Statement

by

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Arria Formula – Addressing Challenges of Children without Parental Care in Conflict Settings

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Thank you Chair,
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is pleased to co-sponsor today’s meeting. We thank Viet Nam for organising the event. We are also grateful to our distinguished briefers for the critical insights shared.

Although the actual number of children who have lost, are unaccompanied or are separated from their parents, across all conflict settings, remains unknown, existing data, as we have heard today, indicate that they represent a significant proportion of children in these contexts. Children are also the group most adversely affected by armed conflict. With nearly a third of the children who have lost their parents, losing them to armed conflict, we must prioritise parental care as part of comprehensive child-centred national, regional and international responses.

Our briefers emphasised the sobering reality for children without stable parental or familial care in conflict settings, as is one in which they are at greater risk of developmental damage, violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, stigma, discrimination, difficulties with community reintegration, and inadequate life skills. They lack sufficient child welfare support, often confined to child-led households and institutional settings with inadequate care.

It is against this backdrop that we propose the following three priority actions:

1. First, the Security Council must prioritise and explicitly outline special measures in all relevant mandates to support governments and regional organisations in their work to place children without parental care with willing and appropriately vetted blood relatives, or within safe, vetted and supported family settings. This goes beyond necessary reintegration support. It must include consistent and adequate psychosocial and financial assistance for these children, their families and their communities.

2. Next, we call for evidence-informed actions to prevent family separation and to address the specific needs of children without parental or familial care, in conflict settings. Currently, most of the available data on children without parental care in conflict settings, subsume their experiences with children without parental care in other contexts. While this is useful as there is some overlap in experiences, it does not allow us to appropriately delineate our response in relation to conflict-affected children. In this regard, we call for national and regional research on the situation for children, including unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children, affected by armed conflict.

3. Finally, we must continue to enhance system-wide co-ordination to address the situation for children without parental care, building on the existing relationship among the various organs of the UN, the wider international community, regional organisations, national governments, and civil society. This is critical in confronting emerging and enduring humanitarian crises that continue to disproportionately affect these children globally.

Excellencies,
The principles enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols on Children and Armed Conflict, IHL and IHRL remain sacrosanct. Durable peace and sustainable development hinge on our ability to ensure children – as the group made most vulnerable in conflict settings – are not only protected but are equally given the tools to thrive.

I thank you.