

Statement on Children and the Global Compact on Migration by the three co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs – Luxembourg, Jamaica and Bulgaria

Mr. co-facilitator,

On behalf of the three co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs, namely Luxembourg, Jamaica and my own country Bulgaria, I would like to welcome the actionable commitments proposed by the Co-Facilitators in the *Zero draft* that aim to reduce risks and strengthen the protection of children in the context of international migration. Throughout the negotiations, we must always remember that children, irrespective of their status, are first and foremost children. As signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have the obligation to protect them, to care for them, and to support them.

While most children migrate safely, millions are forced to leave their homes – fleeing extreme poverty, violence or the effects of climate change and the impact of natural disasters. Children are directly and profoundly affected by migration policies. Upholding the best interests of the child, at all times and in all circumstances, must be a primary consideration in all actions that affect them. The obstacles children face along their migratory journey are not inherent. By making the right political choices now, we can protect vulnerable children and give them the chance to benefit from the opportunities that migration can offer.

As champions of children's rights, we have contributed to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that for the first time recognizes children as agents of change and addresses critical barriers and risks for children – from extreme poverty to violence, as well as limited or no access to good health and quality education. Now we need to ensure that migrant children are also no longer left behind.

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We should seize this opportunity to support the child-specific actions and measures proposed in the zero draft – including, for example, commitments to disaggregate data by age, sex and disability, to prevent childhood statelessness, to facilitate family unification in policy and practice, to develop specialised procedures and cross-border protocols to protect unaccompanied children, to strengthen local authorities and national child protection authorities to identify, refer and assist migrant children, to invest in training of frontline responders, including guardians, to provide child-appropriate alternatives so as to end immigration detention, to establish firewalls and grant equal access to quality education for all – regardless of status.

Ensuring the rights of children remains central to this process and crucial for its success.

Together we can make migration safe for every child.

Thank you.