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28 April 2016

## Protecting children and young people affected by armed conflicts

### **Motion for a resolution**

tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Millions of children and young people world-wide are affected by war and armed conflicts. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century alone, over two million children were estimated to have been killed and six million more maimed. At least 300,000 child soldiers are estimated to participate in armed conflicts at any given time. Some 20 million displaced and refugee children were counted in 2008, while others have been held hostage, abducted or trafficked. We can certainly consider that these numbers have increased further in the humanitarian crisis caused by the Syrian war most recently: according to a Europol estimate of 2015, about 10,000 children have disappeared from official asylum systems in this context.

Next to the direct physical and psychological effects on child victims – including death, injuries, kidnapping, detention, systematic torture and rape and enforced prostitution – war and conflicts deprive children of parents, care-givers, basic social services, health care and education, healthy living conditions and food supply. Systems of birth registration and juvenile justice systems collapse, catapulting children into legal vacuums and uncertainty, while they often wait for years before being reunited with their families. Finally, children suffer from war and armed conflicts as witnesses of death and violence, highly traumatising events leaving them with intense feelings of fear and mistrust for their life-times.

Children's human rights are violated by armed conflicts in multiple ways. The Parliamentary Assembly should examine these violations generated by conflicts in Europe and propose comprehensive policy responses introducing effective child-protection mechanisms or reinforcing existing mechanisms, in order to contribute to safer living conditions for these children.

