

Draft Speech / Ms Soňa Gaborčáková, State Secretary
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

Dear Mr. President, (tbc)

Dear Madam Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentleman,

Dear young delegates,

- 1. The Slovak Republic, during the pandemic and even now, in the middle of a migration crisis, is devoting special attention to children's rights and child protection – our children, Ukrainian children, all children who are in the Slovak Republic – are our priority. That is why I particularly welcome the initiatives of the Council of Europe, which have resulted in the adoption of the Strategy, on the drafting of which we have actively participated.**
- 2. We are among those countries that can only confirm the correctness of the intention of the new Strategy on the Rights of the Child to maintain a certain level of flexibility towards any unforeseen events, so that the strategy can also respond to new, emerging challenges. If the Covid-19 pandemic took us all by surprise, then an armed conflict in Europe, in a country that is our immediate neighbour, is something that really cannot be expected.**
- 3. Slovakia is a small country ready to help all children from Ukraine who remain in its territory or who are merely passing through Slovakia on the way to their families, acquaintances or places in Europe where help will be provided to children from Ukrainian facilities.**
- 4. The Slovak Republic has a standard European system of assistance and protection for unaccompanied minors – it turns out, however, that the situation with unaccompanied children from Ukraine is different – at least for now. Although many children come alone, they are mostly in the facilities only temporarily, until they can get in contact – or cannot contact their families, whether in Slovakia or elsewhere in Europe; of course, this connection with families always takes into account the possible risks that such situations bring.**
- 5. Support for families with children, in the vast majority of cases women with children, is also a great challenge, and some of these children do not have parents in Slovakia –**

the people with whom they stay in Slovakia are their relatives or people close to them. In addition to the initial assistance and escort immediately following the arrival of families with children to Slovakia, the big challenge in the coming weeks is the systematic support of such families with children.

- 6. We appreciate and thank other countries for the help they have offered Slovakia. Countries that are facing migration challenges themselves (such as Greece) are lending a helping hand without hesitation. We are also aware of the incredible power and scope of UNICEF and UNHCR assistance, with which we are working along with the European Commission. In cooperation with UNICEF and UNHCR, our ministry has set up a special working group to work more intensively together and to help children and families fleeing from Ukraine.**
- 7. In this context, I would also like to thank the Council of Europe Development Bank for providing us with financial assistance in these difficult times. This assistance was provided to the IOM Representation in the Slovak Republic and done twice – in the amount of EUR 150,000 and EUR 350,000 – directly from the Migration and Refugee Fund. And thanks to this support, I believe we will further be able to help and support those fleeing the war.**
- 8. I believe that with our common strength and by working together we will be able to mitigate to the greatest extent possible the negative effects of the war on the most vulnerable – all children.**