

## 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event – SRSG Children and Armed Conflict

– statement by Mr. Pawel Radomski, Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the UN

8 February 2017, New York

Mr/Ms Chair,

- Let me begin by joining others in thanking the SRSG Leila Zerrougui for her tireless efforts to safeguard the rights of children in conflict situations.
- We have gathered today to celebrate the progress that has been made in advancing rights of children living in conflict affected areas. Since 1996, thanks to the work of the UN, a significant number of child soldiers were released and reintegrated into societies while many perpetrators were held accountable for their grave violations against children. Yet, there is still a lot to be done to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict.
- Poland, as the initiator of the negotiations of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, remains committed to the fight against violence, abuses and exploitation of children at all levels, including in conflict related situations.
- As per our international engagement, we joined the *Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict* where together with 40 other member states we brainstorm about the ways of improving the efforts of international community to better address the alarming issue of killing, maiming, recruitment or sexual violence against children.
- In terms of regional cooperation, Poland as a member of the European Union, supports the EU's strategies aimed at addressing emergencies that put children in grave danger. For instance, in 2014, the EU and UNICEF launched the “*Voices of Children in Emergencies*” campaign – a joint initiative dedicated to sharing stories of children living in armed conflicts, with particular focus on Jordan, Chad and Philippines. We are proud that Poland was part of this campaign thanks to Polish football player and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Robert Lewandowski, who visited a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan to lend his voice to children affected by the conflict.
- As far as our national endeavors are concerned, since 2014 Polish government has been providing humanitarian and financial aid to Christian and Yezidi families, victims of religious and ethnic cleansing, living in refugee camps across Iraqi Kurdistan. Funds provided by the Polish MFA was used to purchase food, hygiene products and first aid kits for almost 2 thousand children, as well as to equip new schools and to ensure grants for students.

As a proof of our most recent commitment to the *CAAC agenda*, only last year we contributed 2,500,000 PLN to the UNICEF Mosul Response Operation in Iraq, where estimated 35 thousand children became displaced due to the ongoing conflict.

- Let me conclude by highlighting that meetings like today not only provide platform for international community to exchange best practices and to sum up the progress made so far with regard to CAAC, but - above all - they enable a better response to the plight of children and armed conflict in the future.