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**Open debate of the Security Council
on
Children and armed conflict: Children victims of non-State armed groups**

25 March 2015

**Intervention by
H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay
Permanent Representative**

Your Excellency, Mr. President,
Honorable members of the Security Council,

In all cultures, one of the most important factors is the cohesion of the family and community, and the degree of nurture and support that children receive. Indeed, one of the most significant war traumas of all, particularly for younger children, is simply separation from parents.

It is universally true that horrific experiences are so deeply disturbing, so overwhelming, that a child will try to suppress bad memories rather than confront them.

And the trauma of exposure to violence and brutal death has emotionally affected generations of young people for the rest of their lives. Time does not heal trauma. A child must be helped to express suffering and to confront bad memories, with the support and guidance of an informed and knowledgeable adult. The very act of talking or writing about, or even acting out, traumatic events is a way for a child to begin healing and start on the road to recovery.

I wish to particularly thank Junior Nitzza for sharing his personal experience in his briefing.

Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

I wish to thank France and personally you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF Yoka Brandt and the representatives of civil society for their informative briefings.

We welcome the focus of today's debate on **non-State armed groups** who make up the vast majority of perpetrators listed in the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict.

2014 has been the worst year for children in many years as the proliferation of conflicts around the world affected tens of millions of children.

Mr. President,

Impunity continues to be deeply entrenched and most perpetrators are never held accountable for the war crimes they committed. The wave of violence committed by extremist armed groups has further complicated the challenge of holding perpetrators accountable for the grave violations of children's rights, due to the lack of rule of law in areas under their control.

Despite these serious challenges, the decision of the Appeals Chamber of the **International Criminal Court** in December last year is an important milestone as it confirmed the verdict against Thomas Lubanga, who became the first person to be convicted for the enlistment, conscription and use in hostilities of children. We share the ICC Prosecutor's view that this decision stands as a symbol of hope and an important step towards bringing an end to the suffering of children who are still forced to fight, kill and die in armed conflicts.

Hungary fully supports the campaign "**Children, Not Soldiers**", launched by the Special Representative and UNICEF last year, and we are encouraged by the momentum it gained in the short period since its launch. We urge the Special Representative to continue to engage with all stakeholders to successfully end the recruitment and use of children by government forces by the end of 2016.

Mr. President, Your Excellencies,

Children have, of course, always been caught up in warfare. They usually have little choice but to experience, at minimum, the same horrors as their parents—as casualties or even combatants.

In these violent circumstances girls in particular suffer the added trauma of sexual abuse and rape, which psychologists identify as the most intrusive of traumatic events. Sexual violence is particularly common in ethnic conflicts. Rape has been systematically used as a weapon of ethnic cleansing to destroy community ties. Even girls who are not physically forced to have sex may still be obliged to trade sexual favours for food, shelter or physical protection for themselves .

Girls often face greater risk of forced abduction, sexual slavery and forced marriage. Sexual violence is increasingly used by extremist groups to terrorize populations. The

primary targets of these horrendous crimes were often girls belonging to religious minorities, including Christians, Yazidis and other faiths.

Mr. President,

What is also very frightening nowadays is the escalation in the use of children as fighters. Extremist groups like ISIL successfully manipulate young boys and girls and we must find the ways to counter the propaganda used by terrorist groups to recruit susceptible children and youth.

Mr. President,

Hungary is of the view that education is one of the most powerful weapons against discrimination and inequality and the cornerstone of lasting peace. In this context, we are deeply concerned that **attacks on schools and hospitals** have become a common feature in most armed conflicts, putting children at peril and impeding their access to education and health services. Attacks on schools and attempts by extremist groups to exclude girls or minorities from education continue undermine the right to **education** of children affected by conflict. The increasing use of schools for military purposes is of particular concern as they put more children out of schools and subsequently at increased risk of violence.

The world was shocked last year by the brutal abduction of hundreds of schoolgirls by Boko Haram from their schools in northeastern Nigeria. We must continue to raise our voice against these heinous crimes and call for the immediate release of the schoolgirls.

Thank you, Mr. President.