

Afghanistan, 30 January 2011 – The United Nations and the Government of Afghanistan today signed an agreement in which the country made a commitment to protect children affected by armed conflict and to prevent the recruitment of minors into the national armed forces.

“Today we come together to undertake a big step for a better future for the children of Afghanistan,” Zalmay Rassoul, Afghanistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, who represented the Government at the signing of the agreement in Kabul with Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict.

Also signing the document was Staffan de Mistura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

“This is not only the responsibility of the Government. The entire community is called upon to work together for the protection of all children in Afghanistan,” Mr. Rassoul.

In April last year the Afghan National Police (ANP) was cited in the Secretary-General's report on Children and Armed Conflict for the recruitment and use of children into its ranks.

The Government responded by establishing the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict, comprising eight ministries, the head of the National Directorate of Security, and the Presidential Advisor on Education and Health.

The steering committee and the UN-led country task force on children and armed conflict developed the Action Plan signed today. The plan sets out various activities that the Government will undertake to address issues such as the strengthening of birth registration and age-verification mechanisms, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of under-age recruitment and sexual violence.

The Government also undertook to include child-specific provisions in any peace and reconciliation outcomes, including dialogue with armed groups for the immediate release and reintegration of children under the age of 18 in their ranks.

“Today's signing of the Action Plan to halt the use and recruitment of children into the Afghan National Security Forces and to address other child rights violations is an important first step to end such practices,” said Ms. Coomaraswamy.

Peter Crowley, the UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan said: “We welcome the signing of this Action Plan which marks a renewed commitment by the Government of Afghanistan to reinforce international standards ending the recruitment and use of children in the security forces.”

Source: [UN News](#)