

"Child Soldiers" and International Efforts (II): @PKO

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In the previous article (No.16), we looked at the legal framework for dealing with child soldiers. In this article, I would like to focus on the initiative by the United Nations to fight against child soldiering.

Efforts by the General Assembly

The UN has been raising awareness of the misery facing children in armed conflicts since the General Assembly Special Session on Children held in 1990. Subsequently, the Secretary General appointed Graca Machel, the former Education Minister in Mozambique, as a rapporteur for "Children and Armed Conflicts" in 1996 and issued a report on the subject¹. In 1997, the General Assembly adopted the resolution on the rights of child (A/RES/5/77) which spends a great many of its paragraphs on Children and Armed Conflicts based on the report. It should be noted that the resolution decided to appoint the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Let's take a closer look into the Special Representative below.

Efforts by Security Council

On the other hand, not only the General Assembly but also the Security Council started to have discussions on the issue of the Children and Armed Conflicts. First, in 1998 and 1999, the chairman statement was issued reflecting the discussion on the matter within the

Council, then on 30 August 1999, Security Council resolution 1261(A/RES/1261) on Children and Armed Conflicts was adopted. Since then, resolutions on the subject have been adopted almost every year, among which the resolution 1379(S/RES/1379) adopted in 2001 refers to DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration) in the context of Children and Armed Conflict as well as Child Soldiers. In 2005, in its resolution 1612(S/RES/1612,) the Security Council widely talks about Children and Armed Conflicts and Child Soldiers, requesting the Secretary-General to build a mechanism to investigate and monitor Child Soldiers. It also refers to Peacekeeping Operations as the previous resolution, 1379, recommending the Council itself to include Child Protection mechanism when drafting a resolution to send the PKO troops.

Such an increase of reference to Child Soldiers and detailed measures suggests that child soldiering in Sierra Leone and Liberia up to early 2000's has shocked and given a striking impact on the international community.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

The United Nations sometimes appoint a special representative of the Secretary-General in the themes and areas considered important as based on resolutions. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (hereinafter referred to Special Representative) is based on the General Assembly resolution (A/RES/51/77) with three-year term. Well-known human rights activists or lawyers have been appointed as the Special Representative so far². Now, what exactly is the role of the Special Representative?

The relevant paragraphs are (A/RES/51/77) as follows:

- (a) Assess progress achieved, steps taken and difficulties encountered in strengthening the protection of children in situations of armed conflict;
- (b) Raise awareness and promote the collection of information about the plight of children affected by armed conflict and encourage the development of networking;
- (c) Work closely with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, relevant United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies and other competent bodies, as well as non-

governmental organizations;

- (d) Foster international cooperation to ensure respect for children's rights in these situations and contribute to the coordination of efforts by Governments, relevant United Nations bodies, notably the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the specialized agencies and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, relevant special rapporteurs and working groups, as well as United Nations field operations, regional and subregional organizations, other competent bodies and non-governmental organizations;

Let's look at the activities on the ground. While his/her office does not have any permanent field presence, the Special Representative focuses on advocacy (enlightenment and lobbying.) Nevertheless, the Special Representative, as if he/she compliments the lack of field presence, rigorously visits countries having problems with Children and Armed Conflict, especially Child Soldiers. The second Special Representative, Radhika Coomaraswamy who is a human rights activist from Sri Lanka is about to complete her second term for six years, until now (August 2012)³ she visited countries in Asia, Middle East and Africa for twenty-six times to persuade each government to get involved with Child Soldier issue seriously. The Special Representative submits a report on Children and Armed Conflict to the General Assembly and the Security Countries, depicting the situations on the problematic countries. On the website, there is a list of "persistent violators", condemning armed groups or states continuously use Child Soldiers and he/she encourages the Security Council to sanction to those violators⁴.

The next article will take up "Girl Soldiers" and their possible associations with Peacekeeping Operation (such as DDR process.)

End Notes

¹ United Nations. "Children and Armed Conflict".

<http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/about-us/>(Accessed 2012-08-15) United Nations.

² From 1997 to 2006, Olara Otunn, an Ugandan lawyer, diplomat and social activist, held office for two years.

³ The next Special Representative will be a former judge, Leila Zerrougui, from Algeria. United Nations. "Children and Armed Conflict".

<http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>(Accessed 2012-08-16) United Nations.

⁴ United Nations. "Children and Armed Conflict". <http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/our-work/persistent-violators-and-sanctions/>(Accessed 2012-08-16) United Nations.