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AMMAN DECLARATION ON THE USE OF CHILDREN AS SOLDIERS

Participants in the Amman Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers, held in Amman, Jordan from 8-10 April 2001;

Deeply appreciating the call for a world free of child soldiers made by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah in her speech to the Conference;

Affirming that no child under 18 years should be the instrument or object of violence;

Appalled that more than 300,000 children (girls and boys) under 18 years of age are currently participating as soldiers in armed conflicts worldwide;

Recalling that all children are entitled to all the rights and freedoms in the Convention on the Rights of the Child without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;

Welcoming the adoption by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict which prohibits the use of children under the age of 18 years in armed conflicts;

Acknowledging the causes leading to armed conflict and the participation of children, including foreign occupation and forced displacement; poverty, neglect, injustice and economic disparity; lack of access to

education and other opportunities; a culture of militarisation and violence, including through toys, computer games, violent films and cartoons, and media images; the proliferation of small arms; intolerance and discrimination;

Stressing the obligation of the States Parties to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 to both respect and ensure respect for the provisions of these Conventions, in particular the situation of civilians in times of occupation according to the 4th Geneva Convention;

Reaffirming the UN Charter commitment to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and the need to seek peaceful alternatives, promote human security and involve children in building peace and reconciliation;

Noting the UN Security Council's call in Resolutions 1261 (28 August 1999) and 1314 (11 August 2000) for concerted international action to stop the use of children as soldiers, its strong condemnation of the targeting of children and places that have a significant presence of children, and willingness to take steps to minimise the potential harm to children when imposing sanctions;

Recalling Resolution 16/9-C(IS) on Child Care and Protection in the Islamic World of the Ninth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Doha, State of Qatar in November 2000 which called for the non-involvement of (refugee) children in any armed conflict and not to enlist them in the armed forces or for any other actions which might expose their personal safety and security to danger.

Welcoming the Resolution for a Framework on the Rights of the Child adopted by the Summit of the League of Arab States in Amman in March 2001;

Welcoming the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court which makes the conscripting or enlisting of children under the age of 15 years or using them to participate actively in hostilities a war crime, both in international and internal armed conflict and whether by armed forces or armed groups;

Welcoming the inclusion of forced or compulsory recruitment for use in armed conflict as one of the worst forms of child labour in ILO Convention 182;

Welcoming the entry into force of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which prohibits all recruitment and direct participation in hostilities of children under 18 years;

Noting the UN Secretary-General's decision that UN peacekeepers should be at least 21 and in no case less than 18 years of age;

Welcoming the declarations on the use of children as soldiers from previous regional conferences in Maputo (April 1999), Montevideo (July 1999), Berlin (October 1999) and Kathmandu (May 2000);

Mindful of preparations for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in September 2001 which will further underscore the international community's resolve to protect children from all forms of exploitation, violence, discrimination and abuse;

Determined to put an end to the use of children under 18 years of age as soldiers:1

1. Solemnly declare that the use in hostilities of any child under 18 years of age by any armed force or armed group is unacceptable;
2. Urge all states to ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, without reservations and declaring at least 18 years as the minimum age for all forms of voluntary recruitment;
3. Encourage states to use the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (September 2001) as an opportunity for signature or to announce their ratification or accession to the above Optional Protocol;
4. Call upon all armed forces and armed groups to end the recruitment and use of children under 18 and to immediately demobilize or release into safety children already being used as soldiers;
5. Call upon states who have not already done so to ratify the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, the two Additional Protocols of 1977, the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Ottawa Landmines Treaty, the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention,¹⁸²;
6. Call upon the states parties to the 4th Geneva Convention to take all necessary measures to ensure full respect for its provisions, in particular in relation to the protection of children under occupation;
7. Call upon all states to ensure the effective and universal implementation of these international standards and protection for children, including refugee and displaced girls and boys, in national legislation and practice, including through:

- ~ Reviewing national legislation to ensure conformity with international standards;
 - ~ Criminalising the use in hostilities and recruitment of children under 18 in their national laws;
 - ~ Strengthening the international human rights mechanisms, in particular the Committee on the Rights of the Child;
 - ~ Establishing or strengthening national mechanisms for the rights of the child;
 - ~ Ensuring compulsory and comprehensive birth registration;
6. Call upon all states to ensure the special protection of all children living under occupation, child detainees and child participants in armed conflict or civil strife, through the strict application of international human rights and humanitarian law, including international standards on juvenile justice and the use of lethal force;
 7. Call upon all states and other relevant bodies to ensure the translation, raising of awareness and widespread dissemination of these standards at all levels of society and effective training of military and police personnel, peacekeepers and officials in child rights and protection, and to incorporate these into educational and military curricula;
 8. Call upon all states, including those outside the region, not to supply small arms or light weapons to any government or armed group which recruits or uses children as soldiers, and to take steps to prevent individuals and companies from doing so;
 9. Urge states to adopt legislation holding companies accountable for activities which directly or indirectly involve children in hostilities or military activity and call on companies to adopt and abide by codes of conduct to this effect;

10. Urge armed groups to make written commitments to abide by the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflict;

11. Call on religious scholars to conduct studies showing the positive role religion can play in combating child soldiering and its negative impact on children;

12. Call on religious and community leaders to promote a culture of peace, tolerance and understanding and raising awareness about the rights of the child;

13. Encourage states to enhance preventive measures for all children, especially those at risk, by addressing the causes of child soldiering, in particular poverty, discrimination, displacement, injustice and lack of education, including by:

- ~ Creating educational and vocational opportunities
- ~ Ensuring education for tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for others
- ~ Empowering children to be actively engaged in community-building without resorting to violence
- ~ Ending military training programmes for children, which encourage the militarisation of society, aggressive attitudes and entrenchment of occupation;
- ~ Strengthening the family as the main protective unit for the child;

6. Call on the national, regional and international media to promote positive images and attitudes instead of focussing on violence;

7. Call upon all states to ensure the special needs of former child soldiers are met through effective and appropriate programmes of rehabilitation and reintegration into society, taking account of the specific needs of particular groups of children, such as girls, refugees and disabled children;

8. Call upon all governments, including those outside the region, the UN system and international institutions to provide adequate assistance to ensure the implementation of the above aims, in particular by providing short-term and long-term resources to support alternative employment and demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration for child soldiers;
9. Request the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Organization of African Unity, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and other regional bodies to endorse and work for the implementation of this Declaration;
10. Call on the Directorate of Childhood of the Arab League to promote this declaration, particularly to all participants of the meetings of the Technical Consultative Committee for the Arab Child;
11. Call upon all states, international organizations, NGOs and civil society, in particular those of the Middle East and North Africa region, to work for the implementation and monitoring of this Declaration, including through the participation of children themselves and the creation of national, regional and international networks;
12. Encourage His Majesty's Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to present this Declaration to the Human Security Network Ministerial Meeting in Petra (May 2001); and
13. Express their warm appreciation to Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah for her patronage of and participation in this conference and to His Majesty's Government of the Royal Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy for hosting this important event.

Adopted in Amman on 10 April 2001

¹According to the *Commentary on the Additional Protocols*, recruitment covers any means (formal or *de facto*) by which a person becomes a member of the armed forces or an armed group, so it includes conscription (compulsory/obligatory military service), voluntary enlistment, and forced recruitment. According to the UN Conference Document A/CONF.183/2/Add.1, participation in hostilities covers both direct participation in combat and also active participation in military activities linked to combat such as scouting, spying, sabotage and the use of children as decoys, couriers or at military checkpoints and the use of children in a direct support function such as acting as bearers to take supplies to the front line, and all activities at the front line itself.