



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1581 Vienna, 15 October 2026

EU Statement on the *International Day of the Girl Child*

1. On 11 October, we marked the *International Day of the Girl Child*, highlighting the rights, as well as the needs and challenges faced by girls around the world, while also promoting their full enjoyment of all human rights and their empowerment, in line with international obligations. The global pushback on gender equality poses a serious threat to women's and girls' enjoyment of their human rights, as well as to inclusive, peaceful and democratic societies. This backlash must be addressed urgently.
2. The European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to promote the respect, protection and fulfilment of girls' and children's full enjoyment of their human rights worldwide. We pay tribute to all those who continue to challenge discrimination, oppression and injustice. The EU fully supports the OSCE's continued work to prevent and combat violence against women and girls and to promote gender equality, in line with our shared commitments. On the *International Day of the Girl Child*, let us renew our commitment to invest in girls, protect and respect their rights and create the conditions for their full, equal and meaningful participation.
3. At today's Permanent Council, we draw particular attention to the situation of girls in Ukraine. According to UNICEF, more than 3,900 children have been killed or injured since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, while the actual figures are likely to be considerably higher. Around one in five children in Ukraine has lost a close relative or friend because of the war, and one in three children remains displaced. That is more than 2.5 million children. The war has deprived many children of their fundamental rights and denied them access to basic necessities and essential services, including adequate food, shelter, healthcare and education. The war has also increased the number of children living with disabilities, many of whom face heightened risks of exclusion and violence, as well as additional barriers to accessing basic services. These figures illustrate the immense human cost of Russia's war of

aggression, including for girls, whose rights, safety and wellbeing, including mental health, are being severely affected. We are particularly concerned by the heightened risks faced by girls in conflict-affected and displaced settings, including sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings. We stress the need for age- and gender-responsive protection, psychosocial support and continued access to healthcare.

4. We remain furthermore deeply concerned about the fate of the Ukrainian children unlawfully deported to Russia or forcibly transferred within temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories. The report under Moscow Mechanism concluded that Russia has established a coordinated and systematic policy aimed at erasing the Ukrainian identity of children, inter alia, through the education system and military-patriotic training. We call on Russia to immediately cease such practices and ensure the safe and unconditional return of all forcibly transferred and unlawfully deported Ukrainian children.
5. We reiterate our commitment to ensuring full accountability for all violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and for all international crimes committed by Russia in connection with its war of aggression against Ukraine, such as the crime of aggression. There can be no lasting peace without justice.

Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Ukraine and the United Kingdom align themselves with this statement.