

Paris,
March 4th 2022



DECLARATION OF THE EUROPEAN MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF CHILDREN ON THE SITUATION IN UKRAINE

1/ In times of armed conflict, children are always among the most vulnerable. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has been a dramatic reminder of this every day since February 24th.

Children in Ukraine die under the bombs, others are born under these same bombs. Millions of children live in fear, hundreds of thousands are forced into exile, some of them on their own, to the detriment of their physical and emotional safety, causing trauma that will mark them for life. Others, especially children in institutions, are unable to leave.

Every day, children lose a member of their family, a parent, a loved one.

2/ While the countries of the European Union are gathering today around the European Guarantee for Children, a generation of children on our continent is deprived of access to their most basic and fundamental rights: protection, dignity, a roof over their heads, health care, education, food.

The European Union firmly condemns the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Through its illegal military actions, Russia is blatantly violating international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, and is undermining European and global security and stability. In light of this situation, the protection of civilians, including children, as well as civilian infrastructure, is an absolute priority. Safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need must also be ensured and international humanitarian and human rights law - including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict - must be respected.

Life and integrity of all children must be protected in times of armed conflict.

International humanitarian law also provides for an obligation to protect children who have been forced to flee. Their safety must also be ensured until their arrival in a safe place, in Ukraine or in any receiving country.

3/ In this respect, the Member States will ensure, in line with the first announcements made by the European Union, that they provide a prompt and concrete response to the children and their families, with special attention to unaccompanied children, who are among the affected populations, whether in Ukraine, in neighboring countries or in other member States of the European Union.

Taking into account the specific and urgent needs of children in the context of this assistance will be a key element of this commitment. Cooperation between states, civil society and international organizations will be further strengthened in the coming days to reinforce child protection.

Endangering children can also have long-term consequences. It will therefore be necessary to deploy measures, mechanisms and adequate funding that ensure their access to basic and fundamental rights and allow them to benefit from educational activity, access to care, particularly psychological care, and more broadly everything that will facilitate their resilience.

The mobilization of international organizations and civil society will also be a key factor in helping these children. In this respect, we particularly welcome the coordinating role of UNHCR and the remarkable action of UNICEF, its National Committees, and all civil society organizations and local authorities.

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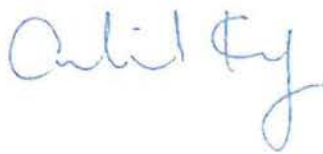
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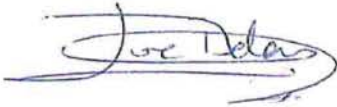
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