

**STATEMENT OF THE OSCE GROUP OF FRIENDS ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT AT
THE 1090th MEETING OF THE FORUM FOR SECURITY COOPERATION ON THE “CODE OF
CONDUCT ON POLITICO-MILITARY ASPECTS OF SECURITY”**

Vienna, 9 October 2024

(602 words)

Mr Chair,

I am making this statement on behalf of the OSCE Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict co-chaired by Albania, Belgium, Italy, Norway and Poland.

We are thankful to the Danish Chairpersonship for its leadership and for organizing today's security dialogue on the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security that is extremely relevant given the current security context characterized by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We are also grateful to the distinguished panellists for their insightful presentations.

In November 2023, OSCE Group of Friends on Children and Armed conflict distributed for the consideration of all OSCE participating States an indicative list of issues on children and armed conflict, as an additional voluntary attachment to the annual questionnaire on the implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. In December 2023, Canada - as then Chairperson of the Forum for security Co-operation (FSC) - encouraged all participating States to use it to exchange information under the Code of Conduct, from 2024 onwards.

To date, 15 participating States have submitted the additional voluntary questionnaire out of 46 that have provided their replies to the main questionnaire on the Code of Conduct for 2024.

We are most grateful for their commitment to this exercise and kindly encourage other participating States to share their views on the subject, by submitting the voluntary questionnaire.

Mr Chair,

In line with relevant OSCE commitments and the wider objective of the Code of Conduct to strengthen the knowledge and respect of international humanitarian law by armed forces personnel, the additional voluntary questionnaire on children and armed conflict aims to foster the exchange of information among participating States, encourage the sharing of best

practices and strengthen the respect of international humanitarian law regarding the protection of children in armed conflicts.

The questionnaire consists of four parts, focusing on international legal frameworks and commitments, internal state measures and mechanisms to prevent CAAC violations regarding the minimum age requirements for recruitment and the six grave violations identified by the UN Security Council, education and training activities for troops on CAAC-related issues as well as international cooperation and partnerships.

All participating States who have replied to the additional questionnaire to date indicated that they have subscribed or endorsed the listed international legal instruments on the subject of the rights of child and voluntary commitments for the protection of children in armed conflicts. Some participating States made also reference to the existence of specific national mechanisms designed to minimise and respond to violations against children in conflicts.

Most participating States provide basic education to their troops on international humanitarian law, including on issues related to children in armed conflict. On the other hand, specialised in-service and/or pre-deployment trainings on children and armed conflict are not often available, including first aid courses and other medical trainings of armed forces specifically targeted at preventing and responding to child casualties. Examples of international collaboration and capacity-building initiatives on IHL, human rights and CAAC-related issues directed with other States, in particular those in conflict or post-conflict situations, were also provided in the responses submitted to the additional voluntary questionnaire.

Mr Chair,

The effective protection of children in armed conflict, through respect of international humanitarian law and human rights, should continue to be our priority. We strongly believe that the OSCE, with its comprehensive concept of security and wide toolbox, can play an effective role in this regard. The additional voluntary questionnaire is a useful tool to share best practices and highlight possible shortcomings. We reiterate our call to all participating States to make use of it.

Thank you, Mr Chair.