

**Counsellor XING Jisheng's Remarks at Arria Formula
Meeting on “Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Violations
against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict”**

Mr. Chair,

I thank all guest speakers for their informative and insightful remarks. China appreciates their works on protecting children in armed conflicts. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed children to the increased risks of violations. Although the overall impact on trends of violations is still yet to identify, the current findings are already very worrying. Children cannot wait longer, we must act now.

First and foremost, we need to make more efforts for ceasefire and cessation of hostilities. This is the fundamental approach to protect children from the harm of armed conflict compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. We call upon all warring parties to respond to Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire and enable the safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian assistance to children. We are encouraged that the field staff of the UN monitoring and reporting mechanism has been working creatively to engage with parties to the conflict on developing and implementing commitments to end children rights violations. Confinement measures can never be used as the excuse for violations against children.

Second, we need to guarantee children's basic needs to health and education and prioritize the continuity of child-centred services. Children affected by conflicts are experiencing increasing threats to their safety and wellbeing as schools are locked down and services are suspended. The international community with the help of UNICEF and other children protection actors should provide practical support to countries concerned to maintain the continuity of services for children while respecting the national ownership. Digital technology is a useful means to minimize the negative impact of school closure. We should help the Global South to scale up the digital literacy for the benefit of children.

Last but not the least, we need to adapt the monitoring and response to violations against children to the new normal. Global coordination is urgently needed to prevent this health crisis from becoming a protection crisis. In this regard, the recommendations presented in the study conducted by the Office of SRSG Gamba is timely and thought-provoking. For example, increase and diversify the monitoring channels, and upgrade IT tools. We hope these measures can be integrated into the field work of the UN monitoring and reporting mechanism to fulfil their mandate as efficiently and safely as possible.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.