SYRIA: FOCUS ON CHILDREN
16 September 2014 from 16:00 to 18:30
Room XXI, Palais des Nations
United Nations Headquarters in Geneva

CONCEPT NOTE

The side event “Syria: Focus on Children”, co-hosted by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Italy, Belgium, France, Lichtenstein and Qatar and the Nonviolent Radical Party Transnational and Transparty, together with No Peace Without Justice and Syrian partners will be held on Tuesday, 16 September 2014, from 16h00 to 18h30 in Room XXI, in the margins of the 27th Session of the Human Rights Council and the 67th Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

After more than three years of war, the plight of the Syrian population remains dire and continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. In his first report on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, the UN Secretary-General reports on the “countless killings and the maiming of children” and numerous violations of children’s rights. Since November 2011, the UN’s independent international Commission of Inquiry has documented patterns of summary executions, enforced disappearance, torture, rape and other sexual- and gender-based violence, forced displacement, starvation and city siege - crimes that have a disproportionate impact on children and young people.

What is happening in Syria is a humanitarian and human rights disaster. People have a right to food, medical treatment and security; they also have a right to express their opinions, live their lives and elect freely their own representatives. However, the people in Syria enjoy none of these rights. As is so often the case, it is the civilians who are bearing the brunt of the conflict; children and young people face the most serious consequences, for their lives now and for their future.

This side event focuses on the following topics, which are essential to minimise the impact of the conflict on children and young people and ensure accountability for the crimes committed against them:

- A Lost Generation: the impact of the Syrian conflict on children and young people;
- Specific crimes and their impact on children: Child recruitment or use in hostilities; Children as targets of detention and torture; Starvation as a method of war; Displacement;
- Legal framework for protection, redress and participation in accountability and peace processes.

Providing accountability for the crimes and ensuring the participation of children and young people is the only way to help breaking the cycle of impunity that is ravaging Syria. Accountability needs to become the centrepiece of any international efforts on Syria to bring justice for the Syrian people, ensure today’s children can grow up in a safe and secure environment and prevent cycles of violence in future generations.