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Security Council Must Act Against Child Recruiters: Twenty-one governments or armed groups are "three-time offenders"

New York (February 22, 2005) -- The Security Council should impose concrete sanctions against governments and armed groups that use child soldiers in armed conflict, said the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers today, in advance of Wednesday's UN Security Council debate on children and armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's recent report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict identifies 42 parties in 11 countries for violating international laws banning the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Of these, 30 have been listed at least once previously, and 21 have been listed in each of his last three reports.

"Three times now the UN has confirmed exactly who is forcing children to kill and be killed in war," said Casey Kelso, coordinator of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, an umbrella group of leading human rights and humanitarian organizations. "The Security Council should not allow another year to pass with these commanders believing that no one will impose accountability for their abuse of children."

Among the three-time repeat offenders named by the Secretary-General are the governments of the DRC and Myanmar and armed political groups or government-allied militias in Burundi, Nepal, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda.

"Twenty-one armed forces and groups have been named in three consecutive reports since 2002," said Kelso. "The evidence of their abuses is overwhelming. What we need now is concrete action to back up the UN's appeals."

The Coalition is calling on the Security Council to impose arms embargoes and other targeted sanctions specifically for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Of the five countries on the Security Council's agenda that were listed in the Secretary-General's latest report, four (Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Sudan) already have sanctions in place. Only Burundi does not. Of the five, three have committees to monitor and report on implementation. The DRC and Somalia also have special expert or monitoring groups to carry out further investigations, including in the field.

Arms embargoes are in force on Cote d'Ivoire, Somalia, and warring parties in parts of DRC and Sudan -- all identified as having child soldiers involved in fighting. Travel bans and asset freezes against individual commanders have been agreed on Cote d'Ivoire, though not yet implemented.

"Adding child soldiers to existing sanctions regimes should not be difficult," said Kelso. "The Security Council should make it explicit that sanctions will only be lifted when the use of child soldiers ends."

The Coalition further called on the Security Council to ensure more effective implementation of dialogue with listed parties to develop concrete plans of action for ending child soldier use. In April 2004, the Security Council called for such dialogue with violators in countries on the Security Council's agenda. However, the Secretary General has admitted that little dialogue actually has occurred, due to security problems, non-cooperation of parties and the lack of systematic monitoring and reporting at country level.

The Coalition also called for an expansion of the dialogue process to include parties to armed conflict named by the Secretary-General in situations not on the Security Council's agenda: Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

In November 2004, the Coalition released a comprehensive global report on children recruitment policies and practices, covering 196 countries around the world, including two dozen situations of armed conflict where children are currently fighting. The full report can be found at www.child-soldiers.org.

Background

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers unites national, regional and international organisations and Coalitions in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Its founding organisations are Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation Terre des Hommes, International Save the Children Alliance, Jesuit Refugee Service, the Quaker United Nations Office-Geneva and World Vision International.

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