



**Defence for Children International (DCI) - Oral Statement
6th Session of the Human Rights Council**

***Review, Rationalisation and Improvement of Mandates:
Working Group on Arbitrary Detention***

Thank you Mr. President,

Defence for Children International (DCI) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the interactive dialogue on the review of Special Procedures mandates.

Since its establishment in 1991, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has been successful in responding to a number of urgent appeals, collaborating with individuals and NGOs throughout its investigations. We would like to stress that the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is an essential instrument for monitoring and protecting the human rights of persons deprived of their liberty. We urge members of the Council to ensure that this mandate be strengthened and continued.

In reviewing the terms for the continuation of this mandate, *Defence for Children International recommends that a specific item of the Group's work be devoted solely to investigating the arbitrary detention of children.*

An estimated 1 million children worldwide are deprived of their liberty¹. DCI's national sections in The Netherlands, Palestine and Sierra Leone, among others, monitor the detention of children in their countries, reporting and intervening in cases where this detention is arbitrary.

Children are arbitrarily detained for reasons which differ from those of adults. They may be detained because they are poor, homeless or lack parental care and protection - reasons which would never be accepted if applied to adults.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that children in conflict with the law have rights - stating specifically in article 37b that "*no child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily*". Despite this right however, children remain most vulnerable to violations of their right to liberty, and thus require special attention from the Working Group to ensure that these rights are respected.

The Working Group has the potential to play a central role in monitoring and exposing the hidden abuses that affect an increasing number of the world's children: we encourage the Council to include this as a specific item in the Group's mandate.

Thank you.

¹ http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_juveniljustice.html