



Permanent Mission of Italy
OSCE



**STATEMENT BY THE OSCE GROUP OF FRIENDS ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT AT
THE 95TH JOINT MEETING OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION AND THE
PERMANENT COUNCIL ON “PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICTS”**

(9 July 2025)

Chairs,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the OSCE Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, which is co-chaired by Albania, Belgium, Norway, Poland and my own country Italy.

At first, I would like to thank the Finnish Chairpersonship of the Permanent Council and Estonian Chairpersonship of the Forum for Security Cooperation for organizing today's timely and important discussion, especially in light of the ongoing Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other crises in the OSCE region. I also extend my gratitude to the esteemed panelists for their insightful contributions.

In 1999, the United Nations Security Council, through its resolution 1261, expressed deep concern regarding the harmful and widespread effects of armed conflict on children and the long-term implications this has for lasting peace, security, and development. The OSCE has also made commitments to protect children. In 1990, during the Copenhagen meeting, participating States pledged to give special attention to recognizing the rights of children. These provisions are particularly relevant in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. A recent report from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reveals that children have become some of the most affected victims of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Millions of Ukrainian children have been displaced, and their access to education has been severely restricted. Many have suffered injuries or lost their lives, and there are alarming reports of forced deportations, and forced adoptions involving Ukrainian children. This staggering reality was showcased at the event organized by the Group with the Delegation of Ukraine on The impact of Russia's War of Aggression on Ukraine's children held on 4 June, this year.

Today, we stand united in our commitment to protect the most vulnerable members of our society our children. International humanitarian law mandates that armed forces and armed groups take all necessary measures to protect civilians, particularly children, who are especially vulnerable during times of war. This is not just a legal obligation; it is a moral imperative.

Last year 15 participating States out of 47 submitted the voluntary questionnaire on children and armed conflict within the annual reporting on the Code of Conduct on politico-military

aspects of security. As for the current year 16 out of 41 have done so. While commending those who responded, we strongly encourage the remaining States to do the same, as the information collected will inform a summary factsheet and, subsequently, a best practice guide to be shared with all participating States. That could also help develop specific guidelines for the FSC, thereby supporting the training of monitoring personnel with the possible mandate to observe the children's rights during an armed conflict.

Chairs,

Protecting children in conflict is not an optional addition; it is a fundamental element of any effective conflict resolution strategy. The OSCE must prioritize this issue on our agenda. The Organization is indeed well-placed to drive capacity-building and strategic cooperation. It could deliver targeted training for armed and security forces and relevant stakeholders, promote national action plans, and facilitate cross-border collaboration. The Group of Friends is prepared to deepen our collaboration to ensure that the protection of children is fully integrated into the OSCE's initiatives. By taking decisive action now, we can help create a safer and more secure future for generations to come. We owe it to future generations to ensure the OSCE's response is both robust and forward-looking.

Thank you.
