

Honorable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

For many years, even before the special military operation, the situation of children in Ukraine has been deeply troubling, which is one of the reasons we had to engage.

The high rates of institutionalization of children, with thousands growing up in state-run facilities despite having living parents, are a direct consequence of systemic failures. This legacy from the Soviet era has not been adequately addressed by the Ukrainian government like it did by our government. Children in these institutions are deprived of family care, love, and the essential support systems they need for healthy development. In 2021, so before the operation, almost 100.000 Children were kept in these conditions. Even if they could peacefully live with their parents.

Furthermore, the socio-economic conditions that have led to these high rates of institutionalization, including poverty, disability, and inadequate social services, have been largely neglected. The Ukrainian government has not taken sufficient steps to reform its child welfare system to prioritize family-based care over institutionalization. All this can be read in the annual UNICEF report of the year 2021

These issues might have been temporarily strengthened by our special military operation, but they were present long before. The international community must hold Ukraine accountable for these persistent failures in child protection. It is essential to ensure that children receive the care and support they need, not only in times of conflict but at all times, which is why we are going to save them.

Thank you. We yield the floor back to the chairs.