

**Ministerial Follow-Up Forum to the Paris Commitments  
and Paris Principles on Children Associated with Armed  
Forces or Armed Groups**

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Address by  
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Mr. Kouchner, Mr Anthony Lake, Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy, Ms Christine McCormick, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

The ILO is pleased to be given the opportunity to take the floor on behalf of the Paris Principles Steering Group.

The UN system has adopted a number of instruments to govern disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in relation to children affected by armed conflict. Among them is ILO Convention No 182, which prohibits the recruitment of children for use in armed conflict as one of the **worst form of child labour**. Addressing this violation of fundamental rights has been a concern and an obligation for the ILO ever since the coming into force of the Convention in 2000. Through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the ILO has since then been contributing to some prevention, release and reintegration efforts.

In doing so, **the ILO focuses on providing long-lasting livelihood opportunities** to boys and girls who have reached the legal working age and who were formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups or otherwise affected by conflict. This approach is intended to optimize the ILO's value added in the field of vocational training, apprenticeship, business and employment support. In this way, the ILO complements the interventions of other agencies that are more involved in the release of children and other aspects of their psycho-social reintegration.

I would like to focus my intervention today on this **economic dimension of reintegration and prevention**, the importance of which is highlighted in the Paris Principles and Guidelines. Addressing this dimension of child recruitment is of critical importance to prevent children from joining armed forces and groups, to ensure sustainable reintegration of children released and to contribute to peace and stability in the communities.

For some older **children released from armed forces and armed groups**, going back to school is not necessarily a best or even a viable option. Their needs and aspirations might instead be to earn a living in what is usually a very challenging environment. Failure to help these older children meet these needs risks exposing them to other forms of exploitation, criminality, violence and re-recruitment.

In Sierra Leone we know that for instance, some children have been re-recruited by armed groups in neighbouring countries while others are now working in hazardous conditions in mines. This example illustrates the serious consequences of the shortcomings of economic reintegration programmes, on the lives of children.

Experience also indicates that providing livelihoods to **other conflict-affected children** can effectively prevent them from joining armed forces or groups. We know that many children, driven by poverty, take the decision to join armed groups in order to survive.

The fact is that, implementing the Paris Principles and Guidelines, economic reintegration has been, and remains, a **major challenge**. Indeed it is one of the **weakest components** of release and reintegration. There are many reasons for this but one of the main difficulties is the lack of know-how of those on the ground in designing and implementing sound economic reintegration programmes for children. The emergency nature of these programmes also induces serious constraints in terms of funding and duration.

It is for this reason that during this past year, the Paris Principles Steering Group has mobilized to conduct a solid **inter-agency review of economic reintegration programmes** worldwide. It is impossible to fully summarize here the findings of this review but I would like to highlight a few:

- **First**, the review confirms that there is no successful economic reintegration without social reintegration. These two components are interlinked and need to be coordinated.
- **Second**, children are too often reintegrated in trades and occupations that do not respond to market demand, and that are not attractive to them. Economic reintegration needs to be based on a solid local mapping of job opportunities, local labour markets and community development
- **Third**, it is not enough to develop the skills of children. We also need to help them transfer their skills into viable livelihoods. And this means more than just providing a start-up kit. Long term business support is needed to sustain and develop the very vulnerable micro-businesses.

- **Fourth**, release and reintegration programmes for children should be better embedded in, or connected to, broader economic development plans and programmes, for instance those promoting youth employment.
- **Last** but not least, the review highlights that the specific needs of children are to be addressed more effectively, in particular those of girls, mothers and those of children with disabilities.

The findings and recommendations of the report have been discussed in an **expert consultation** in June 2010, with representatives from various organizations working in many countries around the world to discuss this specific aspect of children's reintegration.

The review and the expert consultation informed the elaboration, by the Paris Principles Steering Group, of a set of guidance to help practitioners design, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate economic components of reintegration programmes for children. I am pleased to announce that the **Technical Note that sets out this new guidance** is in the final stage of its elaboration. It is our hope and belief that, it will contribute to changing the practice on the ground and ensuring that boys and girls have access to long lasting livelihood opportunities.

To complements the Technical Note, the ILO has recently published a "how-to" guidance on each of the technical components of the economic reintegration process of children and has already been used as a basis for training in five countries. This is the result of a fruitful collaboration with UNICEF, which will hopefully continue and develop in the coming years.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

Before I end my remarks, I would like stress that, while it is important to provide livelihoods to older children, it should not be at all costs. There are basic labour rights which should need to be respected. The latest ILO global estimates on child labour reveal a new alarming trend: the number of children in the worst forms of child labour aged 15 to 17 has increased by 20 % over the last 4 years. These are children who have reached the minimum age for admission to employment but are involved in hazardous work. It is our responsibility to ensure that programmes beneficiaries are

not reintegrated into livelihoods that put their health, safety or morals at risk. We should seek to ensure that one worst form of child labour is not replaced with another.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of this distinguished audience to the importance of securing sufficient and long term funding to ensure successful and sustainable economic reintegration of children.

Thank you.