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SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA FORMULA MEETING
“IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON VIOLATIONS
AGAINST CHILDREN IN SITUATION OF ARMED CONFLICT”.

MAY 7TH, 2021
STATEMENT OF POLAND

Poland commends Estonia and other co-sponsors for convening this meeting. We would like to express our appreciation to Special Representative Virginia Gamba for her statement and a valuable report as well as all to other briefers for their insightful and inspiring remarks.

Poland aligns itself with the statements delivered by the European Union as well as by the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

We would like to use this opportunity to reaffirm our strong support for the mandate of Special Representative Gamba.

The CAAC agenda gathers unparalleled support and engagement from the international community. Unfortunately, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of consolidating gains from the agenda's implementation, we need to explore how and where to act so as to protect the progress that has been made.

Since its establishment, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism has proven a strong and useful tool that allows to monitor and expose grave violations as well as engage in preventive actions with the parties to the conflict. For that reason, we are deeply concerned with the drastic limitations to its monitoring and verification capacities experienced when movement constraints and other control measures have been introduced. The COVID-19 pandemic has in particular exacerbated the tabus regarding rape and other forms of sexual violence, recruitment and use of children, and abductions that are considered particularly sensitive and generally under-reported due to their nature. We are pleased to learn from the report that newly implemented protocols and procedures have already improved the situation and we do hope that this progress will be continued.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on grave violations against children both in the short- and the long-term. We are particularly disturbed by the attacks on hospitals and restricted access to schools and healthcare facilities. Without safe access to those services, children's quality of life will continue to deteriorate. In addition, systematic deprivation of access to education make children more susceptible to recruitment and use by armed and terrorist groups. As a Member of the Steering Committee for the Global Coalition for Reintegration we want to stress that closures of interim care centers for children separated from armed forces or groups put in jeopardy the reintegration programs.

Last but not least, let me also bring to the attention the dire plight of those most vulnerable in the situations of conflict, including children with disabilities as well as children born of sexual violence. With the detrimental consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic they are at an even greater risk of abuse, abandonment, and rejection. Moreover, we are concerned that children with disabilities, who have already been marginalized before the COVID-19 outbreak, are not always included in the strategies of distance learning

The current pandemic is threatening to undo many recent gains in the fields of child protection, human rights and development. Many violations are interdependent and interlinked, so If we want to avoid a vicious circle of powerlessness towards a deteriorating situation of children affected by armed conflict, urgent action with a more holistic approach is needed.