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## CONCEPT NOTE

### UN SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA FORMULA MEETING

#### **“CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT: UKRAINIAN CRISIS. EVACUATING CHILDREN FROM CONFLICT ZONE.”**

**Date:** 5 April 2023

**Time:** 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Venue:** ECOSOC Chamber (TBC)

**Participation:** All UN Member States, Permanent Observers, UN entities, civil society organizations and press are invited

The meeting will be held in all UN official languages and webcast on UN WebTV (*subject to non-objection by UNSC Members*).

#### **Objective:**

The Arria Formula meeting is aimed at providing the participants with objective information on the situation of children in conflict zone in Donbass as well as on the measures taken by the Russian authorities to evacuate the children from danger.

The coverage of the evacuation under consideration by Western mainstream media and some of delegations, misrepresent the evacuation as “abduction”, “forced displacement”, “adoption”, trying to provide a deliberately distorted narrative of attempts by Russia to “destroy Ukrainian identity” of those children. Such a position is not only baseless and illogical, it is also inhumane as it virtually calls for leaving orphaned or uncared-for children in the midst of hostilities.

While Western media promote a distorted picture marked by disinformation, participants will hear “first hand” information from the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Russian Federation, as well from children, evacuated from the conflict area.

The meeting will allow the Security Council members and other Member States to share their views on the question of evacuation of children from conflict zones and ensuring their best interests in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Background:**

Since February 2014, when Kiev authorities that came to power as a result of coup d'etat decided to crash the Russian-speaking population of Donbass by a full-fledged war against the Donetsk and the Lugansk People's Republics, civilians endured daily shelling of residential areas, tortures, threats and kidnappings from the Ukrainian armed forces and nationalist battalions. Even according to the OHCHR that does not have the full picture of the situation, in total 3107 civilians perished as a result of conflict from 2014 to the end of 2021, 152 of them – children. However, this dire situation was being persistently ignored by the Western countries.

With such a carte-blanche, Kiev continued to violate Minsk agreements and UNSC resolution 2202(2015) over seven years and finally decided to resolve the conflict by force.

Having received western long-range artillery and missile systems Kiev intensified targeted shelling of civilian infrastructure and residential areas which led to numerous deaths and injuries of non-combatants including many children. This however does not stop Western countries from providing additional weapons to Kiev.

As a result of the irresponsible and aggressive policy of the Ukrainian authorities, who did not seek any resolution of the conflict in Donbass otherwise than by use of force, the heads of these republics decided to evacuate civilians from the conflict zone.

Evacuation of children from conflict zone and ensuring their best interests in this process is one of the obligations of States both under the international humanitarian law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Millions of people were evacuated from the conflict zone. Among evacuees were children accompanied by their parents or lawful guardians. Only small portion of evacuees was orphan children and children left without parental care. Taking into account the principle of ensuring the best interests of the child, it was decided to immediately remove legal obstacles barring the placement of the latter under the preliminary guardianship.

This decision was based on the norms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes that for the full and harmonious development of his personality, a child needs to grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

Although the English term "preliminary guardianship" (or, with certain caveats – "foster care", "custody") could not be absolutely accurate due to differences between Western and Russian legal systems, it would still work best to describe this approach. This form of preliminary guardianship was chosen on purpose, bearing in mind potential future reunification of minors with their blood relatives, if any. This is what happened in reality, when such relatives have been found. The Russian authorities do not prevent children from maintaining contacts and communication with any relatives and friends if they have them, regardless of their place of residence. Necessary assistance is provided to facilitate reunification of children with their families.

It is cynical for Ukraine and its Western curators to use this topic for spreading anti-Russian narratives. It must be noted that Ukraine has never even attempted to contact the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights of the Russian Federation directly on this issue. This approach is astonishingly different from Kiev's unprecedented efforts to get back the neo-Nazis from inglorious Azov battalion.

It also needs to be underlined that the evacuated children are in need of qualified medical care as well as professional multi-aspect rehabilitation using the latest technologies and with due regard to the individual health characteristics of minors. In this regard, Russia is implementing a program of socio-psychological and medical rehabilitation.

### **Program:**

Opening remarks:

- **H.E. Mr. Vassily Nebenzia**, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

**Briefers, including representatives of civil society, to be confirmed.**

Discussion:

- Statements by the UN Security Council members and other UN Member States as time permits, Q&A. Interventions are suggested to be limited to 3 minutes.

Closing remarks:

- **H.E. Mr. Vassily Nebenzia.**

### **Logistics:**

To register and to request further information please contact the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, at [roman.kashaev@gmail.com](mailto:roman.kashaev@gmail.com).