Statement by H.E. Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima
Permanent Representative of the Republic of CapeVerde
to the United Nations

at the General Debate of the Third Committee on
Agenda Item: 65
"Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children"

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset let me join the previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, along with the Members of the Bureau on your election and assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation.

On the same note, I wish to thank the Secretary General, his Special Representative and Special Rapporteur, for the substantive reports on the topic under discussion. We thank also the Executive Director of UNICEF for his briefing.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me start my intervention by quoting the father of our nation, Amilcar Cabral: "Children are the flowers of our revolution, the main reason of our struggle". Cabral stated these words more than fifty years ago, during the fight for the independence of Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau and, for him, those were not just beautiful words. He made his utmost efforts to go from intention to action, even in a very harsh environment during the freedom war, by creating schools for the liberated zone's children and by putting education on an equal footing with the armed struggle. Cabral believed that education was as important to win the fight for independence as bullet and guns and, above all, for him, education was the only meaningful way to pave the path for a sustainable future for the two independent countries that emerged from the struggle for independence.

The Republic of Cabo Verde has always been determined to follow Cabral’s legacy and to this end the successive Governments placed children at the heart of their policies. As a young nation with scarce natural resources, but full of ambition for our people, we believe that we must value our human resources with special attention to children, girls and boys all together, for they are the future of our nation.

The constitution of the Republic of Cabo Verde brings special protection to children from any form of discrimination, abuse or sexual exploitation. It expressly prohibits child labour and it states that any corporal punishment or any other ill-treatment or lack of care endangering children’s physical, intellectual or emotional development, must be described as crime by law. Beside constitutional provisions, my country enacted numerous legislations in the area of child protection and one of the most substantive achievements in this field was the approval of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, early this month, by the Cape Verdean Parliament. The Statute constitutes a milestone framework, which creates a holistic approach to the promotion and protection of children's rights and reaffirms the recognition of children as subjects of right.


Mr. Chairman,

Granting the rights and welfare of children is not an issue we can dissociate from our endeavour to achieve a sustainable development. In this vein, Cabo Verde, with the support of its partners, has
accomplished remarkable progresses in advancing the living conditions of Cape Verdean children. My country has achieved or is on track to achieve several targets concerning the Millennium Development Goals related to children namely to reduce infant and child mortality.

Cabo Verde has launched numerous programs and policies aiming at fostering the rights and wellbeing of children. Just to name a few: the attendance to primary school is mandatory and free of charge for all children and the enrollment rate at this level of education is close to 100%. The program to provide hot meals to school pupils, put in place in 1979 with the support of the World Food Program, is believed to have contributed decisively to the reduction of school drop-out and to the combat to malnutrition in the country. Campaigns of vaccination have contributed significantly to the improvement of children's health and let me just refer to a vast campaign of vaccination against rubella and measles running these days under the authority of the Ministry of Health with support of WHO which is expected to reach almost all children and young people in the archipelago.

The Government of Cabo Verde has been working tirelessly in the field of prevention and eradication of child labour in the country. In 2012, was officially created the National Unit for Prevention and Combat to Child Labour and established the National Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour. The Government is at present drafting the list of hazardous work prohibited to children and adolescents. It ratified the ILO Conventions 138 and 182, and it set up 15 as the minimum age for admission to work.

Cabo Verde believes that a strong family environment is of paramount importance for children to fulfill their full potential. However, families face multiple challenges around the world and all countries are called upon to address the issue of children without appropriate family care. In this endeavour partnership plays a fundamental role and we would like to make a special reference to SOS children’s Villages International for the commendable work they have been doing in the world and in Cabo Verde, in particular, by providing a family like environment to children deprived of traditional family care. It's so amazing what people can do just giving love and hope.

Mr Chairman,

Children with disabilities are exposed to aggravated forms of vulnerability and are more likely to be victims of violence, abuse and exploitation. Cabo Verde is committed to work towards the full integration of children with disabilities in the society. The Government has been working in a close cooperation with NGOs and other partners from civil society to provide inclusive education, health care and social protection, through the enactment of specific legislation, the creation of Institutions to deal with the issues related to disabilities and the launch of numerous programs and policies in this area. To deal with our handicapped children is like to heal our soul and never despair of humanity.

Mr Chairman,

Despite the achievements accomplished so far, my country remains mindful that a lot more must be done in order to achieve children’s full potential and the government of Cabo Verde will spare no efforts in this venture. Poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, climate change impacts and economic crisis remain the biggest threats to the promotion and protection of the rights of children around the world and Cabo Verde as a Small Island Developing State remains particularly vulnerable.
The report of the Secretary General on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of Child shows that some progresses have been made in all areas covered by the Convention. Nevertheless, it also draws our attention to a number of challenges that remains to be faced. The report noticed that, “nearly 7 million of children under the age of 5 continue to die annually, or some 19,000 daily, mostly from preventable causes”. Here we are not only talking about figures. We are talking about lives. And for us the lost of one single life due to a cause that may be prevented is too much! The report shows also that we still lack behind in our commitments to combat child poverty, to address violence against children, as well as in our efforts to address child labour and in our commitment to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

Mr. Chairman,

At this juncture as we are “setting the stage” for the post-2015 development agenda, we have a strategic opportunity to take stock of the progress made in the field of promotion and protection of the rights of children, to share best practices and lessons learnt, as well as to boost our efforts to overcome remaining challenges. The post-2015 Agenda shall provide an integrated framework to enable us to fulfill our promises to create a “world fit for children”.

In this context, we cannot silence the destiny of millions of children trapped in the middle of conflicts or brutally displaced and put in camps of fortune, innocent victims of the madness of men. How also could we ignore those dying in high sea near Lampedusa or elsewhere, victims of traffickers of course, but mainly victims of an unbalanced world of injustice, intolerance and greed beside poverty that push parents on the uncertain path of misery and migration? Are we always aware or, better saying, do we really give enough attention to this desperation, this lost of hope that put entire families, young people and children in such situation on the borders of what seems to be paradise but in reality looks like the borders of hell? Drowning in the sea is not a destiny for children. WE in this General Assembly of the United Nations definitely have to do something and it should be done NOW to end this shame and this unbearable suffering of human been. Ce n’est pas ici un cri du cœur, ni simplement une conviction personnelle, mais le reflet de ce que doit être notre mission et la détermination commune des femmes et des hommes que nous sommes, ici et maintenant, face à ce qui entre dans le domaine de l’intolérable parce qu’il touche à l’enfant, c’est-à-dire à notre avenir a tous.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by reaffirming the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Cabo Verde to the promotion and protection of the rights of children that is not only a political program but reflects our faith in the future of all Cape Verdeans and our belief in the political will of all our Nations.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.