

Communiqué

TFG and UN discuss details of a draft Action Plan to address child soldiers

On 7 March, representatives of the TFG led by the Ministry of Defence, and UNPOS and supported by the Office of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, conducted a workshop to determine the details of an Action Plan to establish safeguards against child involvement in the Somali National Security Forces (NSF). The Action Plan responds to the UN Security Council's call in Resolution 1612 (2005), for concrete and time-bound action to halt the recruitment and use of children by parties listed in the Secretary-General's annual reports on Children and Armed Conflict and to ensure that the National Security Forces are child-free.

“As the UN Special Representative for Somalia, I feel pain to see Somalia listed as a violator of child rights. I want to work with the Government to ensure removal of TFG forces from the UN list,” the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Dr. Augustine P. Mahiga, stated during the workshop. “It will also contribute to the professionalization of the TFG forces, which will be critical in the context of efforts to stabilise the country and ensuring respect for human rights.” Dr. Mahiga added: “ownership of the Action Plan by the Somali people and its Government is central to its success.”

During the workshop, the TFG and UN discussed four key areas, including the establishment of measures to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers; the process by which children associated to the TFG forces would be identified and released; the reintegration of former child soldiers; and the strengthening of the legal framework to criminalise recruitment and use and promote child protection.

“I wish to reiterate our commitment in eradicating the scourge of child soldiers in Somalia,” declared the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Mr. Hussein Arab Issa, during the workshop. “We continue to face challenges in cultural attitudes, capacity building and resources. We urge UNICEF to provide inputs and technical expertise in supporting us in securing residential programmes, as well as education and livelihood opportunities for children separated from the armed forces. I remain convinced that we will be able to finalise the plan as soon as possible so that we can move into the implantation phase.”

The next steps will include finalisation of the drafting of the Action Plan and its signature by the TFG and the UN, tentatively set for April 2012. While the signing of the Action Plan will constitute a key milestone, the most significant phase of the process will begin with the implementation and verifiable completion of the plan. Successful implementation of the Action Plan will be the shared responsibility of the TFG and the UN.

Both the Somali Government and Al-Shabaab are listed in the United Nations Secretary-General's annual report on Children and Armed Conflict for recruiting and using child soldiers. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), listed parties must sign and implement action plans to end this unacceptable practice or face the possibility of Security Council sanctions. In June of this year, the Security Council expanded the criteria for sanctionable offenses in Somalia to include grave violations against children.

Mogadishu, 7 March 2012