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FSC.DEL/338/22  
29 September 2022

ENGLISH only



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA  
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

Statement by Lithuania for the  
Forum for Security Cooperation  
Security Dialogue: Children and Armed Conflict  
14 September 2022, Vienna

Mr Chairperson, thank you for giving me the floor.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. Please allow me to add several remarks in my national capacity.

Lithuania thanks the Belgian Chairpersonship for choosing this very important topic – “Children and Armed Conflict” for security dialogue at the FSC. We express our appreciation to all distinguished speakers for their valuable presentations and especially **thank the representatives of the NGO Voices of Children and of the Centre for Civil Education “Almenda”** for their powerful stories, which we have heard during this meeting and during the side event this morning.

Since Russia launched its illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable full-scale war against Ukraine, we have witnessed that **children bear the devastating brunt of war**, they are killed, injured or forced to flee their homes. Children lose their parents and relatives. They suffer from long-term psychological trauma. In fact, they are deprived of their childhood.

Since the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, two thirds of the Ukrainian **children had to leave their homes and their country**. We all know that displaced children are particularly vulnerable, also due interruptions to education and health services, and due to heightened risk of conflict-related violence and abuse.

Furthermore, we deplore **unlawful transfers and deportations of the Ukrainian children to Russia**, we deplore that Russia has modified its legislation to facilitate a fast-track and simplified adoption of the Ukrainian children, which may constitute a breach of international law.

**All atrocities and violations committed** against the people of Ukraine, children in particular should be duly **documented and thoroughly investigated, and all perpetrators must be held accountable**.

Mr Chairperson, Colleagues,

Russia wages a war against Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also **against Ukraine's future**, since every child is the greatest asset and the future of each country. Let me quote the First Lady of Lithuania, as she spoke at the panel on "Saving the Childhood" in the conference hosted by First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska in July: "People of good-will should not stay silent observers, when Ukraine's future is being harmed and destroyed before our eyes. We should defend the principles of humanism by protecting children and their tomorrow. It is the duty of every decent person to strive for the well-being of the Ukrainian children, as persistently and decisively as Ukrainians fight for their freedom and for freedom of all of us."

Earlier in June, the Ukrainian Centre was opened in Vilnius by a joint initiative of the First Ladies of Lithuania and Ukraine. The primary mission of the Centre is to provide humanitarian aid to the victims of war, to identify and respond to their immediate needs. At the same time, the Centre helps Ukrainians preserve their identity and culture, which is under the fierce attack from Russia. Education of the Ukrainian children there **is focused not only on integration into our society and our educational system, but also and very importantly, on preservation of Ukrainian language, traditions and culture**. The Centre in Vilnius is now becoming **a real and safe home for Ukrainians in our country**, and it will remain such as long as all Ukrainians are able to return safely and securely to their homes in Ukraine.

On a separate note, I wish to **thank Poland and other countries** in the immediate neighbourhood of Ukraine and across the OSCE area for their hospitality and support to Ukrainian families, and in particular to children.

Mr Chairperson, I would kindly ask that this statement be attached to the Journal of the day.

Thank you.