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HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
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WRITTEN MESSAGE BY THE HR/VP

I offer the warmest congratulations and deep appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, on the 25th anniversary of the creation of the mandate by the UN General Assembly to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, raise awareness, promote the collection of information about the plight of children affected by war and foster international cooperation to improve their protection.

Despite the global efforts, human rights violations and abuses committed against children in the context of armed conflicts continue. Armed groups and forces continue to recruit and use children. Only a fraction of those released have benefited from reintegration programmes. Insecurity prevents thousands of children from access to education and health care. Schools and hospitals continue to be targeted. Children, despite being victims, remain unlawfully in detention for alleged or actual association with armed groups and forces. This is a reminder of why we need to continue to work together to fight for these vulnerable children.

Through your work and tireless efforts in conflict situations and with conflict parties, the rights of children are better protected and their needs served.

The EU remains a staunch supporter of your work for Children and Armed Conflict, to end and to prevent grave violations against children affected by armed conflict. Your work has had real impact on countless children's lives on the ground, working with parties to conflict and through your advocacy.

No one has the right to steal children's dreams or their innocence. The EU and the UN stand together to make sure that all children, wherever they are, experience a childhood free from violence and with access to education. Children have a key role to play in building a present and a future where peace will prevail. It is our responsibility to enable them to be such agents of change.

Let me extend my heartfelt thanks for her dedicated work and the excellent cooperation we have enjoyed. Thanks to determined efforts and commitment of the UN Office and Special Representative Gamba, a great deal for these most vulnerable children has been achieved.