

Filling Knowledge Gaps:
a Research Agenda

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children

The Florence Workshop

The workshop *Filling Knowledge Gaps: a Research Agenda on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* has been convened by:



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



Social Science Research Council



Italian National Childhood
and Adolescence Documentation
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The Florence Workshop

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Acknowledgement must go not only to those who worked to create this event, but also to the over one hundred participants. They shared their experience and wisdom and thanks to their contribution the workshop was a crucial first step in the effort to make available existing knowledge and to generate new research for tackling the needs of children affected by armed conflicts.

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Introduction

The issue of Children and Armed Conflict has emerged in the past decade as a major problem facing international institutions, national governments, and local communities. As the tragic consequences of warfare on children became more visible to the eyes of the world, many important actions have been undertaken to deal constructively with the plight of children in the context of violent conflict. Among these, the creation of the *United Nations Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict* is of particular significance.

These first initiatives, however, have highlighted serious gaps in our knowledge of these issues. It has clearly emerged that every aspect of child involvement in armed conflict needs to be dealt with scientifically and systematically and its causes and consequences studied in depth so that initiatives implemented by governments, local communities and organisations involved in preventing conflict, protecting children in conflict and reintegrating them in society after conflict, can be more efficient and far-reaching.

One of the aims of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict from the outset of its mandate, has been to build a global social and political movement of awareness, pressure and protection for children affected by armed conflict and to develop a research agenda to fill knowledge gaps on this issue.

The Italian Government, which is in whole-hearted agreement with the Special Representative's programme, offered to play host in Italy to the seminar entitled *Filling Knowledge Gaps: a Research Agenda on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* which was held in Florence at the Istituto degli Innocenti from 2 to 4 July 2001.

Seen as a first step towards greater awareness of the problem, the seminar aimed at strengthening the links and exchange of experience between experts and scholars in this field and pinpointing specific issues to bring to the attention of the Special Session on Children of the United Nations' General Assembly to be held in May 2002.

More specifically, the seminar aimed at mapping the studies already carried out on the subject and identifying a research programme for areas that have not as yet been sufficiently investigated as well as at creating a network of research institutes and scholars willing to undertake studies in this domain. Special importance was given to the link between research, political action and intervention.

The seminar was convened by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Social Science Research Council and the Italian National Childhood and Adolescence Documentation and Analysis Centre in collaboration with Unicef, the UN University for Peace, the UN Institute for Social Research and Development, Save the Children Alliance and World Vision with the generous support of the Italian Government, and, in particular, of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Italian Government wishes in this way to contribute to the struggle against this dramatic phenomenon in the firm belief that it must be kept high on the world's political agenda.

Starting the working sessions, the Under-Secretary of State of Labour and Social Policies, Hon. Grazia Sestini, went on to reassert Italy's commitment to this struggle underlining how the Guidelines for Italian Co-operation on Issues Concerning Children give priority to actions aimed at preventing and combating the abhorrent use of child-soldiers and the promotion of a better quality of life especially in relation to urban settlements and to the environment within the framework of sustainable development. The guidelines also highlight protection of the human rights of children in situations of war and recovery from war with special consideration for children on their own, orphans, refugee and disabled children and children belonging to ethnic minorities and vanquished peoples.

The Under-Secretary also reiterated Italy's commitment to immediately ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

During the press conference, Ms. Pia Bertini Malgarini, Head of Desk XIII of the Directorate General for Development Co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cast further light on the struggle of the Italian Co-operation Directorate against the involvement of children in armed conflicts. The planned intervention will take place in two stages: firstly, attention will be focused on emergency aid, while, in the second stage, the focus will be on the psycho-physical rehabilitation of traumatised children and adolescents and their reinsertion into families, their home communities and schools. The *Special Initiative*, which has a budget of some 15 million Euros and includes projects planned for a number of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, will be implemented by United Nations' agencies, in particular Unicef and UNDP along with Italian and local NGOs.

The Istituto degli Innocenti, where the activities of the National Childhood and Adolescence Documentation and Analysis Centre take place, is proud to have contributed to the organisation of this important seminar. The Institute, which for centuries has been a beacon for children in difficulty by welcoming into its midst thousands of abandoned children, plans to go on and broaden its attention to children throughout the world. The recent opening of the Innocenti Library, the first international library specialising in the rights of children and adolescents created by gathering together the bibliographical collections of the Unicef-IRC and Istituto degli Innocenti libraries, is a move in this direction.

This publication presents the conclusions of the work of the seminar together with the opening speeches, the programme of the conference and the list of participants and has the aim of being a useful working tool for all those involved, in whatever capacity, in the struggle against the dramatic phenomenon of the involvement of children in armed conflicts.

Report of the Florence Workshop



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The workshop *Filling Knowledge Gaps: a Research Agenda on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, held on 2-4 July in Florence, Italy, was convened by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG/CAAC) in collaboration with the Italian National Childhood and Adolescence Documentation and Analysis Center, and the Social Science Research Council with the generous sponsorship of the government of Italy. The workshop brought together for the first time an unusual combination of practitioners, policy-makers, advocates and researchers – drawn from a range of government and UN agencies, NGOs, foundations, research institutes, and universities throughout the world. More than 100 participants focused on the ways in which a stronger knowledge base could help to alleviate the plight of war-affected children.

2. The workshop succeeded in accomplishing its principal aims, namely: to develop an agenda and a plan of action for research on the impact of armed conflict on children; to mobilize a research network which would deepen the connections across different institutions and constituencies; and to ensure that research outcomes and products would be responsive to diverse knowledge needs and would serve, above all, as tools to inform and strengthen policymaking and action on behalf of war-affected children.

3. The participants in the Florence workshop also endorsed the basic guiding principles for this research initiative proposed by the OSRSG/CAAC as the backbone of the research agenda. These are: first, it would seek to incorporate the needs of the different actors in this field – practitioners, academics and policymakers and advocates – and promote exchange, collaboration and coordination amongst them. Second, it would inform and strengthen policy and practice on children and armed conflict. Third, it would directly involve the participation of war-affected communities and build capacity in the conflict-affected areas.

4. The workshop endorsed the background document *Filling Knowledge Gaps: a Research Agenda on Children and Armed Conflict*

– a draft research agenda proposed by the OSRSG/CAAC – which identified knowledge gaps in four main areas, namely: reliable disaggregated data on children and armed conflict; current trends in warfare affecting children; cultural norms and values that are meant to protect children in times of armed conflicts; impact assessments of programme interventions on behalf of children affected by armed conflict, including the development of indicators. However, it was also clear that other knowledge gaps might be identified in the future as sub-themes or even new areas for research on children affected by armed conflict (CAAC).

5. The following are some of the next steps that need to be taken as follow up to the Florence workshop:

- *Establish appropriate structures for the network: an Advisory Board composed of prominent international personalities committed to this issue; a Research Committee composed of the coordinators of the task forces and other members appointed by the Advisory Board; and a Secretariat, which will coordinate the activities of the network and implement the decisions of the Advisory Board and the Research Committee.*

- *Create a website on CAAC that will provide access to information from different institutions and link to websites focusing on CAAC and related topics.*

- *Produce a comprehensive inventory of current and past research projects and programmes carried out by individuals and organizations/institutions on CAAC.*

- *Establish thematic task forces on specific themes drawn out of each of the 'knowledge gaps' already identified in the research agenda. Task forces will propose concrete research activities based upon more specific themes. Five themes were particularly highlighted, namely: child recruitment and participation in armed conflict; post-war rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict; definitions and terminologies concerning CAAC; the impact of armed conflict on girls and young*

women; the development of indicators; and international and local standards that provide for the protection of children from armed conflict.

● *Strengthen regional capacities and networks for information-gathering and analysis on CAAC. Priority should be given to zones where children are currently being severely impacted by war.*

INTRODUCTION

More accurate, more systematic, and more easily accessible knowledge on children affected by armed conflict is urgently needed. This conclusion was overwhelmingly reached at the international workshop entitled *Filling Knowledge Gaps: a Research Agenda on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, held on 2-4 July in Florence, Italy. The workshop brought together for the first time an unusual combination of practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers – drawn from a range of government and UN agencies, NGOs, foundations, research institutes, and universities throughout the world. More than 100 participants focused on the ways in which a stronger knowledge base could help to alleviate the plight of war-affected children. This was the first time a broad and diverse group met to share knowledge and experience, discuss research needs on children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) and develop strategies for providing and transmitting information to those who need it for action. The workshop itself was a major step in the establishment of a network of individuals and institutions devoted to research and information sharing on CAAC.

The Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG/CAAC) initiated this research initiative by establishing links with a number of partners and producing a paper proposing a research agenda on children and armed conflict. The workshop, which constituted the high point of the activities undertaken on this initiative in the past two years, was convened by the OSRSG/CAAC in collaboration with the Italian National Childhood and Adolescence Documentation and Analysis Center, and the Social Science Research Council with the generous sponsorship of the government of Italy. Other major collaborators in the organization of the workshop included Unicef, the International Save the Children Alliance, the UN University for Peace, the UN Research Institute for Social Development, and World Vision.

The workshop succeeded in accomplishing its principal aims, namely to develop an agenda and a plan of action for research on the impact of armed conflict on children, to mobilize a research network

which would deepen the connections across different institutions and constituencies, and to ensure that research outcomes and products would be responsive to diverse knowledge needs and would serve, above all, as tools to inform and strengthen policymaking and action on behalf of war-affected children.

Discussions were conducted both in plenary sessions and in discussion groups. The plenary sessions focused on the overall rationale for filling knowledge gaps on CAAC, and, in particular, on four key knowledge gaps, namely: reliable data on CAAC; warfare trends affecting children; cultural norms and values on protection and reintegration of war-affected children; and impact assessments of programmes developed on behalf of CAAC. The plenary sessions were also a forum for discussing the organization, activities, and outputs of a CAAC research network. These sessions provided an opportunity for participants to present ideas and experiences, provide information on ongoing research and shape future research activities. They also set the stage for further debates in the discussion groups, where more time was available to develop ideas and strategies for action. Throughout the workshop the discussions were very lively, and different views and perspectives were brought into the debates. Amongst the main issues raised and discussed in the workshop, the items below deserve particular mention.

TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA
ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Several underlying premises informed the workshop. Research constitutes a means of communication for discovery of new knowledge and for sharing that knowledge with the wider community. Policy makers, the donor community and practitioners need to be informed by research. The issue of children and armed conflict must be integrated in different areas of social inquiry and research such as health and medicine, peace-keeping, education. Research should not be confined to academic institutions; in fact, most of the research conducted on CAAC involves NGOs, UN agencies and multilateral organizations. Although a substantial amount of research has been undertaken on the issue of CAAC by several organizations and individuals, much of it is scattered. More communication and coordination is clearly needed.

The participants in the Florence workshop endorsed the research agenda proposed by the OSRSG/CAAC, which identifies the main knowledge gaps experienced by the various actors in the field. Such an agenda would take into account some basic principles. These are:

● *First, it would seek to incorporate the needs of the different actors in the field – practitioners, academics and policymakers and advocates – and promote exchange, collaboration and coordination amongst them.*

● *Second, it would inform and strengthen policy and practice on children and armed conflict.*

● *Third, it would directly involve the participation of war-affected communities and build capacity in the conflict-affected areas.*

In relation to the first point, the discussions highlighted the fact that creative links should be established between researchers and practitioners and between different kinds of institutions involved in the production, dissemination, and use of knowledge on the impact of armed conflict on children. It was also pointed out that practitioner agencies

are themselves producers of knowledge on children and armed conflict. This needs to be taken into account in order to promote broader learning among the communities committed to these issues. Several presentations stressed that this research initiative should above all provide knowledge that will help establish effective policy and practical interventions to better the lives of conflict-affected children. The workshop emphasized the important role that fundamental and applied research can play in informing policymaking and practical actions on behalf of children affected by armed conflict. After all, when conducted in a manner that connects, shares, and exchanges knowledge with the affected populations, research itself is a mode of constructive intervention. This approach is linked with the third principle, which focuses on listening and learning from those directly affected by conflicts. Indeed, in addition to bridging different fields of activity and expertise, the workshop endorsed the need to connect with researchers and practitioners based in and from the conflict-affected areas. Their direct involvement in the research will bring important insights to the problems faced by children in war. The participation of local populations – parents, teachers, community leaders, etc. – will also provide necessary ‘insider’ perspectives on the conflicts and their effect on children. Last, but not least, it was stressed that children themselves are important sources for relevant knowledge and must be consulted in the research process. However, children’s participation in the research should be done in an appropriate manner to avoid further harm.

FILLING KNOWLEDGE GAPS

The background document for the workshop – the draft research agenda proposed by the OSRSG/CAAC – identified knowledge gaps in four main areas, namely:

- *Reliable disaggregated data on children and armed conflict*
- *Current trends in warfare affecting children*
- *Cultural norms and values that protect children from armed conflicts*
- *Impact assessments of programmes interventions on behalf of children affected by armed conflict.*

While the participants endorsed the need to develop research in these four areas, it was also clear that many other knowledge gaps might be identified as sub-themes or even new areas for research.

Participants maintained that more accurate knowledge is needed to better understand the situation of children affected by armed conflict in all its stages: prior to conflict, during conflict, and in post-conflict. There has been a tendency to focus more on certain stages of conflict – post-conflict, for example – or on particular categories of conflict-affected children, such as child soldiers. Therefore, not only there is need for more accurate research but also new and further research in areas that, for various reasons, have been neglected.

- a) *Prior to the conflict*: research is needed on topics such as: cultural norms and values that protect children from conflict and prevent or facilitate their recruitment; types of recruitment strategies (forced abduction, ‘voluntary’ participation); economic and social factors that drive children to take part in armed conflicts, or make them vulnerable to conflicts; the situation and particular vulnerability of girls.

b) *In the midst of conflict*: some of the key issues include the fashioning of child soldiers (the transformation of children into combatants); the ways girls and young women are affected; the tasks and activities to which both boys and girls are exposed to in military camps and battle fields (as fighters, messengers, carriers, cooks, cleaners, sexual slaves and wives); the situation of children in refugee camps; the situation of internally displaced children; the disruption of children's education and health care due to displacement and destruction of social infrastructures; the spread of diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, in times and corridors of conflict.

c) *In the aftermath of conflict*: knowledge is needed on demilitarization, demobilization, resettlement or repatriation; on health issues such as physical and psychological rehabilitation; on social reconciliation; on the provision of education, vocational training and job creation for children directly and indirectly affected by armed conflict, namely: child soldiers, refugee and displaced children, orphans, maimed and injured children, children who lost access to education, health care and other basic services during armed conflicts.

Participants generally agreed that knowledge gaps in each of these stages of conflict and amongst the various categories of CAAC must be identified and filled; only a holistic approach to the problems faced by conflict-affected children will permit a better understanding of those problems and the development of appropriate mechanisms for response.

Reliable Disaggregated Data on Children and Armed Conflict

While it is generally accepted that the number and percentages of children currently affected by armed conflict is extremely high and perhaps unprecedented, our grasp of the exact extent of the problem is inadequate due to lack of reliable data at the local, national, regional and international levels. Because participants in the workshop came from different areas of activity – NGOs, UN agencies, academics, donors

– their needs with regard to specific kinds of information were diverse. However, there was unanimity that there was a need for reliable data that could help to inform decision-making and practical interventions on behalf of CAAC at various levels. Reliable and accurate data on CAAC can be used for several purposes: advocacy and mobilization of public opinion, legislative action, policymaking, resource allocation, programme interventions, and service provision. An issue identified in the workshop that needs to be seriously considered with regard to data collection on CAAC is that of defining terminologies. Without shared definitions and terminologies about the phenomena of CAAC it is very difficult to produce and share reliable and comparable statistics that can be useful for policy and practical actions. Participants pointed to the importance of having clear and well-understood definitions and terminologies on issues such as how to define a child soldier (e.g., does the definition include girls traveling with armed groups as sexual slaves, does it include cooks, messengers and porters?). This is an example of the kinds of questions that must be looked at in the effort to establish clear and shared definitions and terminologies in this field.

The workshop made the following recommendations with regard to the collection of reliable data on CAAC:

- *Establish international guidelines, standards and a framework for data collection that will allow for country and regional comparisons.*
- *Develop further the scope of data to be collected in different stages of the research.*
- *Define the purposes of the data to be collected in order to respond to diverse knowledge needs.*
- *Develop methodological and ethical guidelines for data collection in conflict situations and amongst vulnerable groups.*
- *Develop mechanisms for continuous data collection which will allow for the updating and analysis of data over extended periods of time.*

● *Put together a task force with technical expertise to make concrete suggestions that will help develop existing research projects on data collection, and create new ones on areas that are not being covered. The task force should focus especially on the definitions issue and ensure across various CAAC initiatives that adequate attention is paid both to issues of methodologies for data collection.*

Current Trends in Warfare Affecting Children

The workshop confirmed the need for a systematic analysis of contemporary trends in the conduct of armed conflict that have a direct or indirect impact on children. Discussions pointed to the nature of warfare that targets primarily civilians, and amongst them children – both boys and girls. Armed conflicts, often fueled by the illicit trade of drugs, natural resources and small arms, destroys the social fabric (the family, the community) as well as the social infrastructure (schools, hospitals). Such social turmoil has a tremendous impact on children. It creates the conditions for the proliferation of child soldiers, of sexually abused girls, of internally displaced children and child refugees. Participants in the workshop also stressed the need to look beyond classic situations of armed conflict and consider other forms of organized violence that also impact on children for purposes of comparison and learning lessons. The need for clearer definitions for comparative purposes of concepts such as conflict, armed conflict, organized violence, and culture of violence was also raised.

The workshop recommended that more research should be undertaken to fill knowledge gaps on the following issues:

● *The factors that draw children into conflicts and organized violence. Issues include recruitment (both forced recruitment and voluntary participation, and their gender dimensions); poverty and social/economic conditions that make young people vulnerable to recruitment; the role of ideology (political, religious or ethnic); and the phenomenon of ‘warlordism’, which constitutes an*

organized system for child recruitment. All these should be carefully analyzed in order to address the root causes of children's involvement in armed conflict.

- *The characteristics and consequences of protracted armed conflicts that destroy civil and economic infrastructure and break down societal structures including the family, and the impact of such total breakdowns on children.*

- *External support to conflicts. Issues include the role of corporate actors in fueling or preventing conflicts; the role of international and national actors; the impact on children of the indiscriminate use of landmines and the illegal trade of small arms, drugs, gold, diamonds, timber and other natural resources that finances armed conflicts across the globe; and the role of the diasporas with regard to the conflict.*

- *Set up a task force to look at the issue of recruitment and training of children in situations of armed conflict. The task force would be instrumental in devising new strategies for research in this theme and establish a conceptual framework for a workshop on recruitment and training of children in contexts of armed conflict.*

Cultural Norms and Values for Protection and Reintegration of CAAC

The participants in the workshop stressed that in order to sustain programme interventions on behalf of CAAC there was a need to ground these programmes and actions in 'local' worldviews and value systems that facilitate their protection and reintegration into society. Only through appropriate and useful community-focused approaches can it be possible to create durable and sustainable mechanisms. Context sensitive research that takes into account local cultural understandings about childhood and the relationships among norms and rules of warfare, and notions of juvenile responsibility and juvenile justice, will be fundamental. Greater knowledge in this area, combined with strategies

to enhance compliance with relevant international and regional legal standards, is called for. The workshop recommended:

● *The development of short and medium-term research projects to identify and examine local cultural rules and norms that regulate children's involvement in warfare. More specifically, develop an inventory of local rules and norms of warfare that can protect children from armed conflict.*

● *The development of long-term research projects that can analyze the specificities of cultural and social norms and values about childhood and adulthood, local understandings of conflict, and rehabilitation, reintegration and healing of CAAC.*

● *Both types of research should involve local people who speak the language and understand the values and taboos of a particular culture. Research in this area should also take into account the heterogeneity of local norms and values, and the fact that culture derives not only from the past but also from the present and the future (including tensions, contradictions, and external influences). Local cultural dynamics should also be examined in a broader context, providing linkages between local and international contexts.*

● *Establish a task force to examine the issue of local and international standards for protection of CAAC. The task force should propose concrete research initiatives that will need to be carried out in this theme and design the conceptual framework for a workshop on this theme.*

Impact Assessments of Programmes on Behalf of CAAC

There is a need for systematic and scientific impact assessment and analysis of programmes interventions on behalf of CAAC. Due to the nature of the problem, many of these programmes happen only in the

aftermath of conflict when international and national organizations and institutions are able to reach the affected population and provide relief and support. Impact assessments need to be made of interventions and responses provided by international bodies, national governments, and local organizations with regard to the provision of education and health for refugee and displaced children, the care of orphans and other unaccompanied children, the healing of war trauma and other social/emotional wounds of war (reconciliation, justice, forgiveness), the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers (vocational training, job opportunities), and the like. Participants in the workshop pointed to the need to avoid casting 'programme interventions' narrowly; rather, we should look at them as processes of interaction, exchange and learning which take time and are part and parcel of the social and economic readjustments taking place in these communities. Methodological issues (how to carry out the research assessments) as well as ethical issues (how to interact with the affected populations, how to use their stories and their opinions, and for what purposes) were also considered as relevant for assessing the impact of programmes on behalf of CAAC.

Specifically, the workshop recommended the following priorities:

- *Develop a framework and the necessary indicators to assess the impact of programme interventions (performance assessment) by different organizations, institutions and individuals involved in the network.*
- *Develop tools and methodologies for conducting rapid assessments of programme interventions based on the experiences of the different organizations/institutions and individuals involved in the network.*
- *Develop sets of core indicators at the macro and micro level which will permit the detection of more commonly recurring issues and problems and facilitate comparisons across the different settings, countries and regions.*

● *Deepen our knowledge on specific issues of impact assessment, especially post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration of war-affected children. A task force needs to be established to examine further these issues and make specific suggestions for future research on the rehabilitation, reintegration and service provision for war-affected children. The task force should also prepare the conceptual framework for the workshop on rehabilitation and social reintegration of CAAC.*

● *Deepen our knowledge about the impact of armed conflict on girls and young women, by setting up a task force to look at and examine how programme interventions need to address their specific needs.*

THE RESEARCH NETWORK

Workshop participants suggested that the research network on children and armed conflict be constituted as a loose, decentralized, but coordinated structure which would facilitate exchange and sharing of information on projects and publications, methodologies and research ethics, seminars, workshops and conferences, and other activities on CAAC. It should be a 'network of networks,' bringing together researchers from various disciplines and areas of activity, from different regions, and from different socio-cultural backgrounds. The research network should have an advisory board, a research committee, and should be coordinated by a small secretariat, which will operate from the Social Science Research Council. The network should also assemble task forces on several themes drawn out of the main knowledge gaps identified in the research agenda. Communication should be established through a website on CAAC and, perhaps, a newsletter to inform members of current research activities and trends on CAAC. Research projects will continue to be undertaken by UN agencies, NGOs, research institutes, and individual researchers. The network will facilitate linkages between the various organizations and individuals and, when necessary, the targeting and commissioning of new research.

Discussions on the network, its structures, roles and 'modus-operandi' recommended the following priorities:

- *Establish the appropriate structures for the network – the advisory board, the research committee, the task forces, and the secretariat.*
- *Produce an inventory of research already undertaken or underway for a systematic identification of knowledge gaps, thus avoiding duplication of existing efforts.*
- *Share and improve methodologies and ethical considerations with regard to research on CAAC. Establish general methodological and ethical guidelines to support researchers. Promote research approaches which are sensitive to local cultures and*

encourage the participation of local researchers. Guide researchers to be sensitive to the vulnerability of the people involved in the research. Organize regular methodological and ethical seminars/workshops to discuss and examine these issues.

- *Build capacity for research at local levels by reinforcing local constituencies for research in conflict-affected areas. Support local research on CAAC through fellowships and grants programmes.*

- *Organize regular workshops on specific themes in regions that will bring together members of the network to discuss and share ideas and information.*

- *Promote and commission new research among network members on areas/angles not covered by ongoing projects in order to fill key knowledge gaps.*

- *Establish a website to facilitate communication and information sharing.*

- *Fundraise for specific research projects on CAAC, and facilitate the links between funding agencies and researchers in this field.*

THE NEXT STEPS

The following are some of the next steps that need to be taken as follow up to the Florence workshop:

1. Establish a network constituted by the various organizations/institutions and researchers present at the workshop as well as others who, for various reasons, were not present in the workshop.

Workshop participants should endeavour to share the workshop outcomes with those who were not present, and encourage them to join the network.

2. Establish the appropriate structures for the network: an Advisory Board composed of prominent international personalities committed to this issue; a Research Committee composed of the coordinators of the task forces and other members appointed by the Advisory Board; and a Secretariat, which will coordinate the activities of the network and implement the decisions of the Advisory Board and the Research Committee.

This secretariat will be located at the Social Science Research Council. Properly designed and managed, the network will function in a decentralized manner, with coordination from the secretariat in terms of information sharing and exchange, methodologies and ethics of research, seminars, workshops and conferences, and, when necessary, the mobilization of specific teams for new research on CAAC.

3. Create a website on CAAC that will provide access to information from different institutions and links to websites focusing on CAAC and related topics.

This will be the most immediate way of establishing communication with different members of the network on new knowledge, activities, publications, events and other developments in the field.

4. Produce a comprehensive inventory of current and past research projects and programmes carried out by individuals and organizations on CAAC.

The inventory should take stock of what already exists and be analytical to permit the identification of knowledge gaps. Once completed, the inventory will help to ensure that new research activities will build upon the strengths of existing material, avoid duplication, and promote future collaboration.

5. Establish thematic task forces on specific themes drawn out of each of the 'knowledge gaps' already identified in the research agenda.

Task forces will propose concrete research activities based upon more specific themes. Five themes were particularly highlighted:

- *Child recruitment and participation in armed conflict*
- *Post-war rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict*
- *Definitions and terminologies relevant to CAAC*
- *The impact of armed conflict on girls and young women*
- *Indicators to assess the situation of CAAC and to assess the impact of interventions undertaken to address the plight of CAAC*
- *Improved understanding of local standards intended to protect children from armed conflict and strategies to encourage compliance with relevant international and regional norms.*

On recruitment of children, participants at Florence argued that unless we understand and deal with the complex mechanisms through which children become soldiers – either through forced abduction or 'voluntary' enrollment – and try to address the issue of impunity of child recruiters, it will be extremely difficult to design prevention programmes.

Regarding post-war rehabilitation and reintegration of war-affected children, it was argued that a holistic approach that brings together psychosocial, economic, educational, human rights and public health

perspectives is fundamental to designing programmes for reintegration of children into their families and communities as valuable and productive members of society.

The need for clearer definitions of key concepts on the field of CAAC was made clear during the workshop, as it can constitute a major obstacle to the production of accurate and reliable data that can be used globally and across regions.

The impact of armed conflict on girls and their specific needs – an area frequently overlooked - was identified as an area that merits careful attention.

Workshop participants identified the lack of knowledge about local normative frameworks and value systems that aim to protect CAAC as a real barrier to mobilizing local and international norms for the protection of children.

The task forces will propose research projects in their thematic areas with a view to informing policy decisions and practical interventions on CAAC. They will also focus on issues of methodology and ethics in the conduct of research into their themes. The materials produced will be published and widely disseminated. More task forces may be established later as new themes are identified

6. Strengthen regional capacities on CAAC by assisting regional networks on children and armed conflict. Priority should be given to zones where children are currently being severely impacted by war, such as the Great Lakes region in Africa and the Balkans region in Europe, for example.

The need for assisting such regional networks was made clear during the Florence workshop. While several researchers and practitioners from conflict zones were able to attend, far too many are isolated from international fora and the latest information on CAAC that may be relevant to their activities. Further, researchers and practitioners from conflict zones bring a wealth of information on the day-to-day realities faced by conflict-affected children. Thus, these regionally focused activ-

ities would bring together various regional actors (individuals and organizations/institutions both governmental and non-governmental) to define their own research priorities and actions on behalf of children affected by armed conflict. Some would channel information to the larger CAAC network, and vice-versa, through the mechanism of Task Force workshops situated in conflict zone/regional settings. Capacity building initiatives for regional researchers on CAAC would include fellowship programmes for advanced research, or the organization of six to eight week-long collegiums focused both on the substance and methodological/ethical issues of research into children affected by armed conflict.

Given the quality of the discussions during the Florence workshop, the enthusiasm of the participants for the establishment of a research network, and the urgency of the CAAC issue, the workshop conveners are committed to working with all partners to maintain the momentum generated at Florence. The need to generate and disseminate knowledge needed by local communities, national governments and international institutions and organizations to address the plight of war-affected children was firmly endorsed by the workshop participants. Indeed, workshop participants made clear that meeting the knowledge needs on CAAC requires a prolonged and sustained effort, for which a workshop – however successful – can only be a first step. It was also emphasized that the success of this initiative will require the strong support of the donor community with resources to strengthen and develop existing projects and create new ones.

Opening Speeches
Programme
List of Participants



President
of the Istituto degli Innocenti

In welcoming all participants, I would like to thank everyone who agreed to take part in the realisation of this initiative. The United Nations Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Social Science Research Council, the Italian Government, the Presidency of the National Childhood and Adolescence Documentation and Analysis Centre and the Unicef-IRC.

The Istituto degli Innocenti is honoured to play host and to have contributed to the organisation of this important seminar. The Institute, which for centuries has been a beacon for children in difficulty by welcoming into its midst thousands of abandoned children, plans to go on and broaden its attention to children throughout the world. The recent opening of the Innocenti Library, the first international library specialising in the rights of children and adolescents created by gathering together the bibliographical collections of the Unicef-IRC and Istituto degli Innocenti libraries, is a move in this direction.

I am convinced that this new service will contribute to the dissemination of information on the dramatic issue of the involvement of children in armed conflicts, also by promoting exchanges of experiences between experts and institutions involved in the struggle against this phenomenon.

I believe that this seminar marks a highly significant scientific milestone in the development of the children's rights, upholding the protection policies promoted by the Italian Government at international level which, also thanks to its generous patronage of this seminar, confirms the renewed commitment of our country to supporting organisations directly involved in safeguarding human rights and especially those of boys and girls.

The Istituto degli Innocenti is proud to make a serious contribution to this commitment.

I wish you all a profitable seminar and an enjoyable stay in Florence.

Under-Secretary of State
Italian Ministry
of Labour and Social Policies

I am pleased and honoured to extend a warm welcome and best wishes for a highly successful seminar on behalf of the Italian Government.

I wish to thank everyone, especially you, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for having chosen Italy as the venue for this important initiative of study and debate.

Over many centuries this building, so beautiful and prestigious, was the source of aid to the poorest and most disadvantaged children and, in more recent times, it has been the centre for the development of study, research and investigation on the theme of the rights of children. Let me take this opportunity of expressing a warm welcome and a special thank-you to the management of the Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, and also to the staff and management of the National Childhood and Adolescence Documentation and Analysis Centre of the Department of Social Policies of the Italian Government.

Italy is a wealthy country but it is also a country that knows and keeps alive the memory of the drama of poverty, the horrors of war and the odyssey of enforced emigration.

Italy is a convinced signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and we can truly state that it is only by developing an approach based on rights that the broader question of the development of individuals and peoples can be properly faced.

But we are also convinced that we must first combat poverty, promote health-care, and favour equal rights of access to education for all boys and girls.

In the face of the economic challenges before us all, we must never lose sight of the fact that this planet does not belong to us, but that has been placed in our care to be passed on to future generations.

Italy abhors war. We consider the ring of arms invariably as a defeat for humanity and its capacity for rational debate. Weapons endow false power to those who bear them, and produce false riches in

those who think that their sufferings, no matter how desperate, can be alleviated by war.

Indeed, the problem is not whether there is a just or unjust war; the problem is rather that, after wars, we must count the dead, the mutilated and the children orphaned.

This, then, is what we would like to count for more among all the peoples of the earth: care and respect for life and the fundamental and inviolable dignity of human beings.

The statistics are before our eyes: in ten years, 2 million children have died; the bodies of another 6 million have been devastated for ever by the brutality of arms.

There are physical consequences, but no less burdensome are those that afflict the mind and the soul. There are also the wounds inflicted on the culture of peoples.

There is war, but there are also many 'post-wars'. There are many scenarios that cry out for intervention: the destitution, the material and moral wreckage, the lack of drinking water, schools and the huge struggle against fear and violence.

Italy has been engaged in this struggle for some time now. The *Guidelines for Italian Cooperation on Issues Concerning Children* give priority to actions aimed at preventing and combating the abhorrent phenomenon of child soldiers and promoting a better quality of life with special attention to urban settlements and to the environment within the framework of sustainable development.

The guidelines also highlight protection of the human rights of children in situations of war and recovery from war with special consideration for children on their own, orphans, refugee and disabled children and children belonging to ethnic minorities and vanquished peoples.

With particular regard to complex emergency situations, Italian development cooperation has, for some time, aimed at providing more than mere assistance. It does so by pursuing follow-ups and continuity of intervention through preventive, diversified action before, during and after the emergency, with special concern for the impact of conflict on children. It channels aid to the demilitarisation of children and their

reintegration into civilian life and pinpoints initiatives that protect children's and adolescents' rights, especially for those belonging to ethnic minorities. These initiatives are implemented both in conflict and post-war situations, with interventions that prioritise education towards peace and peaceful co-existence among peoples, in particular focusing the attention of the military and civilian officials engaged in peacekeeping operations on children's rights, without forgetting the special impact on children of relief aid, repatriation, rejoining loved ones, rehabilitation and pacification.

It is for all these reasons that Italy will immediately ratify the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*. Moreover, Italy is firmly convinced that future generations and their development are an issue that must not be allowed to fade from the international political agenda.

In the course of the G8 Summit due to take place over the next few days in Genoa we shall be pointing out in no uncertain terms that there can be no justice without peace and no development without adequate attention to people's lives. There can be no development without freedom and the proper role for the new generations is to measure themselves against an historical reality within which they must be not guests but citizens.

For this reason, we have been demanding special efforts from Europe for many years and, for this reason, we are in favour of a Europe that is strong, free and just.

The Europe we love is aware and respectful of the rights and needs of all peoples yearning for conditions of greater wealth and dignity in the East and the South of the world and it is especially aware of Africa and the great problems that beset it.

Italy will contribute alone and together with the other European nations to make an extraordinary effort, not in words alone, on the occasion of the Special Session on Children of the United Nations' General Assembly.

Thank you and I wish you all a profitable seminar.

Head of the Policy Analysis
and Planning Unit
of the Secretariat General
of the Italian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

I would like, first of all, to convey to all of you a message of appreciation and support from Minister Ruggiero. Only a very, very busy international agenda has prevented him from being here with us.

We are, indeed, especially pleased to have been able to host in our country such an important event.

As a Policy Planner, that is, as someone who is in charge of “taking the pulse”, so to say, of major trends in international relations, I would like to take the opportunity in my brief intervention to try and explain why we feel that the issue of children in armed conflict is so relevant, so central.

1) The first reason is ethical. Even the most radically ‘realist’ politician, or professional in the field of international relations, will have to admit that the plight of children involved in organised armed violence is an inadmissible violation of every possible moral code, whatever our specific culture, traditions, religion, history. Inability to address this scandal would be sufficient to disqualify any pretension of being credible actors on the international scene. It would leave us all in a shameful moral vacuum.

2) Moral concern, however, should be given a concrete, direct translation into action.

The first level, the most immediate one, is humanitarian. The international community should be able to act quickly, and on a global scale, to alleviate the suffering of the most defenceless, the most innocent segment of humanity, children. Rescue operations – such as those carried out by Unicef in Sudan and Uganda – show that it is possible to act. Rehabilitation of those children who have been physically and psychologically scarred by war is another important humanitarian endeavour.

3) Yet, it would be wrong to conceive of the task – the duty – that lies in front of the international community in purely humanitarian terms. When addressing the issue of children in armed conflict, we are necessarily led into other areas; we have to venture into a wider range of both theoretical and practical dimensions.

The most significant fact is that, after 1990, we have been operating, when addressing the condition of children, beyond the humanitari-

an sphere. With the 1989 Convention, we have entered the realm of human rights. Children can no longer be seen just as the beneficiaries of our humanitarian, benevolent action: they are the bearers of rights. This entails a major paradigm shift of which we should all be consistently aware.

4) Another important aspect is the fact that active concern for the problem of children in armed conflict is being transformed, to a significant extent, with the introduction of new cogent norms, international law.

Italy is especially happy to have been able to promote, in the drafting of the statute of the International Criminal Court, the inclusion of the military conscription of children under 15 as a war crime.

Another important legal rule has been introduced by ILO Convention No. 182 – defining – and banning the drafting of children into combat units as one of the worst forms of exploitation of child labour.

5) So, we are talking at the same time about ethics, humanitarian action, human rights, the shaping of international law, but there is more.

This issue should also be addressed in a development mode. Firstly, because the phenomenon of child soldiers is both a consequence and an aggravating cause (by training numbers of young people to destroy and not to build) – of underdevelopment. At the same time, it is through development assistance that the international community can have an impact on the socio-economic conditions that create the premises of the phenomenon of the child soldier.

6) Let me add, finally, one more point: the inclusion of the issue of child soldiers within the scope of conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention is becoming a very ‘hot topic’, discussed in many international fora. This is both as a consequence of an ethical revulsion against a passive or merely reactive attitude ‘vis-à-vis’ the great human tragedies of our time, but also as a result of a pragmatic, realistic evaluation: preventing is cheaper than picking up the pieces after a catastrophe (Rwanda has made us all ponder!).

Let me quote, first of all, the recent Report of Secretary General Kofi Annan on ‘Prevention of armed conflict’ and, in particular,

Recommendation 22: “I urge member states to support policies and resources that target the needs of children and adolescents in situations of potential conflict, since this is an important aspect of long-term conflict prevention strategy”.

But it is also important to quote what the Report says about why the involvement of children in armed conflict is one of the root causes of future conflicts: (I quote) “The violence against - and witnessed by - children can incline entire generations towards the violent settlement of disputes”.

Let me now turn to another recent document of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The *Supplement to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation*, approved last April by the high level meeting of DAC/OECD.

Paragraph 35 of the document (a document addressing the link between development assistance and conflict prevention) quotes Graça Machel: “children who grow up in a climate of murder, abduction and terror tend to reach adulthood with no idea of what it means to be able to learn, to play, to live safely at home with their families, or to socialise with their peers. And so they perpetuate a cycle of violence”. The policy indication that DAC derives from this premise is that development programs should incorporate a special attention on both the security and the re-habilitation of children involved in any fashion in conflict.

Lastly, let me refer to the G8. I think it is extremely significant that in among the 5 priorities for conflict prevention endorsed in Miyazaki, Japan, one refers to children in armed conflict, and entails an explicit assumption of responsibility by the Eight on:

1) *exerting pressure against those who involve or target children in armed conflict in breach of international standards;*

2) *giving support to international standards and mechanisms, in particular (I quote): “support for the UN Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in its role as an advocate on behalf of war-affected children, and to UN Agencies including Unicef”;*

3) *favouring outreach, synergies and coordination in all forms and among all actors;*

4) *supporting reintegration and rehabilitation.*

Italy, in the exercise of its Presidency, has kept the item of children and armed conflict firmly on the Agenda of the G8, in particular, promoting an exchange of information and an identification of initiatives to which the Eight will give their support within all relevant international fora, beginning with the UN.

In conclusion, let me say that sometimes the gravity, the size (and, let me add, the horror) of the phenomenon of children in armed conflict are disheartening, and yet there are some reasons not to despair.

As I have tried to say, things are moving, and they are moving because of a greater awareness that is, at the same time, ethical, political, diplomatic. Things are moving because governments and international organisations (often stimulated – I would say, prodded – by NGOs) are acting with more decision and effectiveness.

But things are moving especially because of the inspired, tireless effort of a remarkable diplomat and remarkable humanist, Olara Otunnu.

Definitely, political will is at the centre of this as well as of every other need for governance, peace and human development.

And yet political will, political resolve, demand that we determine with utmost accuracy what the characteristics of the problem are, which instruments we can bring to bear to address it.

That is what this seminar is supposed to do, and – I am confident, given the quality of the experts and their commitment – that is what it will certainly achieve.

1.

Unicef is delighted to be associated with this initiative. We attach high importance to the alliance we are building today with UN agencies, governmental representatives, research institutions and NGOs to set in motion a sound and steady process for a Research Agenda on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children.

We are pleased to join hands with the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, with whom Unicef has developed a long and rich collaboration in our common endeavour to better understand and document the plight of war-affected children.

The discussions on a Research Agenda also provide a renewed opportunity to reaffirm our partnership with the Government of Italy, a partnership cemented by our shared commitment to children and the protection of their rights, particularly in situations of armed conflict.

I am particularly delighted to take part in this meeting held at the Istituto degli Innocenti and work once again with Mme Alessandra Maggi, President of the Istituto, who has for a long time been committed to the cause of children. And you will forgive me for a personal note. I believe this is a most auspicious moment – as I am just initiating my new role, as Director of the Unicef Innocenti Research Centre.

It is certainly a meaningful coincidence that I start here in this historic building, which will also be my home over the coming years, to participate in a meeting on war-affected children, and precisely, to consider ways of developing a research agenda – all themes and areas so central to the mandate of our Unicef Research Centre.

No doubt, this initiative will generate a strong alliance and a powerful tool to enhance the protection of children from armed conflict. With its advocacy, policy and operational work, Unicef will continue to support this effort, and will closely associate with it the research activities of the Innocenti.

2.

For Unicef, this meeting has a very special relevance.

a) Firstly, it addresses an area of undeniable value for the realisation of children's rights.

● *As the recently concluded End Decade Review of the World Summit for Children has shown, armed conflicts have become one of the most dramatic and challenging realities compromising the protection of children and hindering the enjoyment of their rights.*

● *Countries affected by war have the worst social indicators, the weakest investment in primary health care and education, the least secure environment for children to survive, develop to their full potential and contribute to the progress of their societies.*

● *Conflicts have gained unknown levels of violence, have multiplied in numbers and victims, have blurred the traditional distinction between armed forces and civilian population and have created new and unknown challenges for humanitarian workers and organisations. As an illustration, in 2000 more than 60 Unicef country offices addressed the impact of armed conflict on children as a major area of concern.*

In a recent review of Unicef's humanitarian response over the last decade, the deep transformation of our programmes and the mainstreaming of our emergency response within our overall operational activities have become clear.

b) Secondly, the meeting highlights a dimension that remains insufficiently considered.

It is a fascinating paradox to recognise how much more attention and visibility has been given, during the last decade, to the plight of war-affected children, and yet how deep the sense of the unknown is.

It seems difficult to recall the incipient understanding prevailing in 1992, when the Committee on the Rights of the Child held its first thematic discussion on this reality, which later led to the Machel Study. At that time, there was fragmented information on various themes, uncoordinated action by major players, and, above all, insufficient recognition of the special vulnerability of children, boys and girls of all ages, as both victims and combatants. Then, a child-centred approach was clearly lacking and was far from being relevant to the world's political agenda. Today, as a result of our steady effort and convergent action, we affirm, without hesitation, that the violation of children's rights is a threat to peace and security.

This reality has certainly helped move forward in the conceptualisation of major issues. The recognition of the existence of child soldiers; the consideration of internally displaced and asylum seeking children; the impact of sanctions, landmines and small arms; the lack of birth registration and education strongly adding to the vulnerability of children; the promotion of child focus cease-fires, through days of tranquillity and corridors of peace; the demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers in overall DDR programmes; the notion of international accountability for children and the fight against impunity for crimes committed against them... The agenda keeps growing ...

Yet, and this is the paradox, this increasing level of understanding has also led to a strong recognition that... we do not know enough! And we need to address seriously and urgently prevailing knowledge gaps!

c) It is also for this reason that this meeting is particularly timely. In fact, being held before the Special Session on Children (SSC), it presents a unique occasion to anticipate and agree upon a strategy to address one important recommendation highlighted by the Secretary-General, in his report *We the Children*, recently presented to the Preparatory Committee of the SSC.

The Secretary General stressed
“the need to improve information, data collection, research and analysis on children in conflict situations, in order to improve policies and programme implementation”.

Together, during the next few days, we have the opportunity to consider ways of addressing such a challenge and to map out how our collaborative efforts will be pursued in the future!

d) For Unicef, this is an irresistible call!

Building upon our work, our research studies, advocacy and policy positions, as well as our programmatic interventions, we remain committed to increasing our understanding of the plight of war-affected children and, in turn, to becoming increasingly effective and strategic.

Let me highlight two priority areas in which we will continue to be engaged: research and, naturally, programmed interventions.

On the one hand, investment in research activities in emerging areas will remain high – the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS in situations of conflict and challenges created by their convergence on the enjoyment of children's rights, is one such example. It compels us to study a complex scenario, shaped *inter alia*, by the general breakdown of health systems, traditionally used for collecting sentinel surveillance data; the destruction of education systems, where social cohesion, tolerance and HIV/AIDS prevention might have been taught; the limited access to areas controlled by non-governmental actors, together with the situation of children in crowded refugee camps and isolated areas of displacement which all add to the difficulty of getting accurate data and shaping well targeted programmes.

On the other hand, we keep our strong commitment to implement further our human rights approach to programming, to identify best practices and to learn and adjust, guided by lessons learnt. This area will be addressed in greater detail in the group discussions, but let me highlight at the outset, three major dimensions which remain central to our work.

Firstly, the promotion of an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach which recognises the indivisibility of children's rights and the need to always place the child at the centre of our considerations – with this approach, it becomes key to consider, for example, the impact of birth registration and education campaigns in the prevention of child recruitment and participation in hostilities, and to resist the temptation

of seeing these realities as separated and unrelated.

Secondly, the prevention of discrimination of children and the need to narrow economic and social disparities, through systems of data collection and analysis, disaggregated by gender, age and social and ethnic origin – with this approach, we are better placed to reverse the increasing vulnerability of already disadvantaged groups of children, including their manipulation in conflicts.

Thirdly, the promotion of the involvement and consultation of children in the design, implementation and evaluation of major programmatic interventions as a key strategy in achieving effective and lasting solutions – also in the context of demobilisation and social reintegration of child soldiers.

For all this, our work in data collection and analysis remains clearly instrumental and the End Decade Review process makes us feel particularly encouraged and optimistic in this regard.

The new indicators identified, the statistical information obtained and, in particular, the household surveys conducted – several of which in countries affected by war – provide a unique basis for better understanding and for more effectively acting in favour of children.

The impact of policies and programmes on the cost of missed opportunities can be assessed with greater transparency.

And, above all, the notions of leadership and accountability for children, so often included in important political declarations, can now be transformed into tangible imperatives and concrete indicators of our commitment to children.

Clearly, much remains to be done but a major difference can be made in the aftermath of the Special Session.

With the commitment and unique expertise of the participants at this meeting, we have no doubt a major step will be taken in that direction over the next few days!

Thank you.

Deputy Director
of the Directorate General
for Development Co-operation
of the Italian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

With its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1999, and more recently with its ratification of the ILO Convention No. 182 together with Declaration 190 – which define the exploitation of child labour in its most intolerable forms – the Italian Government is in the process of carrying out actions required by the Agenda for Action adopted at the 1996 Stockholm Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and at the 1997 Oslo Conference against the Exploitation of Child Labour, including the *Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* (May 2000).

The priorities enunciated in the *Guidelines for the Italian Co-operation on Issues Concerning Children* include the protection of the human and civil rights of children in situations of conflict or post-conflict, with particular concern for children who are on their own, orphans, child war veterans and disabled children, children belonging to ethnic minorities and vanquished populations. Support for the psychic and physical integrity of children against every form of violence, dependence, constraint or torture is considered another crucial priority. The use of children in armed conflicts as child soldiers and the terrible problem represented by children who are war victims are among the problem areas that Italian Development Co-operation has chosen as priority items to be dealt with through specific initiatives which are now being realised.

Today, certain specific problems such as child soldiers, the abuse, trade and sexual exploitation of children have assumed global dimensions. The promotion of better conditions for children and young people is achieved thanks to specific measures for the prevention and struggle against these most serious problems which, very often, go beyond the local and national level to include a much vaster area (regional and global). Child labour, abuse, sexual harassment and trade in children, and, above all, the involvement of children in armed conflict – represent extremely serious issues. These are causing growing alarm within institutions and Italian and international public opinion and require firm and immediate action.

Highly qualified experts from all over the world have clearly pointed out the dimensions of the problem of children and adolescents who are involved in armed conflicts as well as those who are victims of war. Hundreds of thousands of children and adolescents, boys and girls, are directly involved in war operations; a large number of adolescents are recruited into armies and into different military factions and risk being called upon to fight at any moment. Many of them are recruited legally, others are kidnapped and forced to enrol in the armed forces.

Most children are between 8 and 15 years old when they enrol, but a large number of those recruited are only 10 years of age and sometimes even younger. Girls are often used as assistants, servants and cooks in military camps; they are used as concubines and sometimes even in combat. The physical and psychological consequences for children and adolescents involved in armed conflicts are always very serious. Children are often witnesses to or are forced into being authors of atrocities that leave lasting signs.

Millions of children and adolescents are direct and indirect victims of conflicts: the orphans, the traumatised, the psychological and physical disabled, those separated from their families, those used in the child trade, the sexually abused, those disabled from mines, and those without any possibility of going to school, etc. Children in refugee camps are the ones who are exposed to the greatest risks of being abused. Often their families have been dismembered and the children have been abandoned. The community structure has fallen to pieces and the children live in a general situation of serious insecurity and precariousness in which abuse and mistreatment represent a condition of everyday violence.

The Special Initiative of Italian Co-operation
in Support of Children and Adolescents
involved in Armed Conflicts and Victims of War

The *Special Initiative* that Italian Development Co-operation is currently developing was born out of the awareness of the seriousness of the above-mentioned situation. Italy has signed the *Optional Protocol to*

the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and has ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the subsequent Recommendation 190 that underlines that Governments, which have ratified the Convention, should intervene through urgency procedures (chap. 1, point 2).

The *Special Initiative* of Italian Development Co-operation in support of children and adolescents involved in armed conflicts and victims of war is addressed at a number of countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, wherever there are special needs or urgency for intervention. Guinea Conakry, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan are some of the countries where targeted programmes will be implemented (funded through the emergency channel) and also Lebanon, Uganda, Rwanda, Mozambique, Cambodia, Bosnia, Eritrea, Senegal/Casamance (funded through the bilateral channel).

The *Initiative* will be accomplished in two phases: a first phase in an emergency perspective and a following phase in a medium-long term perspective. The programme will be implemented through appropriate UN Agencies - Unicef and UNDP in first place - and administered directly by the Italian Directorate General for Development Co-operation. The UN Agencies will involve the Italian NGOs present in the various areas where intervention is to take place together with institutions and associations that support children and adolescents in armed conflicts.

In keeping with the action planned by UN Agencies involved and the Guidelines for the Italian Co-operation on Issues Concerning Children, the principal objective is to concentrate all the resources at hand on implementing initiatives aimed at preventing the involvement and promoting the rehabilitation of children who are victims of armed conflicts while contributing to improving their quality of life in their communities. It will be possible to programme interventions aimed at prevention, rehabilitation and education, with particular attention to the psycho-physical rehabilitation of children who have suffered violence and traumas, promoting their reintegration in the family, community and society.

The logic of the *Special Initiative* is to gather together the different plans of action according to a joint implementation strategy and within a co-ordinated and coherent framework. The entire strategy will benefit in terms of impact and efficiency, and there will be a series of advantages in the long-term.

As Mr. Olara Otunnu – the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict – has pointed out there are still gaps in our knowledge of what impact armed conflicts have on children, gaps that should be filled.

The *Special Initiative* intends to make its contribution to the work based on researching the trends and the situations that generate organised violence and to the systematic collection of data on the various aspects of the phenomenon as well as to identifying elements and instruments of intervention able to guarantee better protection for children and adolescents who are involved in armed conflicts or victims of war.

The *Special Initiative* will give its support to the global campaign launched by the Special Representative Mr. Otunnu, for the constitution of an autonomous network for collecting data on child abuse in conflicts, research and the continuous exchange of information and experience. For this purpose, the action to be carried out and implemented within the framework of the *Special Initiative* will involve resources directed towards enhancing the comprehension of the different problems in different contexts, towards increasing the efficiency of the intervention, and towards informing and making public opinion and the relevant stakeholders within public institutions and organisations within civil society more aware of the problem.

The plight of children involved in humanitarian crises is one of the main challenges faced by the world community. Lessons on the best way to respond have gradually been learned. The emphasis is on the fastest possible return to ‘structured normalcy’ instead of reliance on purely material ‘humanitarian’ assistance. First of all, it is necessary to restate the principle that children’s rights also need to be firmly protected in situations of armed conflict and to create the political, moral, economic, and social conditions for the fulfilment of these rights.

Head of Desk II, Human Rights,
of the Directorate General
for Multilateral Political Affairs
and Human Rights
of the Italian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

In welcoming the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Otunnu, allow me to stress how glad I am to return to the Istituto degli Innocenti. 'Return', because for four years in the early '90's, as the head of Italian Multilateral Cooperation, I had the opportunity of cooperating with the Istituto and of appreciating the important work it does as well as following the interesting activities of the Florence Unicef Centre.

Today, I am especially pleased to meet here, and to welcome the Honourable Ms. Sestini, Under-Secretary of State for Social Policies of the recently constituted Italian Government and Ms. Santos Pais, the Centre's new Director.

Today, I am here as head of the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and thus I can provide a new perspective on the complex world of human rights. In this capacity, I wish first and foremost to convey greetings to this seminar from the Director General for Multilateral Political Affairs and Human Rights, Ambassador Baldocci.

Mr. President,

I wonder if you agree with an impression I have - in recent years, we have been witnessing an important development in international life.

After decades of the perfectly proper and necessary predominance of economic, social and cultural rights linked, in some cases, especially to certain political systems and lifestyles, today, I feel that "man", the "human person" is increasingly at the centre of our attention.

Ms. Santos Pais has already said very clearly "we must now move from marvellous international declarations and conventions to putting them into practice".

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is moving in this very direction.

Ambassador Toscano has just reminded us that "children are bearers of rights", and children are, indeed, among those groups that should be protected to the extreme by the International Criminal Court. Italy is proud to have contributed to the constitution of this body, and the events of these last few days at the Hague show that nobody, not even a Head of State, is above the imperative of respecting citizens' rights, and especially those of the most vulnerable including, undoubtedly, children, the citizens of tomorrow.

In the same way, Italy is involved on a bilateral level, and within the European Union, in the campaign against the death penalty.

We are well aware of the historical and cultural reasons on which retentionist countries base their thinking. We are also aware that the death penalty will not be universally repealed tomorrow. We cannot, however, tolerate the death penalty being passed on children or adolescents. Italy and the European Union intervene with concrete measures whenever they are informed of cases of this kind, in an attempt to have them rescinded.

Also, in its preparation for the World Conference on Racism due to be held in South Africa in late August and early September, Italy intends to play its part not only in indicating a proper historical perspective on the past, but also in the search for valid answers for the future to ensure equal rights to every human being, irrespective of race, sex or religion. It is important that these objectives be taught to children in order to contribute to the birth of a society free from racism and able to respect diversity.

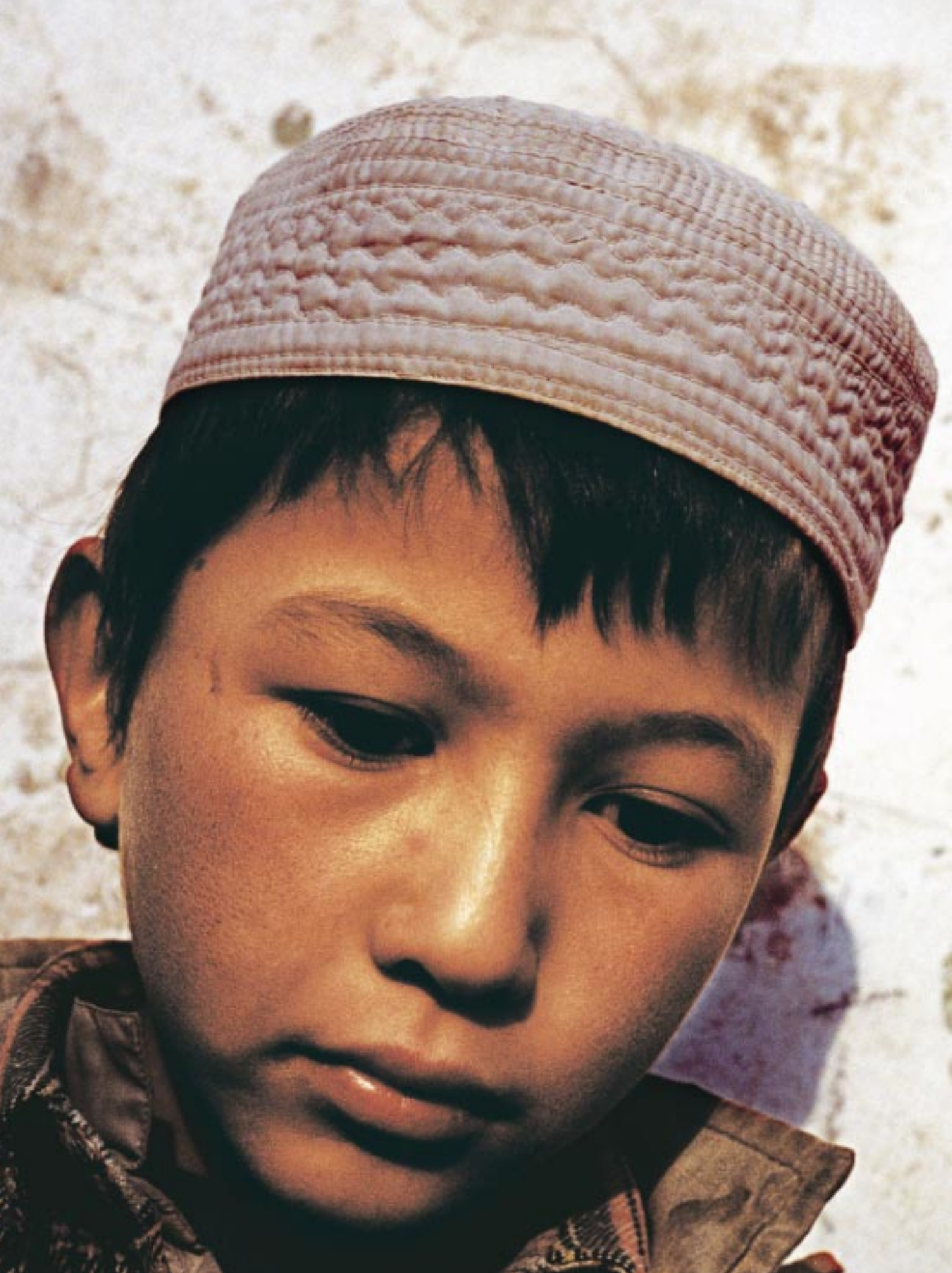
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has tried to draw inspiration from these principles in preparing the Italian participation in the Conference on Racism, as well as in preparing our participation in the Special Session on Children of the General Assembly of the United Nations, that will take place in September, ten years after the Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force.

I am particularly happy, therefore, to hear the Under Secretary of State, the Honourable Ms. Sestini, affirm that the Government intends to continue along this road and promote internal interministerial collaboration and the needed international cooperation. I am confident that our country can play an active role in presenting proposals to these two important international events of the UN.

It is in this spirit that I once again thank the Istituto degli Innocenti and Unicef for this important initiative in favour of all children, the bearers of rights and, in general, for the hard work it is doing every day here in Florence.

Thank you Mr. President.

Programme



Filling Knowledge Gaps:
a Research Agenda on the Impact
of Armed Conflict on Children

Florence 2-4 July 2001

DAY ONE: 2 July 2001

8.30 - 9.00 – *Registration at the secretariat of the workshop*

9.00 - 10.00 – Opening Session

Chair:

Ms. Alessandra Maggi, *Istituto degli Innocenti*

Hon. Grazia Sestini, *Under-Secretary of State Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies*

Mr. Roberto Toscano, *Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Mr. Olara A. Otunnu, *Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*

Ms. Marta Santos Pais, *Director of Unicef International Research Centre*

10.00 - 10.15 – *Children and Armed Conflict in Italian International Policy*

Presenters:

Mr. Attilio Massimo Iannucci, *Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Children and Armed Conflict in the Italian International Cooperation

Mr. Emanuele Pignatelli, *Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
The Activities of Human Rights Office relating to Children and Armed Conflict

10.30 - 12.30 – Towards a Common Research Agenda
on Children and Armed Conflict

Chair:

Mr. Olara A. Otunnu, *Special Representative of the Secretary-
General for Children and Armed Conflict*

Presenters:

Dr. Alcinda Honwana, *Office of the Special Representative
of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*
An Overview of the Research Agenda on Children
and Armed Conflict

Prof. Craig Calhoun, *President of the Social Science
Research Council*

Bridging Academic Research, Policy Making and Practice

Dr. Neil Boothby, *International Save the Children Alliance*
Research and Interventions on Behalf of Children
Affected by Armed Conflict

14.00 - 16.00 – Trends in Warfare & Data Collection
on Children and Armed Conflict

Chair:

Ambassador Marika Fahlen, *Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Presenters:

Dr. Jon Pedersen, *FAFO Institute for Applied Social Science*
Data Collection on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children

Prof. Michael Klare, *Hampshire College*
(warfare trends affecting children)

Trends in Armed Conflict as they Affect
the Vulnerability of Children

Programme

Discussants:

Mr. Gareth Jones, *Unicef*

Dr. Suliman Baldo, *Human Rights Watch*

16.15 - 18.15 – Programme Interventions & Local Knowledge
on Prevention and Reintegration

Chair:

Dr. Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino, *University of Philippines*

Presenters:

Dr. Marie de la Soudière, *International Rescue Committee*
Programme Interventions on Behalf of Children
Affected by Armed Conflict

Prof. Pamela Reynolds, *University of Cape Town*
Local Knowledge in Prevention and Social Reintegration
of War-affected Children

Discussants:

Ms. Carlinda Monteiro, *Christian Children's Fund, Angola*

Dr. Alejandro Bendaña, *Centro de Estudios Internacionales,*
Nicaragua

Programme

DAY TWO: 3 July 2001

8.30 - 10.30 – *Breakout into Discussion Groups*

Group one: Data Collection on Children and Armed Conflict

Moderator: Dr. Debarati Guha-Sapir, *Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters*

Group two: Warfare Trends Affecting Children

Moderator: Prof. Peter Wallensteen, *Uppsala University*

Group three: Cultural Norms and Values

Moderator: Dr. Alcinda Honwana, *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*

Group four: Assessment of Programme Interventions

Moderator: Dr. Neil Boothby, *International Save the Children Alliance*

10.45 -12.15 – *Plenary: Reports from Group Discussions*

Chair:

Dr. Ram Manikkalingam, *Rockefeller Foundation*

Presenters:

Presentations by moderators of groups 1 & 2

13.15 - 14.45 – Continuation of Plenary: Reports
from Group Discussions

Chair:

Mr. Jean-Claude Legrand, *Unicef*

Presenters:

Presentations by moderators of groups 3 & 4

14.45 - 16.30 – The Research Network,
Methods and Outcomes

Chair:

Prof. Peter Wallensteen, *Uppsala University*

Presenters:

Dr. Ron Kassimir, *Social Science Research Council*
The Network: Structures, Activities and Outcomes

Discussant:

Mr. Rory Mungoven
Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

DAY THREE: 4 July 2001

8.30 - 10.00 – *Breakout into Discussion Groups*

Group one: The Organizational Structures and 'modus operandi' of the Network

Moderator: Dr. Beverly Bruce, *Social Science Research Council*

Group two: Methodological and Ethical issues

Moderator: Dr. Marie Smyth, *Institute for Conflict Research*

Group three: Capacity-building and Links with Conflict-affected Groups

Moderator: Dr. Sheila Bunwaree, *Codesria*

Group four: Outcomes and Products

Moderator: Prof. Craig Calhoun, *President of the Social Science Research Council*

10.15 - 12.00 – *Plenary: Reports from Group Discussions*

Chair:

Dr. Larry Aber, *Columbia University*

Presenters:

Presentations by the four group moderators

Programme

12.00 - 13.15 – **Next Steps and Closing Session**

Chair:

Ambassador Marika Fahlen, *Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Presenters:

Mr. Olara Otunnu, *Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*

Prof. Craig Calhoun, *President of the Social Science Research Council*



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