European External Action Service (EEAS)

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Committee on Application of Standards

Syrian Arab Republic

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

Thank you Chair.

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

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova, the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the United Kingdom align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its Member States are committed to the promotion, protection, respect and fulfilment of human rights, including labour rights and the fight against child labour in its worst forms, as enshrined in Convention No.182. We promote universal ratification and effective implementation of fundamental ILO Conventions and support the ILO in developing and promoting international labour standards and supervising their application.

The EU and its Member States take note of the profound political change in Syria marked by the end of the Assad regime and the establishment of a transitional Government and new governmental institutions in Syria. We recognise efforts taken by the transitional Government of Syria to resume full control of its territory and at the same time assume Syria`s international responsibilities and obligations despite an ongoing complex political, social and economic situation and the still present legacy of decades of war and dictatorship.

Against this background we welcome the Government’s information on the measures taken, aimed at preventing and criminalising the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

We also note the 2025 Annual Report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict reporting an 18 per cent decrease of children in armed conflict from 2023 to 2024.

We strongly urge the transitional Government to ensure that forced recruitment of children under 18 years of age into armed forces does not occur. We call on the government to ensure that thorough investigations and robust prosecutions of all persons who forcibly recruit children under 18 years of age for use in armed conflict are carried out, and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive penalties are imposed in practice.

In line with the Committee`s requests, we call on the Government to ensure that the sale and trafficking of children under 18 years of age for sexual and labour exploitation does not occur and to provide information on the measures taken in this regard. We call on the transitional Government to ensure that thorough investigations and robust prosecutions are carried out for persons who engage in the trafficking of children and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive sanctions are imposed.

We express deep concern at the large number of children who are still deprived of access to education for reasons of insecurity prevailing in the country, and we encourage the transitional Government to ensure that all necessary measures to improve access to free basic education for all children and in particular for girls, children in rural areas and in areas affected by the conflict are taken, by increasing the school enrolment and attendance rates at the primary and lower-secondary levels and by decreasing the drop-out rates.

We recommend to the transitional Government to take effective and time-bound measures to prevent the engagement of children in armed conflict, and to rehabilitate and integrate former child combatants.

We acknowledge the additional information submitted by the transitional Government and we strongly encourage it to follow-up on the measures laid out to fully implement Convention 182 in law and in practice.

We encourage further exchanges between the transitional Government and the ILO with a view to implementing the recommendations of the Committee of Experts and making use of technical assistance.

The EU and its Member States will continue to follow the situation closely and remain committed to supporting the effective application of fundamental labour standards.

Thank you.

^ North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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