

Joint Statement by co-chairs of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, Ukraine and Canada, following the Third Plenary Meeting

October 1, 2024

Building on the Joint Declaration on the creation of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, issued on February 2, 2024, as well as on the productive dialogue during the 3rd Plenary Meeting of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, we, co-chairs Canada and Ukraine reaffirm our shared unwavering commitment to address the problem of deportation and forced transfer of Ukrainian children in the context of the ongoing armed conflict of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which is in violation of international law.

Welcoming the outcomes of the high-level Summit on Peace in Ukraine held on June 15-16, 2024, in Switzerland, we reaffirm our support of the Joint Communiqué on a Peace Framework issued on June 16, 2024, which laid the foundation for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on international law, starting with the United Nations Charter, that includes the return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children.

We recognize and appreciate the efforts of the members of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, as discussed during its 3rd Plenary Meeting, to accelerate the safe return of unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred children to Ukraine.

We note the recommendations contained in the white paper "Safeguarding Children from Forced Transfers and Deportation" issued by the "Bring Kids Back UA" Task Force on August 27, 2024, as well as the ongoing work by the Working Group #4 under Ukraine's Peace Formula, aimed at informing an action points document to be presented prior to the Foreign Affairs Ministerial Conference on the

Human Dimension of Ukraine's 10-Point Peace Formula to take place in Canada on October 30 and 31, 2024.

We stand united in our commitment to the following key principles, which should guide the return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children:

1. Transparency

The Russian Federation must provide international organizations with full access to comprehensive data on Ukrainian children within its territory. This includes vital information on their location, legal status, any changes to their personal status, (including names), and details of placements with Russian families, whether under guardianship or adoption, as well as placements in institutions, particularly in the fields of education and health care.

2. Access

The Russian Federation must grant international missions unrestricted access to all Ukrainian children on its territory. This includes children in social care institutions, educational and medical facilities, temporary accommodation centers, as well as those placed in alternative care families.

3. Support for Ukraine's humanitarian efforts

We stand in solidarity with the ongoing humanitarian efforts led by the Government of Ukraine, in cooperation with international partners and humanitarian organizations, aimed at rescuing children from deportation and forced displacement, including facilitating the evacuation of those at risk of deportation or forced displacement.

4. Long-term and inclusive support

We are committed to providing sustained, timely, and inclusive support for survivor-centered and child-rights-based reintegration programs. These programs must be sensitive to gender, age, and the specific needs of child victims and witnesses, including children with disabilities, and must always prioritize the best interests of the child.

5. Access to justice and fairness

Children should have the opportunity to receive comprehensive legal assistance and support. This includes conducting interviews in a way that respects the best interests of the child, and ensuring access to justice where appropriate.

As co-chairs of this coalition, we reaffirm our shared responsibility to ensure that no child is forgotten, and that no effort is spared in bringing children back to Ukraine, in line with the best interests of the child. Our collective commitment, supported by the international community, is essential for realizing the rights of these children and for securing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on international law.