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**PRESS RELEASE**

**The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict at the Italian Chamber of Deputies with the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict**

**And the Second Edition of UNETCHAC INTERNATIONAL AWARD 2022**

In light of the dramatic events in Ukraine and where conflicts persist around the world, protecting children who are victims of them is now more than ever a priority for the international community.

This is why the **Universities Network For Children in Armed Conflict (UNETCHAC)**, in collaboration with the **Institute of Political Studies “S. Pio V”**, organizes a Conference in the Italian Chamber of Deputies: the lectio magistralis given by **Virginia Gamba**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict will open the debate on **Thursday 24 November at 12 p.m.**, (Sala del Refettorio - Biblioteca della Camera, Via Del Seminario, 76 - Rome), paving the way for international multilateral action that translates proposals in concrete actions for an effective juridical protection of these minors.

As recently reported by the SRSG CAAC Gamba to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly Discussion on the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights “in 2021, the United Nations verified nearly 24,000 serious violations committed against children. The violations with the highest number of verified cases were killing and maiming, recruitment and use, followed by denial of humanitarian access and kidnapping. The abduction of girls was an astonishing 40% increase over the previous year. Data collected through the monitoring and reporting mechanism continues to show that boys and girls are affected differently by serious violations.” Data collected in the first half of the year confirming that these trends continue.

The event will see the involvement of representatives of Italian Parliament and the academic community who will question on how to prevent and combat the violence and abuse that continue to affect minors.

Participants, among others: **Laura Guercio**, Coordinator of the Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflict; The Deputies of Italian Parliament **Giorgio Fede**, **Giorgia Latini** and **Bruno Tabacci** (former Undersecretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Draghi Government); **Paolo De Nardis**, President of the Institute of Political Studies “S. Pio V".

During the Conference there will be the Awards Ceremony of the *Universities Network Award 2022* which will award those personalities who have distinguished themselves in the various sectors in the protection of minors in conflict: **Paolina Massidda**, Principal Counsel at the Independent Office of Public Cousel for Victims (OPCV) at the International Criminal Court; **Nicolò Govoni**, President and Executive Director of the Still I Rose Association; Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) in the person of the Vice President **Silvia Salis**.

The **Universities Network For Children in Armed Conflict** continues to work worldwide with over 50 universities and research institutes and with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in the development of research activities involving international academics and experts, in the promotion of training (academic weeks, cycles of conventions, conferences, advanced courses and seminars that also involved warzone students), in the organization of artistic and cultural events. To continue to raise awareness of the institutions and civil society by promoting concrete actions.