

**Statement by Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan
to the United Nations, at the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict
(20 January 2004)**

Madame President,

I would like to welcome you back to the Security Council. The fact that you have left the warm climes of Santiago for the frigid weather in New York is testimony to the priority, which you yourself and your country attach to the important item on children that we are considering today. This item in our debate, Madame President, is ultimately linked to a central purpose of the UN Charter i.e. to save succeeding generations i.e. our children from the scourge of war.

2. I would also like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF for their comprehensive presentations to us which would enrich the Council's deliberations and decisions on this item.

Madame President,

3. As the Council reviews progress made so far, we would like to thank the Secretary General, for once again presenting a concise, succinct and comprehensive report (S/2003/1053). The recommendations contained therein merit careful consideration by the Council and we hope that this will soon be translated into a consensus resolution.

4. We also appreciate the unyielding commitment and efforts of the Secretary General's Special Representative Mr. Otunnu, as well as the role, which UNICEF is playing, as the lead UN agency to ameliorate children from the disastrous impact of conflicts.

5. I might add that the NGO community too has made invaluable contributions. For a sustained and meaningful engagement, particularly with non-State actors, it is important that the NGOs maintain objectivity and pursue a purely humanitarian agenda.

Madame President,

6. The Secretary General's report this year covers new ground. Besides listing parties to conflicts on the Council's active agenda that continue to recruit children, it also lists parties to other conflicts not on the Council's agenda. We endorse this approach what popularly is called naming and shaming as a useful tool for securing compliance by the parties. To this end, both the conflicts and the parties to these conflicts should be identified.

7. The issue of child soldiers has deservedly been addressed extensively in previous reports. There is need to also highlight other egregious violations and abuses perpetrated against children in conflict situations. The Secretary General's report this year has devoted a section to an assessment of such violations and abuses.

8. The central challenge now, **Madame President**, as rightly pointed out by the Secretary General, is to ensure the application of the comprehensive body of international standards, which have been adopted.

Madame President,

9. In this context, DDR programmes are now an integral part of peacekeeping operations. Yet being vulnerable to economic and psychological pressures, children are at risk of re-recruitment. Projects providing economic opportunities and educational facilities for demobilized children and their social integration can be useful ways to prevent re-recruitment.

10. We favour the Secretary General's proposal to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism. However, rather than create new mechanisms, it would be more effective to reinforce and strengthen the existing and operating mechanisms. Moreover, the intergovernmental nature of such mechanisms should be preserved.

Madame President,

11. Reliable and accurate information is essential for monitoring and implementation of commitments. The Council may consider compilation – and regular updating – of a general compendium of statistical data on children affected by armed conflicts, including an assessment of violations and abuse of children and, if possible, those responsible for such violations. This could then be appended to the Secretary General's annual report. Collection of such data should be entrusted, where possible, to United Nations country offices, humanitarian teams or peacekeeping missions. A focal point could be created in the Department of Political Affairs to work in close consultations with the Secretary General's Special Representative to coordinate mainstreaming of child protection into all aspects of peace operations (including DDR).

Madame President,

12. Tragically, the international community usually becomes engaged with the plight of children at the end of conflicts. There are by then fewer children to save and most have already endured the worst suffering. Our principal endeavour in the Security Council must, therefore, be to ensure that the protection of children in armed conflicts begins before conflicts breakout; before wars are fought and the killing and maiming begins. The international community must address the root causes of conflicts – which in most cases are socio-economic inequities, systematic ethnic discrimination, denial of human rights, and the illegal exploitation of natural

resources. The Security Council has a special responsibility in this regard. It has the authority and the capability to create the mechanisms and modalities that can discharge fundamental and central goal of preventing conflicts and promoting the pacific settlement of disputes.

I thank you Madame President