DEED OF COMMITMENT UNDER GENEVA CALL FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM THE EFFECTS OF ARMED CONFLICT

WE, (name of signatory), through our duly authorized representative(s),

Concerned with the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on the physical and mental development of children and the long-term consequences this has for human security, durable peace, and development;

Affirming our determination to protect the civilian population, in particular children, from the effects or dangers of military actions, and to respect their right to life, to human dignity, to education and to development, with the best interest of the child as a primary consideration;

Recognizing that children associated with armed forces are at particular risk of exposure to attacks by opposing forces;

Taking due account of the varying standards within international law instruments providing special protection for children affected by armed conflict, in particular the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and *determined* to clarify our responsibilities on the recruitment and use in hostilities of persons under 18 years of age;

Mindful that the Statute of the International Criminal Court criminalizes the act of conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities;

Rejecting the notion that any cause, for whatever reason, may justify unlawful treatment of children in armed conflict;

Accepting that international humanitarian norms apply to and oblige all parties to armed conflict;

Stressing that the present Commitment protects all children, both girls and boys;

And understanding that for the purposes of this Deed of Commitment:

"children" are defined as persons under the age of 18, and where there is doubt as to whether a person has reached the age of 18, (s)/he will be treated as a child;

HEREBY solemnly commit ourselves to the following terms:

1. TO ADHERE to a total ban on the use of children in hostilities.

2. TO ENSURE that children are not recruited into our armed forces, whether voluntarily or non-voluntarily. Children will not be allowed to join or remain in our armed forces.

3. TO NEVER COMPEL children to associate with, or remain associated with, our armed forces. By associate, we mean any type of direct or supporting activity whether combat related or otherwise. In the event that children have been compelled to do so, they will be released at the earliest possible opportunity in accordance with Article 6 of this *Deed of Commitment*.

4. TO ENSURE that children do not accompany our armed forces during our military operations and to take all feasible measures so that children in areas where we exercise control are not present during military operations.

5. TO TREAT humanely children who are detained or imprisoned for reasons related to the armed conflict, in accordance with their age and gender specific needs, recognizing that deprivation of liberty may be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. The death penalty will not be pronounced or executed on a person for any offense committed while a child.

6. The release or disassociation of children from our armed forces must be done in safety and security, and whenever possible, in cooperation with specialized child protection actors.

7. TO FURTHER ENDEAVOUR TO PROVIDE children in areas where we exercise authority with the aid and care they require, in cooperation with humanitarian or development organizations where appropriate. Towards these ends, and among other things, we will:
   i) take concrete measures towards ensuring that children have access to adequate food, health care (including psycho-social support), education, and where possible, leisure and cultural activities;
   ii) protect children against sexual and other forms of violence;
   iii) facilitate the provision of impartial humanitarian assistance to children in need;
   iv) facilitate efforts by impartial humanitarian organizations to reunite children with their families;
   v) avoid using for military purposes schools or premises primarily used by children.

8. TO ISSUE the necessary orders and directives to our political and military organs, commanders and fighters for the implementation and enforcement of our commitment, including measures for information dissemination and training. Commanders and superiors are responsible for their subordinates. In case of non-compliance, we will take all necessary measures to cease violations immediately, initiate appropriate investigations and impose sanctions in accordance with international standards.

9. TO ALLOW AND COOPERATE in the monitoring and verification of our present commitment by Geneva Call and other independent international and national organizations associated for this purpose with Geneva Call. Such monitoring and verification include visits and inspections in all areas where we operate, and the provision of the necessary information and reports, as may be required for such purposes in the spirit of transparency and accountability.

10. TO TREAT this commitment as one step or part of a broader commitment in principle to the ideal of humanitarian norms, particularly of international humanitarian law and human rights, and to contribute to their respect in field practice as well as to the further development of humanitarian norms for armed conflict.

11. This *Deed of Commitment* shall not affect our legal status, pursuant to the relevant clause in common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949.

12. We understand that Geneva Call may publicize our compliance or non-compliance with this *Deed of Commitment*.

13. We see the desirability of attracting the adherence of other such armed actors to this *Deed of Commitment* and will do our part to promote it.

14. This *Deed of Commitment* complements, or supersedes, as the case may be, any existing unilateral declaration of ours on children and armed conflict.

15. Any reservation to this *Deed of Commitment* must be consistent with its object and purpose, international humanitarian law, and the minimum obligations of State parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It must be expressed in writing upon signature and will be periodically reviewed towards attaining the highest possible respect for the rights of children. Geneva Call will be the final arbiter on the permissibility of any reservation.

16. This *Deed of Commitment* shall take effect immediately upon its signing and receipt by the Government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva which receives it as the custodian of such deeds.

Done this (Day Month Year), in (City)

For the **(NAME OF THE SIGNATORY)**

(Name)
(Title)

(Name)
(Title)

For **GENEVA CALL**

(Name)
(Title)

(Name)
(Title)

For the **GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND CANTON OF GENEVA**

(Name)
(Title)