



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers on  
12 February**

On the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers, the European Union underlines the need to step up efforts at all levels to protect children from the effects from war, including being abducted to serve as combatants, sex slaves or servants. The EU highlights the necessity to address the short, medium and long-term impacts of armed conflict on children in an effective, sustainable and comprehensive manner.

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The EU remains deeply concerned about the situation of children affected by armed conflict around the world. 13 years after the groundbreaking Graça Machel's study 'The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children' progress is still too slow for the tens of thousands of children who still fight in forces in different countries or are victimised as part of armed conflict. Children continue to be abducted, killed, maimed, raped or otherwise sexually abused. Schools and hospitals caring for children continue to be attacked and children continue to be denied humanitarian assistance. The changing character of conflict where civilian life is not necessarily safe further enhances children's suffering. Girls are particularly affected by the increasing use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

In line with its Guidelines on Children Affected by Armed Conflict, the EU reaffirms its firm support to the work of the United Nations, particularly of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict and the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict set up on the basis of the Security Council Resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), as well as to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict. The EU reaffirms its full support to the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the fight against impunity for the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

The EU furthermore expresses its support to the Paris Commitments and Principles on children associated with armed forces or armed groups, the first ministerial follow-up meeting of which was held in New York in September 2008 focusing on concrete long-term actions in the field of reintegration of ex child soldiers. In this context it urges the different parties involved in the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) processes to pay adequate attention to children, particularly to girls. The EU also continues to support initiatives of civil society organisations promoting children's rights in armed conflict.

*"The Candidate Countries Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.*

*\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process."*

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