

## **MAIN MESSAGES:**

- \* **We are delighted with your appointment to the position of Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict.**
- \* **My government considers the rights of children to be a priority both in Canada and abroad. My cabinet colleagues and I are committed to working with you and other core countries to address the complex and heinous situation of children involved in armed conflict.**
- \* **I feel very strongly about the use of children as soldiers in war. Last week, I hosted a Roundtable on Child Soldiers with leading experts from the international community. Canada is supporting the international NGO coalition to ban the use of child soldiers. The Canadian Defence Act is under review, and I working with my colleague at National Defence to examine changes in legislation governing our armed forces.**
- \* **I also feel strongly about the particular vulnerabilities of girls in situations of armed conflict. We must raise the profile of their needs with the international public, and also with perpetrators of crimes against girls and women in conflict zones.**
- \* **As an advocate on behalf of children in conflict situations, you have a critical role to play on site as a negotiator to mediate on behalf of children with governments and non-state actors to protect children's rights and to create political space for humanitarian NGOs and U.N. Agencies to assist children affected by conflict.**
- \* **We would like to assist you by exploring ways in which eminent Canadians might support your mediation efforts on behalf of children trapped in the midst of armed conflict.**
- \* **At the United Nations, you can also play an important role as an advocate for children in situations of conflict within the Security Council and other political organs.**
- \* **We welcome and support your efforts to establish mechanisms which would almost automatically ensure attention to child protection issues in discussions focussed on conflict, on peacekeeping, on the role of civilian police and in peace agreements. In this regard, we applaud your current initiatives with peacekeeping operations.**
- \* **I understand that USD\$1.5 Million has already been committed to your voluntary fund. I also understand that you are in the process of hiring your staff. While we are unable to commit funds at this point, we do look forward to supporting our work in the future and I am interested in hearing about your spending priorities for the fund.**