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Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict presented the Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict recently.

The report highlights progress in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1612 and its monitoring and reporting mechanism. It includes information on compliance in ending recruitment and use of children by armed groups and other grave violations. Its annexes contain a naming and shaming list of parties committing these grave abuses. The report also raises concern about a number of other situations of concern and cross-cutting issues that seem to have worsened around the world due to the changing nature of conflict.

"Thanks to the commitment of the Security Council and the sustained political will on this issue, the monitoring mechanism on violations against children in armed conflict in place is leading to positive results", announced Radhika. She referred to the de-listing of parties in Cote d'Ivoire from the annexes of the report and to progress on development of action plans to demobilise children from armed groups in Uganda, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Myanmar.

Children and armed conflict

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However, recruitment and use of children is taking place in 13 situations of concern including Burundi, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda and, more lately, in Afghanistan and Central African Republic.

She confirmed initial evidence that due to the changing nature of warfare, children are increasingly suffering from the consequences of armed conflict. The report raises serious concerns about a series of cross-cutting issues such as the increasing cases of recruitment or re-recruitment of children across borders and in refugee or internally displaced camps due to lack of security around the camps in DRC, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Chad.

She also said that more support should be given to the reintegration and the rehabilitation of children who have been associated with armed groups to avoid these re-recruitments and to ensure proper reintegration in their communities.

Radhika also deplores the use of indiscriminate weapons such as cluster munitions during attacks in areas of civilian concentration, which has a severe

impact on civilians, particularly children, even long after the conflict ended. Children are caught in the crossfire in too many situations as victims of indiscriminate mortar shelling of residential areas, of bomb attacks or suicide cars bombs.

The report calls for effective targeted measures against parties to armed conflict who continue to systematically commit grave violations against children in defiance of recommendations by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and of Security Council resolutions. Member States concerned also should take effective action to bring to justice individuals responsible through national justice systems.

Radhika stated that the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism set in place by SC Resolution 1612 is unique and is beginning to show positive results.