



BELGIUM

**SECURITY COUNCIL WORKING GROUP
ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT
30th Meeting**

**Introduction of the Report of the Secretary-General on the
situation of children and armed conflict in the CAR (S/2011/241)**

**STATEMENT
OF
H.E. MR. JAN GRAULS
AMBASSADOR
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIUM
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**IN HIS CAPACITY OF CHAIR OF THE COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CONFIGURATION FOR CAR
OF THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION**

2 May 2011

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in the presentation of this Report of the Secretary General. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ms. Coomaraswamy. I also welcome the presence of my dear colleague, Ambassador Poukré.

Mr. President,

The recent Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic provides an excellent overview of this worrying crisis. As Ms. Coomaraswamy has just reminded us, many Central African children are not only victims of serious violations of international law, but also of a lack of attention, capacities and resources deployed to address them. Indeed, the Central African Republic remains, despite all efforts, an "aid orphan".

As also noted by the Special Representative, the situation of children in CAR is inextricably linked to the country's peacebuilding challenges. Thus, the virtual absence of the State over a large part of the territory creates a security vacuum, which in some areas is exploited by rebel groups and road bandits. People are often left to their own fate and do not enjoy access to the most basic social services.

Faced with these challenges, how can the Peacebuilding Commission contribute to the sustainable improvement of living conditions of children and the general population in the Central African Republic?

Our answer is threefold. The first element concerns the restoration of the *physical* security of the Central African population through Security Sector Reform and activities related to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of politico-military groups. In this regard, the Commission is committed to promoting the release, protection and reintegration into society of all children recruited by armed groups.

The second element of our work focuses on restoring *legal* security through activities in the field of Good Governance and the Rule of Law

. In the same way, the Commission is committed to promoting the

actions taken in this third area will also contribute to the betterment of the situation of Central African children.

Mr. President,

In order to support the efforts of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, I have given this issue special attention during my recent field mission (6 to 10 April 2011). Accordingly, I have raised

Beyond my visit to Batangafo, my exchanges with the Government and the UN system in Bangui have allowed me to convey five key messages related to the content of the Report of the Secretary-General:

The first is the need – also pointed out by the Special Representative of Secretary General – to establish and implement action plans for each individual armed group listed in the Annex to the Report. In this context, I found that the national authorities were open to this approach, although it requires close, step by step, guidance.

Secondly, I have had the opportunity to talk with the Prime Minister about the launch of the work of the National Council on Child Protection (*Conseil National pour la Protection de l'Enfance*), an issue that also appears in the Report of the Secretary General. The Prime Minister assured me that the launch can be expected soon, as the last institutional barriers have now been removed.

Thirdly, my audience with the President of the Republic allowed me to draw his attention to the consequences of the absence of a peace agreement with the Convention of the Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), particularly in the field of humanitarian access. This topic was already raised by Ms. Coomaraswamy. I note with hope that since my return, the political leadership of this movement has reiterated its willingness to sign a final peace agreement with the Central African Government.

Fourth, concerning the “reintegration” issue, my visit has allowed me to talk to actors in the field about the prospects for implementing the strategy aimed at revitalizing communities affected by conflict. The programs for long-term socio-economic reintegration of former child combatants, of which the Special Representative has stressed the importance, fit perfectly into this strategy.

Finally, and in direct connection with one of the key points cited by Ms. Coomaraswamy, I have encouraged the Special Representative of the Secretary General in CAR, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, her team and the humanitarian actors to reinvigorate the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, which they have agreed to do.

Mr. President,

I am about to conclude on a hopeful note. My mission has allowed me to announce - with her consent - the visit to the Central African Republic in

2011 of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Taking advantage of this impulse, I urged the relevant actors to establish and implement a roadmap of activities ahead of the visit. In addition, the Central African Republic Configuration is currently preparing a Donor Roundtable for the CAR with UNDP and the World Bank. This Roundtable will allow among other to raise the necessary resources for improving the living conditions of children in the CAR. I therefore hope that this twofold impetus will be the first step in increasing attention and support for the forgotten children of the Central African Republic.

Thank you, Mr. President.