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.
Belgium
Mr. Antonios ANTONIADIS
Vice-Minister-Président et Minister
Of Health and Social Affairs
Of German speaking community

Croatia
Ms. Margareta MADERIC
State Secretary to the Minister of Labour,
Pension System, Family
and Social Policy

Cyprus
Ms. Anastasia ANTHOUSI
Deputy Minister of Social Welfare

Czechia
Ms. Martina STEPANKOVA
Deputy Minister of Labour
and Social Affairs

France
Mr. Adrien TAQUET
Secretary of State
for children and families

Germany
Ms. Ekin DELIGOZ
Parliamentary State Secretary

Greece
Ms. Dómina Maria MICHAELIDOU
Deputy Minister of Labour and
Social Affairs

Hungary
Mr. István KOVACS
Deputy State for International
and EU Affairs

Irland
Mr. Roderic O'GORMAN
Minister for Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Malta
Mr. Michael FALZON
Minister for Social Justice
and Solidarity, the Family
and Children's Rights

Sweden
Mr. Tobias Lundin GERDAS
State Secretary to the Ministry
for Health and Social Affairs

Italy
Ms. Elena BONETTI
Minister for Equal Opportunities and
Family
Denmark
Mrs. Astrid KRAG
Minister for Social Affairs and Senior Citizens

Luxembourg
Mr. Claude MEISCH
Minister of Education, Childhood and Youth

Estonia
Ms. Signe RIISALO
Minister of Social Protection

Romania
Ms. Gabriela FIREA
Minister of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities

Italy
Mr. Andrea ORLANDO
Minister of Labour

Slovakia
Mr. Milan KRAJNIAK
Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Latvia
Mr. Gatis EGLITIS
Minister for Welfare

Finland
Mr. Aki LINDÉN
Minister of Family Affairs and Social Services

Lithuania
Ms. Monika NAVICKIENE
Minister of Social Security and Labour

Finland
Ms. Hanna SARKKINEN
Minister of Social Affairs and Health
Poland
Ms. Marlena Malag
Minister of Family and Social Policy

Spain
Ms. Ione BELARRA
Minister for Social Rights and Agenda 2030