



The Annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board

UNICEF Humanitarian action (item 4)

15 June 2022

Ms. President, Madam Executive Director,

We appreciate UNICEF's efforts in humanitarian assistance in prolonged and violent conflicts in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Myanmar and in many other conflict areas and most recently in Ukraine.

We are deeply concerned about the alarming humanitarian situation in Ukraine.

We must talk about what is happening.

The **Russian aggression against Ukraine** has been characterised by systematic violations of international law, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as **grave violations against children in conflict**. This includes killing and maiming, attacks against schools and hospitals, sexual violence and denial of humanitarian access. We underline the importance of the recording, monitoring and reporting on violations against children in Ukraine.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the unlawful deportation of Ukrainian residents, in particular **forced deportation of unaccompanied children**, to the Russian Federation by the Russian authorities and their local collaborators, as well

as **their illegal adoption**. These actions grossly violate international law and the UN Charter, and undermine international human rights principles.

We commend UNICEF's life-saving help to children inside Ukraine and in neighbouring countries - but the needs are enormous. Children need humanitarian assistance, but first and foremost, the war must stop.

Every child has a right to safety. We have welcomed those fleeing the war in Ukraine and have offered them access to Estonian education and health systems, as well as online learning opportunities and mental health support for children in Ukraine and those outside. Estonia continues to send needs based humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and contribute to the longer term reconstruction needs.

We would like to reiterate our strong support to UNICEF for its tireless work in protecting the rights of the children, often in highly difficult circumstances.

Thank you!