Chairperson, distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Austria, Croatia and Slovenia.

The three countries align themselves with the statement delivered by the EU earlier.

As we take the floor today, we would like to once again pledge our full commitment to child-specific needs and rights and our unwavering and longstanding support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Approaching the 25th anniversary of its adoption in the General Assembly, let me reiterate the call for universal ratification and implementation of this important instrument, and its optional protocols, and express our deep appreciation for the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Let me once again also express our strong support for the two Special Representatives of the UN Secretary General {namely Leila Zerrougui and Marta Santos Pais}, who have been entrusted with this important, child protecting task, as well as all other UN stakeholders, that give their best to improve the lives of children worldwide. We particularly encourage strong coordination and enhanced cooperation among UN entities in the field of Child Protection. We welcome the cooperation of UN actors with regional and subregional organisations and at the same time encourage deepening and broadening of this cooperation.

Rights of the child have been a top priority in multilateral fora for all of our three countries and we have been pursuing them further through different projects on the ground.

Despite progress made to improve the situation of children around the world, much remains to be done. Although the international community has committed to protect children as one of the most vulnerable groups, they still suffer from poverty, armed conflict, natural and man-made disasters. Children are victims of different forms of discrimination and violence, including sexual violence and abuse. They are often victims of multilayer discrimination, such as those involved in child labour.

Children living in the midst of armed conflicts around the world face particularly grave threats to their safety and human rights: all too often we receive reports indicating armed forces are not taking all feasible measures to ensure that children are not taking a direct part in hostilities. Let me in this sense once again stress the importance of protection of children from violence, including in armed conflict, ensuring their basic human security. All UN actors in the field must also remain committed to the protection of children. We cannot refrain from mentioning particularly worrisome reports from Syria, Mali, Central African Republic, and the lasting
consequences this will have on their populations, also, but not only, in terms of lost generations.

Children are often denied their right to education. Formal and informal education, including human rights education, give children the opportunity to grow up into responsible citizens. Education is not only important for their future, it is of utmost importance also for their present! Our countries pledge they will continue focusing on this area in specific, as it is crucial for sustainable development.

Furthermore, we need to ensure equal opportunity for girls and boys. The fulfillment of girls’ right to education is first and foremost an obligation and moral imperative. However, it must be recognized that without their creativeness and potential, mankind will be deprived of potential magnitude of its future progress. In this regard, we especially welcome the recent second Day of the Girl Child and its theme of “innovating for Girls’ Education”.

In broader terms, Austria, Croatia and Slovenia, will remain vigilant during this Session of the Third Committee also on many other issues, which unfortunately remain linked to the rights of the child, among them sexual discrimination, sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, early marriage, etc.

As already stated, we strongly believe in the need for cooperation of different stakeholders at all levels, to ensure that children can fully enjoy all their human rights.

I thank you.