

**STATEMENT OF THE OSCE GROUP OF FRIENDS ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT
AT THE 1056th PLENARY MEETING OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

Vienna, 27 September 2023

Madam Chair,

I'm delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Belgium, Italy, Norway and Poland, forming the OSCE Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict.

We would like to use this opportunity to commend Canada for organizing last week's Security Dialogue, which particularly focused on the threat posed to children by landmines and explosive remnants of war. The meeting showcased the range and scale of challenges related to protecting children from this devastating danger.

Madam Chair,

The last report of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict, of June 5th this year, states that children continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict and the number of children verified as affected by grave violations continues to increase. Within the OSCE region many children are affected by armed conflict. Due to the scale and the intensity of hostilities, the most dire is the situation of Ukrainian children, affected by the consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Only in the last year the UN verified over 2300 violations against Ukrainian children with 477 cases of killing and 909 of maiming, most of which resulted from the use of explosive weapons and explosive ordnances. The UN also verified over 460 attacks on schools as well as multiple cases of abduction, denial of humanitarian access and sexual violence.

Madam Chair,

Protection of children in armed conflict should be regarded as an important aspect of any comprehensive strategy to resolve conflict. Therefore, we believe that the OSCE, with its comprehensive approach to security, should put more focus on this important issue.

In this context we highly appreciate Canada's plan to mainstream a children's perspective across different topics discussed at the FSC during this trimester.

Our Group, established at the Łódź Ministerial Council, aims to raise awareness on this important issue. We stand ready to actively support Canada, as well as future chairs of the FSC in promoting the CAAC agenda within the Forum's works.

Thank you.