

37th session of the Human Rights Council

High-level panel discussion on violations of the human rights of children in the Syrian Arab Republic

Trilateral statement by Croatia, Slovenia and Austria

I have the honour to read this statement on behalf of Austria, Slovenia and my own country Croatia.

We welcome this High-level panel discussion and thank the panellists for their presentations and their work on the ground. We remain appalled by the horrific human rights situation in Syria and the direct detrimental impact it has on children in Syria and their future.

Mr President,

2018 has barely started and there is already information from UNICEF that at least 1,000 children have been killed and injured across Syria so far this year. We recently held an urgent debate on Eastern Ghouta, where a third of the besieged civilians enduring constant attacks are children. UNICEF has issued a blank statement in February on this topic and we too are at a loss for words to react to the horror faced by children in Syria.

We strongly condemn the reported deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure, especially hospitals and schools, the arbitrary impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the wilful disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law by all sides.

The seventh year of armed conflict means that millions of children continue to live in fear, suffer from malnourishment, die of preventable diseases and be deprived of their rights, including the rights to food, water and sanitation, and have no access to education and health care. All of these violations will have long term detrimental consequences. The lack of access to education and experienced trauma lead to creating ‘lost generations’ of Syrian children that will affect the future of the country, as well as the region, and hope for recovery.

We call upon all sides to uphold international law and standards. Those responsible for the violations and abuses of the rights of children should be held accountable.

At the end we would like to support the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, contained in its latest report, especially to ensure the release of the most vulnerable detainees, including children, and to enable the registration of births.