Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Serbia*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

There is a strong international consensus that children are entitled to protection, their rights ought to be promoted and their development has to be at the core of our endeavours. This consensus finds proof in the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified of all Human Rights treaties. For the EU, a strong commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols is at the heart of its policies. -The EU would like to renew its call to states parties to withdraw any reservations contrary to the object and purpose of the convention on the rights of the child and its optional protocols.

The new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure that allows for individual complaints on violations of

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* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
the rights of the child, including by the children themselves, is an important tool to reinforce the established child protection systems. Some member states of the European Union have already ratified the Optional Protocol and others are in the process of signing or ratifying it.

The "EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child", adopted in 2011, aims to increase efforts to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of the child in all EU policies and actions and monitor their implementation. In particular, it focuses on a number of priorities such as child-friendly justice, protecting children in vulnerable situations and fighting violence against children. As part of the implementation of this EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child, the 2012 multi-stakeholder European Forum on the rights of the child concluded that child-centred protection systems which ensure interagency and multidisciplinary coordination are key in addressing the protection needs of diverse groups of children. This year's Forum will further explore such an integrated approach and identify key elements of future possible EU Guidelines on child protection systems.

The EU believes that giving children a voice is a precondition for effective child protection. In order to reflect on the situation in the EU, the European Commission will publish the results of a study mapping the EU Member States' legislation, policy and practice to respect UNCRC Article 12 (the right to be heard), at the end of the year. Making the justice system more child-friendly is also a key action item under the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child. It is also an issue that is raised systematically in our human rights dialogues with partner countries.

The EU recognises, as outlined in the charter of fundamental human rights of the European Union, the right of all to education. This right includes the possibility for all children to receive compulsory education free of charge. The EU is actively participating in on-going discussions on education in the post-2015 context and has played an active role in implementing the 'education for all: Dakar framework for action 2000', which recognises the fundamental right of all children to a quality education.

Children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable members of society. They face significant barriers in many areas of daily life such as access to inclusive education, participation in recreational activities, culture and sport, effective inclusion into society and access to health care, as well as protection from violence. As a result, they are at greater risk of poverty, marginalisation and exclusion. With the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 the EU has a multiannual and cross-sectorial framework of actions to promote the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including children with disabilities, in all relevant policies.
Millions of children around the world continue to bear the burden of war such as violence, killing, and maiming, recruitment by armed forces and groups, sexual abuse and exploitation or trafficking. The EU welcomes the attention that is given by the UN to the issue of children in armed conflict and supports the ongoing efforts to deal with the unacceptable issue of impunity and persistent perpetrators. We highly appreciate the work and cooperation of all relevant UN mechanisms that contribute to the protection of children during conflict. We welcome the efforts by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui during her first year in office on children and armed conflict and the new initiative to stop child recruitment and use by government armed forces by 2016. We stand ready to support its implementation. The EU will continue to strive to improve the life of children in and affected by armed conflicts with concrete actions, as envisaged in its 2010 Implementation Strategy of the EU Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflicts.

Tragically, every day and in every society many children are exposed to physical, sexual and psychological violence. The EU will continue to promote the 2007 EU guidelines on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child including its strategy on combatting all forms of violence against children. Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and the Development Cooperation Instrument, support is being given to tackle a number of issues such as child marriage, to promote birth registration or to prevent girls' infanticide. In order to further mainstream the rights of the child in external action policies, the European Commission together with UNICEF has developed a comprehensive toolkit to help strengthen capacities among development partners to integrate child rights in development programming, budgeting and programming.

The EU would like once more to express its gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais, for her relentless commitment and efforts to protect children from all forms of violence. We welcome the special representative’s thematic studies, including on violence-free schools and child-friendly justice systems, as well as the recently published child-friendly version of the third optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child. We call on states around the world to comply with the spirit of the recommendations contained in the United Nations Study on Violence against Children.

In line with the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy adopted in June 2012, this year the EU will conduct a targeted campaign on the issue of violence against children in order to lend further visible, political support to help end this scourge.
The EU strongly welcomes the UN General Assembly's landmark Resolution banning the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on 20 December 2012. FGM still affects 125 million girls worldwide according to the 2013 UNICEF report on FGM produced with EU support. Building on a multitude of EU projects, the EU is currently preparing an initiative to push forward the abandonment of FGM both in its internal and external policies. The EU also welcomes the human rights council resolution of 25 September 2013 on 'strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate the early and forced marriage of children and notes the fact that it is the first time that this harmful practice is brought before a UN forum.

Protecting children victims of trafficking and enhancing cooperation with third countries and international organisations is another EU priority and part of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016. Work is in progress to implement the 2011 EU anti-trafficking directive, which prescribes a set of provisions for child victims, including unaccompanied children.

The EU is deeply concerned that under-nutrition is the biggest underlying cause of death in children under the age of five, causing 45% of all child deaths in the world today. For those who survive it, it has irreversible consequences for their health and cognitive development. Under the convention on the rights of the child, the international community has recognised the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical and mental development and their right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. The EU calls on all states to protect, promote and fulfil these rights and to ensure that all children are given the opportunity to survive, grow and reach their full potential.

The EU emphasises that the right of every child to food is a right to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, providing all the nutritional elements a child requires to live a healthy and active life. Earlier this year, the EU adopted a new EU nutrition policy to enhance maternal and infant nutrition in EU external assistance and to reduce the number of children under five who are stunted and dying of malnutrition. We encourage all states and international organisations to re-double their efforts to ensure that we achieve the global nutrition targets agreed by the world assembly last year.

Within the EU, the number of children living in poverty and social exclusion has significantly increased in recent years. Therefore the EU is stepping up efforts to prevent child poverty and the transmission of disadvantage across generations by focusing in particular on early intervention and prevention, including early childhood education and care to reduce inequality. Worldwide, chronic poverty remains one of the most pressing challenges for meeting the needs and protecting and promoting the rights of children. The EU believes that the time
remaining until 2015 has to be fully utilized and that the process for the
definition of the post-2015 development agenda provides the right framework
to accelerate progress in regard to children's wellbeing.

Poverty also makes it often necessary for children to work, sometimes under
unacceptable circumstances including heavy work and long working hours
thereby making it impossible for those children to attend school. According to
the ILO, around 168 million children are affected by child labour, out of which
85 million are exposed to hazardous work. In October 2011, the European
Commission released: 'A Renewed EU strategy 2011-2014 for Corporate Social
Responsibility'. Accordingly, the EU has increased synergies with the private
sector in EU Development policy recognising the need to support corporate
social responsibility throughout the supply chain. This includes combatting child
labour in line with internationally recognised CSR principles and guidelines,
such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the United
Nations General Principles.

The EU participated actively in the negotiations of the Outcome Document of
the Third Global Conference on Child Labour, held in Brasilia from 8-10
October 2013, and reaffirmed its commitment to the 2016 target of the
elimination of the worst forms of child labour. In addition, this year the EU
promoted the ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic
Workers which entered into force on 5 September 2013. This important
Convention will extend key labour protection to millions of workers, mostly
women and children, making its ratification an important tool to reduce child
domestic labour.

Through bilateral, but also multilateral co-operation, the EU will continue to
pursue political dialogue in order to promote and protect the rights of the child.
The EU will also continue its good cooperation with the UN system, regional
organizations and civil society. We reiterate our support for UNICEF, the
Special Representatives of the secretary-general, the special rapporteurs and
other independent human rights experts, the Committee on the Rights of the
Child, national and other relevant actors. Our multilateral commitment is also
exemplified by the resolution on the rights of the child that we annually
introduce together with our partners from GRULAC. This year the resolution
will look at the whole spectrum of issues related to the rights of the child - the
full omnibus resolution. This approach- together with the Secretary-Generals
report- will allow us to take stock of the achievements and draw the necessary
conclusions for the future. This is also reflected in the theme of our side-event,
orGANized together with Uruguay and UNICEF on 17 October.

It is our hope that, in the very near future, every child, irrespective of origin, sex,
language, religion, or status can enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention
on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights instruments. Let us all make our very best effort to achieve this essential goal!