA IS VERY INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROCESS, WE WILL FIRST HAVE TO REVIEW OUR CURRENT DOMESTIC SITUATION. WE ARE CURRENTLY EXAMINING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK RELATED TO RECRUITMENT WITH A VIEW TO ADOPTING THE MEASURES NECESSARY TO BE IN A POSITION TO SUPPORT ACTIVELY THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COALITION.
- * IN THE MEANTIME, WE ARE PUTTING \$50,000 DOLLARS TOWARDS SUPPORTING THAT COALITION AND PREVENTING THE USE OF CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS IN THE WARS OF ADULTS.

After lunch, you will leave the delegation and re-unite with them for a joint meeting with the media.

- * WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT, MR. OLARA OTUNNU, AND APPLAUD HIS ROLE AS AN ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN TRAPPED IN ARMED CONFLICT.
- * MY CABINET COLLEAGUES AND I ARE COMMITTED TO PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN, WHETHER IT BE IN THE CHILD SEX TRADE, IN EXTREME AND EXPLOITIVE CHILD LABOUR SITUATIONS, AND ARMED CONFLICT.
- * I AM PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE USE OF CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS. CHILD SOLDIERS, BROADLY DEFINED, INCLUDES ALL BOYS AND GIRLS PARTICIPATING IN HOSTILITIES, WHETHER THEY BE AS LABOURERS, SEX SLAVES, WATER CARRIERS OR THE MANY OTHER WAYS IN WHICH THEY ARE EMPLOYED BY FIGHTING FACTIONS.
- * I AM WORKING WITH MY COLLEAGUE, MINISTER MARLEAU AND WITH INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS TO IDENTIFY CONCRETE WAYS FOR CANADA TO HELP PREVENT THE USE OF CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS, AND TO ASSIST THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN WHO ARE BRUTALLY ABDUCTED INTO ARMED FORCES, OR BECOME SOLDIERS BECAUSE THEY ARE POOR, OR MARGINALIZED OR HAVE NO OTHER VIABLE ALTERNATIVES.
- * LAST MONDAY MY DEPARTMENT HOSTED A ROUNDTABLE ON CHILD SOLDIERS WITH LEADING NGO EXPERTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. THEY ASKED CANADA TO JOIN IN A GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS AND RAISE THE AGE OF RECRUITMENT INTO ARMED FORCES. CANADA IS PUTTING \$50,000 DOLLARS TOWARDS SUPPORTING THAT COALITION AND PREVENTING THE USE OF CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS IN THE WARS OF ADULTS.
- * WITH MY COLLEAGUE, THE MINISTER OF CIDA, DIANE MARLEAU, AND I ARE SUPPORTING THREE PROJECTS AIMED AT DEMOBILIZING AND REINTEGRATING CHILD SOLDIERS IN ACUTE PEACEBUILDING SITUATIONS. MY DEPARTMENT IS ALLOCATING \$200,000 DOLLARS TOWARD REINTEGRATING BOY AND GIRL EX-SOLDIERS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.
- * THE PROJECT WILL SUPPORT NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES TO DEMOBILIZE 1, 500 CHILD SOLDIERS, AGED NINE TO SIXTEEN, AND TO REINTEGRATE THEM INTO THEIR FAMILIES. OUR HOPE IS THAT EVENTUALLY THESE CHILDREN WILL TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN REBUILDING THEIR COMMUNITIES.

* MINISTER MARLEAU TO ANNOUNCE?

RESPONSIVE:

- * THE FIRST PROJECT, IN NORTHERN UGANDA, IS AIMED AT ASSISTING AND RE-INTEGRATING BETWEEN 5 000 AND 8 000 ABDUCTED CHILDREN BY REBEL FORCES. THE MAIN OBJECTIVES ARE TO STOP THE ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN; TO SUPPORT THE ADVOCACY WORK UNDERWAY FOR THE RELEASE OF THE ABDUCTED CHILDREN; AND TO FACILITATE THE TRACING AND RESETTLEMENT OF CHILDREN WHO MANAGE TO ESCAPE CAPTIVITY.

- THE SECOND PROJECT IN LIBERIA TARGETS 4 360 CHILDREN SOLDIERS. IT IS AIMED AT DEMOBILIZING AND REINTEGRATING CHILD SOLDIERS INTO THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT SUCH AS SKILLS AND LITERACY TRAINING. IT WILL ALSO HELP TO ASSESS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITION OF THE CHILDREN AND SUPPORT THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY, AND REBUILD THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE FOR REINTEGRATION INTO CIVIL SOCIETY.

- THE THIRD PROJECT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (EX-ZAÏRE) IS AIMED AT ENCOURAGING AND ASSISTING NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL AUTHORITY TO DEMOBILIZE 1 500 CHILD SOLDIERS, AGES NINE TO SIXTEEN, AND TO REINTEGRATE THEM INTO THEIR FAMILIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY. IT WILL ALSO HELP TO REINFORCE EXISTING MECHANISMS TO ALLOW DEMOBILIZED CHILDREN TO COMPLETE THEIR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDIES AUGMENTED WITH LOCAL AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TRAINING.

Following the meeting with press, you will leave the SRSG delegation. The delegation will meet with Minister Marleau, and then with Mr. Bill Graham and other members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

P R O F I L E S

BIOGRAPHY

H. E. MR. OLARA OTUNNU

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Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed Olara A. Otunnu (Côte d'Ivoire) as his Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict. The three-year-term appointment, announced on 19 August and effective on 1 September, is a follow-up to the Graça Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children and is pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/77 (December 1996).

In his capacity as the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Otunnu will serve as advocate for children in conflict situations, promoting measures for their protection in times of conflict and for their healing and reintegration in conflict's aftermath: by taking concrete initiatives in particular cases; by informing and mobilizing international public opinion; by ensuring that the welfare of children affected by armed conflict is a priority on the international agenda; and by acting as a catalyst among United Nations agencies and humanitarian non-governmental organizations to develop a concerted and focused approach to meet the needs of children affected by violent conflict.

Mr. Otunnu has been widely recognized for his long-standing commitment and contribution to diverse activities relating to international peace and security, prevention of conflict, reform of multilateral institutions, development, human rights, issues of values, and the future of Africa. In this connection, he has held many leadership responsibilities, including President of the United Nations Security Council, Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, and Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations. He has also served on several commissions, including the Commission on Global Governance, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, and the Club of Rome.

Born in Mucwini (Chua) in Uganda, Mr. Otunnu received his early education at Gulu High School and King's College Budo. He then attended Makerere University, where he was president of the students union; Oxford University -- where he was Overseas Scholar -- and Harvard Law School -- where he was a Fullbright Scholar. A lawyer by training, he practised law as an Associate with the law firm of Chadbourne and Parke in New York, prior to becoming Assistant Professor of Law at Albany Law School.

In the 1970s, as a student leader and later as Secretary-General of Uganda Freedom Union, Mr. Otunnu played a leading role in the resistance against the Idi Amin regime in Uganda. At the Moshi Unity Conference on Uganda (1979), Mr. Otunnu was elected to serve as a member of the Uganda National Consultative Council, the interim administration in the post-Amin period (1979-1980).

From 1980 to 1985, Mr. Otunnu served as Uganda's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. During his tenure, Mr. Otunnu played a very active role in the work of the Organization, providing leadership in various bodies, including President of the Security Council (1981), when he presided over the election of the Secretary-General; Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights (1983-1984); Vice-President of the General Assembly (1982-1983); Chairman of the Contact Group on Global Negotiations (1982-1993); Chairman of the General Assembly Credentials Committee (1983-1984), when he presided over the Grenada crisis; Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Ministerial Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries (1983); and Chairman of the African Group (1981).

Mr. Otunnu served as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda from 1985 to 1986, during which time he played a prominent role in the Uganda Peace Talks which culminated in the Nairobi Peace Agreement of December 1985. Subsequently, he returned to academia. From 1987 to 1989, he was affiliated with the Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI) as a Visiting Fellow, and with the American University in Paris as a Visiting Professor.

Mr. Otunnu has participated in many studies and commissions focusing especially on international peace, reform of multilateral institutions and issues of values. He has been a member of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1994 to present); the Commission on Global Governance (1992-1995); the International Panel on Management and Decision-Making in the United Nations (1986-1987); the Group on Rethinking International Governance (1986-1990); the United Nations Group of Experts on New Concepts of International Security (1984-1985); the Commonwealth Group of Experts Study Group in the Security of Small States (1984-1985); and the International Task Force on Security Council Peace Enforcement (ongoing).

Mr. Otunnu has also been active in many civic initiatives and organizations. He currently serves on the boards of several organizations, including the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Aspen Institute, Hampshire College, the International Crisis Group (ICG), the International Selection Commission of the Philadelphia Liberty Medal, Aspen France, the Council of African Advisers of the World Bank, the International Patrons of the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford University, Aspen Italia, and the Advisory Committee of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Mr. Otunnu has been President of the International Peace Academy (IPA) since 1990. The Academy is an independent, international institution dedicated to promoting the prevention and settlement of armed conflict between and within States. Under Mr. Otunnu's leadership, it has developed an extensive portfolio of programmes and has become an important forum for ideas and debate among policy-makers and opinion-makers. These programme initiatives include a policy research programme to monitor and assess the effectiveness of multilateral peace operations: a regional programme for Africa designed to help the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and African civil society build indigenous capacities for responding more effectively to the dramatic situation of conflicts in Africa; and a major expansion of the Academy's training programme on peacemaking and peacekeeping to five annual seminars.

Mr. Otunnu was born in September 1950. He is the guardian of six children.

Biographical Note

Moncef Khane

Mr. Moncef Khane joined the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed conflict in January 1998. Prior to that assignment, he served as Legal Officer and Special Assistant to the Deputy Executive Director of the joint OAS/UN International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH), working on human rights and assisting the Government of Haiti in reforming the judiciary system. From 1993 to 1995, he served as Special Assistant to the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna, Austria. From 1992 to 1993, he was Deputy Provincial Director, Battambang Province, of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), and Liaison Officer with the Party of Democratic Kampuchea at Pailin. Prior to that Mr. Khane served in the Algerian Foreign Service as Adviser to the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UNIDO in Vienna, Austria. He started his career at the United Nations as Associate Political Officer at the Centre against *Apartheid*, Department of Political and Security Council Affairs in New York.

Born on 31 March 1964 in Algiers (Algeria), Mr. Khane received his *Licence ès Science économique* (international economics) from the Sorbonne in Paris, a Masters of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and a Masters in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, where he was an Edward S. Mason [Fellow] at the Harvard Institute for International Development.

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

U.N. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Issue:

The U.N. Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict is seeking Canadian support for his mandate and Canadian views on his role. Although Canada is not providing financial support for his office at this time, we want to assist his efforts through the creation of a Canadian Eminent Persons Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Background:

Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed H.E. Mr. Olara Otunnu to the position of Undersecretary and U.N. Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict as a concrete follow-up to the Graça Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (Tabled December 1996).

In the first six months of his three year mandate, SRSG Otunnu's priority has been to establish his office. In so doing, he has visited northern capitals to solicit support for a Trust Fund, from which operational and personnel funds will be drawn. This visit to Ottawa is part of that process. Another priority of the SRSG is to visit war affected countries. Mr. Otunnu recently returned from his official visit to Liberia and Sierre Leone.

Canadian Position:

The role of the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG) could be twofold: (i) to act as an advocate on behalf of children in situations of armed conflict with governments, non-state actors and global public; and (ii), the SRSG should negotiate with fighting factions to mediate on behalf of children to ensure respect the rights of children and to create political space for UN agencies to carry out their humanitarian work with children.

As an UnderSecretary to the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu could leave a lasting mark on the U.N. system by creating mechanisms which would almost automatically ensure attention, by the UN's political organs, to child protection in situations of conflict. Furthermore, Mr. Otunnu could introduce the issue of children and armed conflict to the Security Council.

Canada could assist the SRSG by identifying eminent Canadians to advocate on behalf of children trapped in the midst of armed conflict.

MAIN MESSAGES:

- * **We are delighted with your appointment to the position of Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict.**
- * **My government considers the rights of children to be a priority both in Canada and abroad. My cabinet colleagues and I are committed to working with you and other core countries to address the complex and heinous situation of children involved in armed conflict.**
- * **I feel very strongly about the use of children as soldiers in war. Last week, I hosted a Roundtable on Child Soldiers with leading experts from the international community. Canada is supporting the international NGO coalition to ban the use of child soldiers. The Canadian Defence Act is under review, and I working with my colleague at National Defence to examine changes in legislation governing our armed forces.**
- * **I also feel strongly about the particular vulnerabilities of girls in situations of armed conflict. We must raise the profile of their needs with the international public, and also with perpetrators of crimes against girls and women in conflict zones.**
- * **As an advocate on behalf of children in conflict situations, you have a critical role to play on site as a negotiator to mediate on behalf of children with governments and non-state actors to protect children's rights and to create political space for humanitarian NGOs and U.N. Agencies to assist children affected by conflict.**
- * **We would like to assist you by exploring ways in which eminent Canadians might support your mediation efforts on behalf of children trapped in the midst of armed conflict.**
- * **At the United Nations, you can also play an important role as an advocate for children in situations of conflict within the Security Council and other political organs.**
- * **We welcome and support your efforts to establish mechanisms which would almost automatically ensure attention to child protection issues in discussions focussed on conflict, on peacekeeping, on the role of civilian police and in peace agreements. In this regard, we applaud your current initiatives with peacekeeping operations.**
- * **I understand that USD\$1.5 Million has already been committed to your voluntary fund. I also understand that you are in the process of hiring your staff. While we are unable to commit funds at this point, we do look forward to supporting our work in the future and I am interested in hearing about your spending priorities for the fund.**

CHILD SOLDIERS

CHILD SOLDIERS

Issue:

To prevent the use of children as soldiers (broadly defined) in armed conflict, and to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers into their communities so that they may be active citizens in the reconstruction of their societies.

Background:

Throughout history children have been forcibly or voluntarily conscripted into armed factions. In the late 20th century, however, the use of children as soldiers has escalated due to the advent of light weapons technology, the rise of intra-state conflict, and the increase in irregular forces.

The child soldier phenomenon is a complex and multi-faceted global problem. Child soldiers are active in zones of combat in Latin America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. They belong to both government and rebel forces. Some child soldiers are volunteers, while others are abducted and forced to serve in combat situations. Estimates in 1996 put the number of child soldiers serving in the world at 250,000. In their book, *Children the Invisible Soldiers*, Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin claim this figure is not static: once child recruitment starts, it tends to escalate, leading to ever more children becoming involved at an increasingly younger age. The danger for children in zones of conflict is immediate, but the ramifications for countries whose children have become socialized as soldiers is long-lasting and possibly devastating for future generations.

Canadian Position

"Child Soldiers" can be broadly defined to include child fighters with weapons, and also the many ways in which boys and girls "serve armies": as cooks, porters, messengers, spies, to perform labour and as sexual slaves, as outlined in the Machel Report. In keeping with Canada's position on the Optional Protocol, child soldiers will refer to persons under 18 participating in hostilities.

The challenge is three-fold: (i) to protect children and provide them with alternatives so that they do not become child soldiers; (ii) to remove child soldiers from active combat; and (iii) to reintegrate children into families and communities if they have been soldiers.

Canada's approach is also three-fold: First, through advocacy. Canada is supporting the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu who sees his role as an advocate to raise awareness for the issue of children and armed conflict-- both with governments who use child soldiers, and with rebel groups who specifically target children.

Second, through Development. Through CIDA, Canada has been supporting children in areas of conflict since 1993 by rebuilding schools, and by assisting children with basic human needs such as access to clean water, food, health care and shelter. Beyond this first rank of needs,

Canada has assisted the reintegration of children and child soldiers alike, through education projects, reunification programmes, sports and skills training through local Canada funds and NGOs, and we are committed to continuing this important developmental track.

And third, through Prevention. On March 23d, DFAIT hosted a Roundtable on Child Soldiers with leading NGO experts from around the world. International participants asked Canada to join in a government and civil society Coalition to prevent the use of Child Soldiers and raise the age of recruitment into armed forces. DFAIT is supporting this Coalition with a CDN\$50,000-contribution from the Peacebuilding Program.

MAIN MESSAGES:

- * WHEN WE SPEAK OF CHILD SOLDIERS, WE ARE NOT JUST SPEAKING OF CHILD FIGHTERS WITH WEAPONS, BUT ALSO OF THE MANY GIRLS AND BOYS WHO SERVE IN ARMIES AND REBEL GROUPS AS COOKS, PORTERS, MESSENGERS, SPIES, LABOURERS AND AS SEXUAL SLAVES.
- * THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT IS WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS TO IDENTIFY CONCRETE WAYS FOR CANADA TO HELP PREVENT CHILD SOLDIERING, AND TO ASSIST THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN WHO ARE BRUTALLY ABDUCTED INTO ARMED FORCES, OR BECOME SOLDIERS BECAUSE THEY ARE POOR, OR MARGINALIZED OR HAVE NO OTHER VIABLE ALTERNATIVES. OUR APPROACH IS THREE-FOLD:
 - * FIRST, THROUGH ADVOCACY. WE SUPPORTING YOUR ROLE AS AN ADVOCATE TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR THE ISSUE OF CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT-- BOTH WITH GOVERNMENTS WHO USE CHILD SOLDIERS, AND WITH REBEL GROUPS WHO SPECIFICALLY TARGET CHILDREN. WITHIN THIS REGARD, ADVOCACY IS ESSENTIAL FOR HIGHLIGHTING THE SPECIAL NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES OF GIRLS SOLDIERS.
 - * SECOND, THROUGH DEVELOPMENT. THROUGH CIDA, CANADA HAS BEEN SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN AREAS OF CONFLICT SINCE 1993 BY REBUILDING SCHOOLS, AND BY ASSISTING CHILDREN WITH BASIC HUMAN NEEDS SUCH AS ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER, FOOD, HEALTH CARE AND SHELTER. BEYOND THIS FIRST RANK OF NEEDS, CANADA HAS ASSISTED THE REINTEGRATION OF CHILDREN AND CHILD SOLDIERS ALIKE, THROUGH EDUCATION PROJECTS, REUNIFICATION PROGRAMMES, SPORTS AND SKILLS TRAINING THROUGH LOCAL CANADA FUNDS AND NGOS, AND WE ARE COMMITTED TO CONTINUING THIS IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTAL TRACK.
 - * AND THIRD, THROUGH PREVENTION. LAST WEEK, MY DEPARTMENT HOSTED A ROUNDTABLE ON CHILD SOLDIERS WITH LEADING NGO EXPERTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. THEY ASKED CANADA TO JOIN IN A GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION TO PREVENT THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS AND RAISE THE AGE OF RECRUITMENT INTO ARMED FORCES.

OPTIONAL PROTOCOL

THE DRAFT OPTIONAL PROTOCOL

ISSUE:

Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict

BACKGROUND:

A working group of the UN Commission on Human Rights has met four times since 1994 to draft an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fourth session of this working group has taken place on February 2-10, 1998.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that States parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen do not take a direct part in hostilities (combat) and that States parties shall refrain from recruiting into their armed forces any person who has not attained the age of fifteen (article 38(2) and (3)).

The main objectives of the Optional Protocol are to raise the age for participation in hostilities and the age of recruitment. Another objective is to prevent the recruitment and use of children by non-governmental armed groups.

In the negotiations, there are three principal outstanding issues: 1) the minimum age for participation in hostilities; 2) the minimum age for voluntary recruitment; and 3) whether there should be any exceptions to the minimum age for recruitment. The Working Group has agreed, *ad referendum*, that the minimum age for compulsory recruitment (conscription) should be 18. There is also broad support for a provision that would require parties to the Optional Protocol to take all feasible measures to prevent the recruitment of persons under the age of 18 by non-governmental armed groups.

Working groups of the Commission on Human Rights work on the basis of consensus. It has become clear that it will not be possible to reach a consensus that will satisfy many States participants seeking to preserve the status quo applicable to their armed forces on one or more of the above issues.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Canada supports 18 as the minimum age of involvement in hostilities. The Department of National Defence has confirmed that it was prepared to put policies in place that will preclude placing individuals under the age of 18 in direct or indirect support of hostilities.

On the age of recruitment, current Canadian legislation allow recruitment of persons aged 17 and 16 under certain conditions. Canada has been very involved in the drafting and supportive the early conclusion of a good optional protocol.

However, at the last meeting of the Working Group, it was impossible to achieve a consensus and it appeared that the text would have to be considerably weakened to accommodate the domestic situation of every countries.

Since then, an strong NGO Coalition was formed with the objective of getting together a group of counties to support the development of a protocol setting the age of 18 for both participation and recruitment.

While Canada is very interested in participating in this process, we will first have to review our current domestic situation. We are currently examining the legal framework related to recruitment with a view to adopting the measures necessary to be in a position to support actively the objectives of the Coalition.

**CANADIAN POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER
ON
CHILD SOLDIERS**

DRAFT Discussion Policy Paper on Child Soldiers**1. Introduction**

The child soldier phenomenon is a complex and multi-faceted global problem. Child soldiers are active in zones of combat in Latin America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. They belong to both government and rebel forces. Some child soldiers are volunteers, while others are abducted and forced to serve in combat situations. Estimates in 1996 put the number of child soldiers serving in the world at 250,000. In their book, *Children the Invisible Soldiers*, Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin claim this figure is not static: "Once child recruitment starts, it tends to escalate, leading to ever more children becoming involved at an increasingly younger age".¹ The danger for children in zones of conflict is immediate, but the ramifications for countries whose children have become socialized as soldiers is long-lasting and possibly devastating for future generations.

It is this complex of variables that presents the biggest challenge: how to create a general policy approach that will apply to all cases of child soldiering and will help to minimize the number of child soldiers and facilitate their re-integration into society. This paper will sketch out the dimensions of the child soldier problem and suggest several options for a Canadian initiative based on discussions in the first meeting of an interdepartmental working group (WG) on children and armed conflict.

2. Proposed Definition

"Child Soldiers" can be broadly defined to include child fighters with weapons, and also the many ways in which boys and girls "serve armies": as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies, to perform labour and as sexual slaves, as outlined in the Machel Report.² In keeping with Canada's position on the Optional Protocol, child soldiers will refer to persons under 18 participating in hostilities.

3. Background

Throughout history children have been forcibly or voluntarily conscripted into armed factions.³ In the late 20th century, however, the use of children as soldiers has escalated due to the advent of light weapons technology, the rise of intra-state conflict, and the increase in irregular forces. Child soldiers are a wide-spread phenomenon with documented cases on all continents. Although the literature attempts to quantify the extent to which child soldiers are employed in Africa, Latin America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East as data varies dramatically.

Of the documented cases, Africa is one of the continents most studied as the phenomenon of child soldiers is acute. In Liberia for example, Human Rights Watch estimates that between 40 to 60 thousand children have fought in that country's civil war. In Uganda and Southern Sudan, child soldiers as young as eight and ten years of age have given testimony on the brutality experienced by themselves and others-- many younger and weaker than themselves.⁴

Liberia and Southern Sudan represent two extremes. At one end of the spectrum is the Liberian case, where children actively seek to join the NPFL and ULIMO primarily for power and economic survival. At the other end, in Uganda and Southern Sudan, children are abducted and forced to join armed factions.

The challenge is three-fold: (i) how to protect children and provide them with alternatives so that they do not become child soldiers; (ii) how to remove child soldiers from active combat; and (iii) how to reintegrate children into families and communities if they have been soldiers. To properly and adequately address these challenges, one must understand the root causes from which children become soldiers. Although causality is at times difficult to prove in the case of child soldiers, the combination of three causal variables; namely, structural violence, leadership and poverty often produce ripe conditions for them.⁵ Poor children and children exposed to harsh or unstable social conditions are disproportionately targeted for both voluntary conscription and forced abduction. Fundamentally, addressing the economic and/or societal instability of children in situations of armed conflict becomes crucial. (See *Key Sectors*)

4. Towards a Canadian Approach

Canada's human security approach could be used as a methodology for analyzing child soldiers. This entails examining issues of prevention and demobilization from the perspective of a child and child soldier's (respectively) needs. This approach would compliment well the methodology which CIDA and UNICEF have developed to deal with child rights and child soldiers. Such an approach could be driven by the following principles:

- (i) Through the development assistance program, Canada seeks to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence by supporting initiatives that address problems directly and that build the capacity of key organizations in partner countries. CIDA's approach is to focus on improving conditions in which children find themselves, to place priority of seeking to eliminate the most severe forms of exploitation, and to address the causes of abuse, exploitation and violence. CIDA's approach is based on the Rights of the Child, situating issues connected to child soldiers therein. In this approach, the child is viewed as 'subject' not 'object' and thus has voice. Demobilized child soldiers will be a key resource for understanding which approaches will be successful in meeting the needs of children in armed conflict-- both in prevention and demobilization;
- (ii) A community-based approach will be most successful for suggesting both alternatives and techniques for reintegrating child soldiers into the social fabric of their communities. Community leaders will be able to respond to the reintegration of child soldiers based on local traditions and norms;
- (iii) In conjunction with a community-based approach, local, national, regional and international NGOs who work closely with civil society will be aware of strategies for prevention, demobilization and re-integration. They will be able to mobilize expertise and resources to detract children from voluntarily joining armed groups, while at the

same time, assisting the community to absorb demobilized child soldiers;

- (iv) Interventions must be sustainable and provide for a child's basic human needs. Temporary mechanisms (such as psycho-social healing 'gardens') may not be as sustainable as schools (with teachers who are trained to deal with trauma), employment and safety for the child's family;
- (v) Understanding the root causes for the voluntarily or involuntarily involvement of children in armed conflict will assist in finding preventive solutions and possibly incentives for demobilization.
- (vi) Much of the core problem with child soldiers stems from non-state actors who target children primarily to reinforce their depleting numbers and because children are said to be less constrained by fear than adults. It is critical, therefore, to dialogue with non-state actors. Although the Canadian government is not in a position to conduct that dialogue, it can deal with others who are; namely, SRSO Otunnu, state leaders, retired eminent leaders, and NGOs.

5. International Instruments

In order to legitimize the sanctity of children in armed conflict, Canada is continuing to uphold and push for further protection of children through the following international instruments:

The following international instruments (and draft instruments) and norms should be used as a basis for our activities in the area of the protection of children in armed conflict.

- * The Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 38(2)(3) which provides that "States Parties Shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen do not take direct part in hostilities" and that "States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces" which sets the standards for rights of children to be protected from armed conflict;
- * Protocol Additional I to the Geneva Conventions, article 77 provides that "states parties shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen do not take part in hostilities and, in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces";
- * The Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention which aims at raising the age of participation in hostilities and the age of recruitment in armed forces and in paramilitary groups;
- * The Draft Statute of an International Criminal Court where Canada supports the inclusion of a crime dealing with the recruitment of children under fifteen to participate in armed conflict;

- * The omnibus resolutions of the Commission on Human on the Rights of the Child containing a section on children in armed conflict;
- * Resolutions of the Red Cross Conference dealing with the protection of Women and children.

6. Key sectors:

(i) *Political:*

- * Canada could continue to push for the recommendations laid out in the Machel Report. One of these is to dialogue with state and non-state actors to reach a consensus that children do not belong in armed conflict.
- * The WG could convene a Roundtable in March on Children and Armed Conflict with an emphasis on Child Soldiers. The objective would be to assemble a core Canadian group (the WG expanded to include Nigel Fisher, Senator Pearson and representatives from key international NGOs active in this area) to develop an agenda for political action on the issue of children and armed conflict with an emphasis on child soldiers (broadly defined). Canada's role and niche can be extracted from the outcome.

(ii) *Development:*

- * CIDA's programming in support of children in areas of armed conflict supports the goals of the Plan of Action of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990 UN World Summit for Children and Canada's OECD commitment to help meet targets for poverty reduction, primary education, gender equity in schools, child health and maternal health. The challenge lies in designing projects to address the root causes for child soldiers from a child-centred perspective. Many studies have documented structural violence and poverty as the root causes for child soldiers. Poor children are disproportionately targeted for both voluntary conscription and abduction. Addressing the economic instability which surrounds poor children in situations of armed conflict will continue to be a central question for the donor community.

(iii) *Role of SRSG:*

- * A visit from the SRSG, Olarra Otunnu to raise the political profile with Canadian Ministers, Parliamentarians and media about the issue of child soldiers;
- * Canada could support SRSG's role as an advocate to raise awareness for the issue of children and armed conflict. SRSG believes that children and armed conflict must be perceived as a political issue by key governments, UN institutions, NGOs, religious leaders and civil society at large. He would like to mount a public relations campaign to overcome apathy and to mobilize the media, governments and civil society to show that: "we *should* do something and that something *can* be done". Finally, he sees countries such as Canada playing a key role in setting world public opinion.

(iv) *Country-specific tracks:*

- * The WG could identify areas of the world in which Canada is most interested and active in so that a Canadian child soldier initiative can build on existing development and peacebuilding projects. Once countries are identified, Canada can convene coalitions of the willing around situations where the problem of child soldiers is critical, and where the rights of children in armed conflict are being systematically ignored.

Consultations: Interdepartmental Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Endnotes

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- 1 . Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin, *Children: The Invisible Soldiers*, Stockholm: Radda Barnen Pub., 1996, p. 23.
 - 2 . G. Machel, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children", UN Doc.A/51/150, 26 August 1996, p. 16.
 - 3 . *Ibid.*, p. 24.
 - 4 . See Human Rights Watch, *Easy Prey: Child Soldiers in Liberia*, 1994; *The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda*, 1997; *Children of Sudan: Slaves, Street Children and Child Soldiers*, 1995.
 - 5 . See Goodwin-Gill and Cohn, *Child Soldiers* (1994); Brett and McCallin, *Children the Invisible Soldiers* (1996); Human Rights Watch, *The Scars of Death* (1997); *Easy Prey* (1994); and *Children of Sudan* (1995).

**INTERIM REPORT OF THE SRSG-CAC
ON HIS MANDATE**

ADVANCE COPY- UNOFFICIAL DOCUMENT

Economic and
Social Council

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fourth session
Item 20 of the provisional agenda

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Interim Report of the Special Representative of the
Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict,
Mr. Olara A. Otunnu, submitted pursuant to
General Assembly resolution 52/107

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990 World Summit for Children, the United Nations has sought to draw international attention to the horrendous plight of children affected by armed conflict. In 1993, following a recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/157 recommending that the Secretary-General appoint an independent expert to study the impact of armed conflict on children. Ms. Graça Machel, former Minister of Education and First Lady of Mozambique, was appointed the Secretary-General's Expert, charged with the task of undertaking the study with the special support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Center for Human Rights. In 1996, following two years of extensive research, regional consultations and field visits, Ms. Machel submitted her report, entitled "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" (document A/51/306 and Add. 1), to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

The Machel Report provided the first comprehensive assessment of the multiple ways in which children are abused and brutalized in the context of war. It set out findings and recommendations for action in several areas, including child soldiers, refugees and internally displaced children, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, landmines and unexploded ordnance, the impact of sanctions on children, health and nutrition, psychological recovery and social reintegration, education, demilitarization and reconstruction.

In response to the Machel Report, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/77 in which it recommended the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The resolution also called upon States and institutions concerned to provide voluntary contributions in support of the work of the Special Representative.

In September 1997, the Secretary-General appointed Mr. Olara A. Otunnu as his Special Representative for a term of three years. In announcing this appointment, the Secretary-General underscored the urgent need for a public advocate and moral voice on behalf of children whose rights, protection and welfare have been and are being violated in the context of armed conflict.

This interim report is being submitted to the Commission on Human Rights pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/107. A full report will be presented to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly later in the year.

II. CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT: THE CONTEXT

As the Preamble of the United Nations Charter underlines in its famous opening words, our first duty is to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". In this we have failed profoundly. Not only are millions of children still the victims of war, far too often they are its principal targets and even its instruments. At this moment in approximately fifty countries around the world, children are suffering from the effects of conflict and its aftermath.

For all the children deliberately massacred or caught in crossfire or maimed by anti-personnel land mines, many more have been deprived of their physical, mental and emotional needs in the context of societies long at war. Millions have lost their homes and their parents, not to mention years of education and socialization. Some have been permanently traumatized by the events they have witnessed and experienced. In today's internecine conflicts, children are specifically targeted in strategies to eliminate the next generation of potential adversaries. To the same end, children, and especially girls, have been made the targets of sexual abuse and gender-based violence on a large scale. Most cynically, children have been compelled to become instruments of war, recruited or kidnapped to become child soldiers, forced to give violent expression to the hatreds of adults. In all, an estimated two million children have been killed in situations of armed conflict since 1987, while three times that number have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Countless more have been psychologically scarred and socially dislocated.

This brutal reality has been exacerbated by a qualitative change in the nature and scope of conflicts in recent times. Today's conflicts are primarily internal, often fought by multiple, semi-autonomous armed groups within existing state boundaries. The international rules of warfare, which have governed inter-state wars fought by regular armies, are routinely ignored in these situations of "total war." Often protracted, such conflicts can expose successive generations of children to horrendous violence.

Against a backdrop of increasingly accessible and destructive conventional weapons and ordnance, many of these conflicts pit compatriot against compatriot, neighbor against neighbor. They are often characterized by the demonisation of the "enemy community" and the orchestration of vicious hate campaigns. In the intense and intimate setting of today's internecine warfare, the village has become the battlefield and civilian populations the primary target. In World War I, civilians counted for some 5 percent of casualties. In World War II that figure rose to 48 percent. Today up to 90 percent of conflict casualties around the world are civilians. A large and increasing number of these are children.

At the heart of this growing phenomenon of mass violence and social disintegration is a crisis of values. Perhaps the most fundamental loss a society can suffer is the collapse of its own value system. Many societies exposed to protracted conflicts have seen their community values radically undermined if not shattered altogether. This has given rise to an "ethical vacuum", a setting in which international standards are ignored with impunity and where local value systems have lost their sway.

The international community has an obligation to be concerned about the protection of all non-combatants caught in the midst of violent conflicts. Yet there is an urgent need to focus special attention on the plight of children. They are the ones least responsible for the conflicts, yet most vulnerable to their excesses. Children, as the most innocent and powerless victims of war, require special protection.

Children represent the future of human civilization and the future of every society. To permit them to be used as pawns in warfare, whether as targets or perpetrators, is to cast a shadow on the future. From generation to

generation, violence begets violence, as the abused grow up to become abusers. Children who are thus violated carry the scars of fear and hatred in their hearts and minds. Forced to learn to kill instead of pursuing education, the children of conflict lack the knowledge and skills needed to build their futures and the futures of their communities. For society, the lives destroyed and the opportunities lost could have a devastating effect on its long-term stability and development.

III. TAKING NORMS AND VALUES SERIOUSLY

As noted above, the abomination against children that we are currently witnessing in so many theatres of conflict around the world are due in large measure to a normative crisis at both the international and local levels. The traditional limits on the conduct of warfare - international instruments as well as local injunctions and taboos - are being cast aside. Clearly, the development and codification of these local and global norms is only the first step. To be meaningful, they must be respected and applied. The immense effort involved in the creation of international instruments and standards comes to naught if adoption is not followed by application. Similarly, the rich well of history and traditions from which local values spring means little if those norms are discarded when most needed. In his work, the Special Representative will stress the need to turn principle into practice, reminding all parties concerned, including non-state actors, that international and local standards of conduct should be resurrected and respected.

(i) International instruments

Over the past fifty years, the nations of the world have developed and ratified an impressive series of international human rights and humanitarian instruments. Several of these address the rights, protection and welfare of children. The most pertinent are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Geneva Conventions (1949), along with their Additional Protocols. The latter contain some 25 articles specifically pertaining to children. Protocol 1 stipulates that children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of assault during conflict. Article 3, common to all four Conventions, is the cornerstone of the protection of civilians in internal conflicts and is binding on all parties to a conflict, regardless of their relationship to the state. Its fundamental guarantees are supplemented by Protocol II. Article 4.3 of Protocol II is devoted exclusively to children, enjoining that they "be provided with the care and aid they require". The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most universally ratified international instrument, calls for the protection of children's right to life, education, health, and other fundamental needs. These provisions apply equally in times of armed conflict as in times of peace.

However, the value of these provisions is limited to the extent to which they are applied. Words on paper cannot save children in peril. The role of the Special Representative will be to ensure that the international community does not forget that its obligation encompasses not only the invocation of norms but, more important, the exertion of pressure to implement those norms and prevent the abuse and brutalisation of children.

(ii) Local value systems

In addition to these international instruments, all societies can draw on their own local value systems, including a normative order governing civic relations and the conduct of war. Societies throughout history have recognized the special obligation to protect children from harm. Even in times of conflict, fundamental values and ethical standards were respected. Distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable practices were maintained, with taboos and injunctions proscribing indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations, especially children and women.

Increasingly, however, especially during periods of protracted conflict, we are witnessing a breakdown of traditional norms and social codes of behaviour, with horrendous consequences for the civilian population. In the resulting "ethical vacuum" anything goes. Distinctions between civilians and combatants have broken down. Children, women, the elderly - all have become fair game in the single-minded struggle for power.

In such situations, the Special Representative shall encourage the revival of these critically important local value systems, the values that promote the rights, protection and welfare of children. In particular, the role of institutions and community structures that normally provide a sense of ethical rootedness, such as parents, extended families, elders, teachers, schools and religious institutions, should be supported and strengthened.

IV. PROMOTING PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION

A serious and systematic effort by all concerned parties - from Governments to the UN system to civil society organizations to private citizens - is needed to address the abomination being committed against children in the context of armed conflict. As an advocate on behalf of these children, the Special Representative will work to spearhead that effort. He will combine normative, political and humanitarian strategies in efforts to promote prevention, protection and rehabilitation for the benefit of children.

First, it is high time to put the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" into practice. Prevention entails strengthening the normative foundation of societies and mobilising public opinion in order to create a social and political climate that is capable of impeding abuse against children. Second, the protection of children in zones of active conflict is the most visible and daunting challenge. In addition to their right to life and physical security, children require continued access to relief, health and educational services. Third, and equally important, is the need for healing and reintegration of children in the aftermath of violent conflict. The provision of physical, spiritual, and emotional care to children whose lives have been shattered by conflict must constitute an important component of programmes for post-conflict recovery.

In this context, the Special Representative will develop the following activities:

(i) Public advocacy

The Special Representative will give a public voice to children who have been victimized by the chaos, cruelty and lawlessness that characterize contemporary armed conflicts. He will work to raise greater public and official awareness of international instruments and local norms that provide for the rights, protection and welfare of children, even as he highlights the horrific impact of conflict on them. He will be a public advocate and a voice for prevention, protection, and rehabilitation. The Special Representative will seek to draw official and public attention to the abomination against children and mobilise action through various activities, including field visits, media outreach, addressing opinion leaders and policy makers, and other awareness-raising strategies.

(ii) Promoting concrete initiatives

In situations of active violence where the security and well-being of children are seriously endangered, the Special Representative will engage in political and humanitarian diplomacy, proposing concrete initiatives to prevent or mitigate the suffering of children. He will, in effect, serve as a facilitator and a resource for the agencies, funds, programmes, offices, bodies and mechanisms which operate on the ground. He will work with them, for example, to unblock difficult political situations and to seek access to civilian populations in distress, the worst affected of whom are always children and women. This sensitive political role will require close coordination with partners within and outside the UN community, especially the relief and humanitarian organizations whose work on the ground would be facilitated by such initiatives.

(iii) Mobilising coordinated response to post-conflict needs

In countries that are emerging from conflict, the Special Representative will highlight the needs of children and women whose lives have been shattered by war. Cessation of hostilities does not mean that war is over, particularly for children who have been extensively exposed to the culture of violence. Only with a systematic programme of healing and reintegration into society will the cycle of violence be broken. The healing and rehabilitation needs of children should therefore constitute a central theme and not an afterthought of post-conflict peace-building programmes. The Special Representative will work to promote this concern with agencies, funds, programmes, offices, bodies and mechanisms of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Some of the issues and needs that should be addressed in a collaborative manner include the demobilisation of child soldiers and their social reintegration, the return and reintegration of displaced and refugee children, mine-clearance and mine-awareness programmes, psychological recovery, educational and vocational training, and issues of juvenile justice.

V. BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

To advance these objectives, the Special Representative will work to broaden the ownership of this agenda and seek the participation and collaboration of key actors from several sectors, official and non-official. To carry out a broad strategy of advocacy and collaborative action, he will seek to build

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

organizations, including the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Council of Europe, the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States, Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This circle of partners should include important multilateral political-cultural associations based on shared historical affinities, such as la Francophonie and the Commonwealth.

(iii) Civil society organizations

An important premise of the work of the Special Representative is the need to widen the ownership of this agenda beyond official actors. Civil society organizations, including humanitarian and relief organizations and the human rights community, women's organizations, religious leaders, civic and youth associations, as well as key actors from the private sector, are important partners in the broad movement to protect children's rights and welfare in the context of armed conflict. Non-governmental organizations are particularly important in this regard because of their commitment, expertise and activities on the ground. The Special Representative will encourage civil society organizations to work to build greater awareness and to mobilise for action on this issue. He will also encourage organizations with relief, humanitarian and development capacities on the ground to develop more focussed and coordinated programmes to protect the rights and respond to the needs of children during and in the aftermath of conflict.

(iv) The media

The media have come to play a central role in informing and influencing public opinion at all levels. The media will have an important role to play in building public awareness about the abuse and brutalisation of children in the context of armed conflict. The Special Representative will therefore make particular efforts to inform and engage the media on this issue, so that they can play a more effective role in mobilising both public and official opinion.

VI. FOCUSING ON SELECTED THEMES

The Machel Report highlighted a wide range of important issues affecting the rights and welfare of children in the context of armed conflict. Given the breadth of this agenda and practical constraints, there is need to select some areas for concentration of efforts. The following are some of the issues to which the Special Representative will give priority attention at this stage:

(i) Participation of children in armed conflict

Children simply have no part in warfare. The Special Representative will seize every available occasion and forum to underscore this fundamental principle.

An alarming trend in recent years is the increasing participation, direct and indirect, of children in armed conflict. It is estimated that up to a quarter of a million children under the age of eighteen are serving as combatants in government armed forces or armed opposition groups in ongoing conflicts.

Indeed, the development and proliferation of lightweight automatic weapons has made it possible for very young children to bear and use arms. Many more are being used in indirect ways which are more difficult to measure, such as cooks, messengers and porters. Children have also been used for mine clearance, spying and suicide bombing.

The Special Representative will seek to mobilise public opinion and political pressure against this growing trend. In particular, he will advocate for concerted action against the military recruitment of children under the agreed age limit. In this connection, he supports current efforts to raise the legal age of participation in hostilities to 18 years, through the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Similarly, he supports the designation of the recruitment of children under 15 and their participation in hostilities as a war crime in the proposed statute for a permanent International Criminal Court.

The Special Representative will also draw attention to the various political and socio-economic conditions that often facilitate the recruitment and participation of children in armed conflict. He will work to promote more effective response to the needs of child soldiers in post-conflict situations.

(ii) Sexual abuse and gender-based violence

There is growing evidence that rape and sexual abuse have, in many places, become an intrinsic part of armed conflict strategies. The breakdown of social value systems and the disintegration of families and communities in times of war leave women and girls especially vulnerable to sexual violence. The practice of rape as a weapon of armed conflict and ethnic cleansing must be ended and its perpetrators brought to justice. Children affected by gender-based violence also include those who have witnessed the rape of a family member. The Special Representative will work to raise greater awareness of and call for action against these abuses. In this connection, he supports the inclusion of rape and any other forms of sexual violence in international and internal armed conflict as a war crime under the jurisdiction of the permanent International Criminal Court. He will also promote the need for special health and psychological care for victims in the context of post-conflict rehabilitation programmes.

(iii) Mine awareness and rehabilitation of child victims

Civilians, including children, are exposed to the danger of approximately 100 million landmines left buried in more than 68 countries. It is estimated that anti-personnel landmines kill or maim about 26,000 persons a year, a large proportion of them being children. Millions of items of unexploded ordnance also represent additional hazards. The signing in December 1997, by 122 countries in Ottawa, of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on their Destruction is a milestone achievement for the international community. The treaty now must enter into force and be effectively implemented. In the immediate term, the Special Representative will emphasise the need for more rapid progress in mine clearance, greater support for mine awareness programmes for children, and rehabilitation programmes to help child victims. He will work with key partners to address these concerns, especially in post-conflict situations.

(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.

- Establishing contacts with leaders of affected countries

The Special Representative has held discussions with government leaders from several countries affected by armed conflicts to inform them of his mandate and proposed activities, to seek their cooperation in the conduct of his work, to discuss the plight of children in each situation, and to prepare for field visits to those countries. Following these initial contacts, plans are now underway for the Special Representative to visit some of the affected countries to assess directly the conditions of children in the midst of on-going conflicts or in post-conflict situations.

- Developing a framework of collaboration within the UN

The Special Representative has conducted a series of consultations with the heads of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) in order to develop a framework of institutional and operational collaboration in support of this agenda.

As a follow-up to these discussions, the Special Representative has now established an informal advisory group consisting of senior officials from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), for the purpose of reviewing cooperation and seeking advice on an on-going basis. The Special Representative will also use his participation in the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS), the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA), the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to ensure that the issue of the rights, protection, and welfare of children affected by armed conflict is fully addressed in the relevant policy discussions and programme activities on a system-wide basis.

- Discussions with leaders of regional organizations

The Special Representative has met and held discussions with the Secretaries-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of American States (OAS), and with the European Union (EU) Commissioners for Development and Humanitarian Affairs, in order to present this agenda to them and seek their support in its development. The European Union, in particular, has expressed a strong interest in working closely with the Special Representative to make the issue of children affected by armed conflict an important item on its agenda, as well as to collaborate actively on humanitarian initiatives and post-conflict projects.

In this connection, the Special Representative is pleased to report that, following discussions with government officials in London, the United Kingdom has offered to use the occasion of its current Presidency of the European Union to highlight this issue. To this end,

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.

- Strengthening standards for peace-keeping personnel
The Special Representative and the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations have held several discussions on the issue of standards, procedures and training relating to the conduct of peace-keeping personnel. They share a common commitment to reviewing and strengthening existing arrangements, and have constituted a consultative group to this end. The Special Representative has also been in contact with several interested delegations, UN agencies and programmes and NGOs to seek their perspectives and input. The Special Representative and the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations intend to complete this exercise and to issue its outcome soon.
- Developing pilot projects in post-conflict situations
The Special Representative has stressed the importance of a concerted and more effective response to the needs of children and women in the aftermath of conflict. He plans to propose two or three post-conflict cases that may serve as pilot projects for the development of "best practice" and more systematic application of "lessons learned". Several key actors, including UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, the European Union, and several governments, have expressed support for this idea and have indicated their strong interest in participating in the proposed pilot projects.
- Strengthening the knowledge base
One of the first casualties of war is often the truth. To be effective in his work, the Special Representative needs to have ready access to reliable and timely information. The Special Representative is working to build a process for information gathering, relying on a network of United Nations agencies, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the academic community. Much of the information on children affected by armed conflict at present is diffuse, segmented, and not readily accessible to those who need it. A more comprehensive system is needed. Plans are underway for establishing an electronic data base and a web site for this purpose. One of the objectives of this database will also be to make available information relating to "lessons learned" and principles of "best practice".

(iii) Setting up a secretariat for the Special Representative

Since his appointment in September 1997, the Special Representative has been engaged in efforts to get a secretariat established and functioning to support his activities; this has proved to be a particular challenge. An office has been provided at United Nations Headquarters in New York. At the time of writing this report, however, the secretariat for the Special Representative is not yet fully functional and staff have not yet been recruited for this purpose. The Special Representative very much hopes that efforts presently underway will soon remedy this situation.

The Special Representative has also spent time mobilising voluntary contributions to support his work. He is very grateful to several Governments and UN programmes that have responded generously with initial contributions. These have been most helpful and made it

possible for the Special Representative to launch his activities. A Trust Fund has now been established at the United Nations Secretariat in New York for receiving voluntary contributions from Governments and other institutions.

In his report to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the Special Representative will provide further information on the status of the Trust Fund and staff support.

The Graça Machel Report presented a disturbing and compelling account of the abomination being committed today against children in theatres of conflict all over the world. This is so in spite of the existence of a formidable body of international instruments and local norms. Indeed this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of a landmark instrument in this context - the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Special Representative believes that the most important and pressing challenge today is how to translate these standards and commitments into action that can make a tangible difference to the fate of children exposed to danger on the ground. This means, above all, concerted political action at both the international and national levels. Clearly, the time has come to make the protection and welfare of children - all our children - a common cause that can unite us across the boundaries of our political orientations, religious affiliations and cultural traditions. The Special Representative will work with all concerned partners for the promotion and realisation of this project.

Note: The statistics cited in this interim report were compiled from UNICEF sources and materials.

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