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COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

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Steering Committee Members: Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, Human Rights Watch, Jesuit Refugee Service, Quaker United Nations Office - Geneva, Rädda Barnen for the International Save the Children Alliance, International Federation Terre des Hommes and World Vision International and several regional NGOs from Latin America, Africa and Asia.

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Andorra: fourth country to ratify an international instrument banning child soldiers

The Principality of Andorra will become the fourth country to ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

“Ratification of the Optional Protocol sends a clear message to the world: no longer shall children be used in battles,” said Rory Mungoven, co-ordinator of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

Furthermore, Andorra has stated firmly that all forms of recruitment -- even voluntary -- of children under 18 are unacceptable. Such a statement clearly demonstrates that the position taken by certain governments, including the United Kingdom, to allow under-18 volunteers in their armed forces runs against growing international consensus on this issue.

“The only way to ensure that children are not used as soldiers is not to recruit them in the first place,” said Mr Mungoven.

“We urge other countries to follow Andorra’s example and commit themselves to ending the recruitment of children under 18.”

The Optional Protocol has been signed by 79 countries and ratified by three others (Bangladesh, Canada and Sri Lanka). The Optional protocol requires 10 ratifications to come into force.

For more information on the global campaign to ban child soldiers please visit: www.child-soldiers.org.

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