

[EU child refugee protection policy welcomed by UN agencies](#)

12 April 2017 – New policy guidance from the European Commission aimed at improving the protection of migrant and refugee children has been welcomed by the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and the UN refugee agency.

“It is the first EU policy to address the situation and rights of all children in migration – refugee and migrant children, children alone and with their families – linking migration, asylum and child protection,” Noala Skinner, Director of UNICEF’s Brussels Office said.

The guidelines include boosting child protection at all levels, improving data collection to ensure children are properly tracked and the appointment of guardians for children. The guidelines also encourage member States to refrain from invasive age assessments and to increase cooperation among states.

Dianne Goodman, Deputy Director of the Europe Bureau of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) said: “These important guidelines will help EU States better respond to the needs of refugee and migrant children. We strongly hope that these guidelines will contribute, in a very concrete manner, to the protection of the many children who arrive to Europe after having been forced to flee their homes due to violence, war and conflict. Many have suffered incredible hardship while on their journey and afterwards.”

In a [joint press release](#), the two UN agencies stressed that children should never be detained, irrespective of their legal or migratory status, or that of their parents. They also welcomed the EU’s policy commitment to prioritise national child protection systems for children displaced beyond European borders.

According to UNHCR, children make up over half of the world’s refugee population. Both agencies are looking forward to the policy’s implementation and an end to the violence and poverty that often precipitates displacement.

[‘Moment of crisis’ in Syria calls for serious search for a political solution – UN envoy](#)

12 April 2017 – In the wake of yet another dire turn in the Syrian crisis,

the United States and the Russian Federation “must find a way to work together” to stabilize the situation and support the political process, the United Nations envoy for the war-torn country told the Security Council today.

In his briefing, Staffan de Mistura, the UN Special Envoy for Syria added that last week’s reported chemical weapons attack, the subsequent airstrikes by the US and intensified fighting on the ground have put the fragile peace process in “grave danger.”

“This is a time for clear-thinking, strategy, imagination, cooperation,” said Mr. de Mistura.

“We must all resolve that the time has come where the [intra-Syrian talks](#) move beyond preparatory discussions and into the real heart of the matter, across all four baskets, to secure a meaningful negotiated transition package,” he added.

Prior to the [reported chemical attack in Khan Shaykhun area of Idlib](#), modest but incremental progress were made, the UN envoy noted, highlighting that though there no breakthroughs, there were also no breakdowns. The most recent round of talks, facilitated by the UN in Geneva, wrapped up two weeks ago>

However, the reported attack and subsequent events have placed the country between two paths: one leading more death, destruction and regional and international divisions; and the other of real de-escalation and ceasefire, added Mr. de Mistura.

He informed the 15-member Security Council of his appeals to Russia, Turkey and Iran – the guarantors of the Astana ceasefire – and urged all with influence over the parties to the conflict to restore the credibility of the ceasefire, and to ensure that the UN can reach the millions who are trapped in besieged and other hard to reach areas.

The Security Council briefing comes as the US Secretary of State Tillerson visits Moscow.

Hailing the visit and the discussions, Mr. de Mistura called on both the US and Russia – the co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) – to recognize their common interests and responsibilities and find a way to work together to stabilize the situation, in a deliberate, realistic and concerted way, in support of the political process.

The ISSG established respective taskforces on humanitarian aid delivery and a wider ceasefire that have been meeting separately since early 2016 on a way forward in the crisis. In addition to Russia and the US (the co-chairs of the taskforces), the ISSG also comprises the UN, the Arab League, the European Union and 16 other countries.

Concluding his briefing, the UN Special Envoy reiterated that there are no military solutions to the strife in the war-ravaged country.

“You have heard it countless times, but I will say it again: there can only

be a political solution to this bloody conflict [...] regardless of what some say or believe,” he expressed, noting that this is what Syrians from all walks of life also say and something that the Security Council had agreed upon.

“So, let us use this moment of crisis – and it is a moment of crisis – as a watershed and an opportunity perhaps for a new level of seriousness in the search for a political solution.”

[Guidelines on keeping illegally caught fish from global supply chains near ‘finish line’ – UN agency](#)

12 April 2017 – A push to establish internationally-agreed standards to keep illegally caught fish off store-shelves and consumers’ plates has taken an important step forward, the United Nations agricultural agency, said today as a measure aiming to create a “gold standard” for catch documentation nears the finish line.

“A set of draft Voluntary Guidelines on Catch Documentation Schemes was last week unanimously adopted by a FAO [technical consultation](#) that brought a five-year negotiation effort to a close, and are now poised for adoption by all UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) members at [its] upcoming bi-annual governing conference,” the agency said in a [news release](#).

Once approved by the Conference, which will take place in Rome from 3 to 8 July, the guidelines will act as an internationally-recognized “gold standard” reference for governments and businesses looking to establish systems that can trace fish from their point of capture through the entire supply chain, in other words from “sea-to-plate,” to stop illegally caught fish from entering the marketplace.

Globally, some 91-93 million tonnes of fish are captured each year, and seafood products are among the world’s most widely traded food commodities – with a \$142 billion export value in 2016.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is also estimated to strip as much as 26 million additional tonnes of fish from the oceans annually, damaging marine ecosystems and sabotaging efforts to sustainably manage fisheries.



Fish caught in the Seychelles. Photo: UNEP GRID Arendal/Lawrence Hislop

Catch documentation schemes (CDS) offer a way to cut down on trade in illegal fish with basically ensuring that: fish shipments are certified by national authorities as being caught legally and in compliance with best practices; certified hard-copy documentation accompanies the fish through processing and marketing nationally or internationally. Only fish with valid documentation can be exported or traded to markets where a CDS requirement exists.

Until recently, the few such schemes that had been established mainly focused on overexploited high-value species, such as Chilean Seabass harvested in Antarctic waters, or Atlantic and Southern Bluefin Tuna.

With seafood trade at record highs along with rising consumer demands, CDS could be more widely applied. Since 2010, the European Union has used a CDS that covers all imported fish shipments from overseas; and in 2016, the United States announced its own scheme.

International buy-in critical

One challenge facing broader use of CDS is logistically ensuring that a paper certificate safely makes it from a fishing port in one country to an inspection station in another. The new guidelines recommend that fish shipment information be recorded digitally for referencing at any point along the chain – reducing administrative burdens and cutting down on fraud opportunities.

The new guidelines also call for “user friendly” CDS that are relatively simple and can be adapted to different fisheries circumstances.

“CDS will only succeed if there is strong, international coordination,” explains Audun Lem, Deputy-Director of FAO’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division and current Secretary of FAO’s Sub-Committee on Fish Trade.

“Although they are voluntary, the process of negotiation that led to the new guidelines means they enjoy a high level of buy-in by governments, while endorsement at the FAO Conference will send a clear signal of commitment to adhere to them. So, going forward, new catch documentation schemes established at the national, regional or international level will be in sync, reducing barriers to their wider use,” he underscored.

Additionally, Mr. Lem added that because the guidelines call on countries to comply with existing international laws as well as World Trade Organization agreements, their developing CDS will allow countries to avoid unwanted trade disputes.

With millions in Yemen on brink of famine, situation 'close to a breaking point,' warns UN agency

12 April 2017 – The United Nations World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) is scaling up its emergency operations in war-torn Yemen to provide urgently needed food assistance to some nine million people, the agency said today.

“We are in a [race against time](#) to save lives and prevent a full-scale famine unfolding in the country, but we urgently need resources to do this,” said the WFP Representative and Country Director in Yemen, Stephen Anderson.

The new emergency operation will require up to \$1.2 billion over a one-year period and should allow WFP to gradually scale up assistance to feed all severely food insecure people in Yemen every month. The success of this operation hinges on immediate sufficient resources from donors.

“The situation is getting close to a breaking point in Yemen with unprecedented levels of hunger and food insecurity. Millions of people can no longer survive without urgent food assistance,” said Mr. Anderson continued.

With the new plan, WFP aims to provide vital food assistance to nearly seven million people classified as severely food insecure, in addition to nutrition support to prevent or treat malnutrition among 2.2 million children. WFP will also assist breastfeeding and pregnant mothers with specialized nutritious foods.

Until it can secure the funds that it needs, WFP will prioritize 6.7 million people for urgent food assistance. Some 2.5 million of them – particularly those in governorates hardest-hit by food insecurity – will receive a package of assistance aimed at averting famine.

This will include a full food ration, which will cover 100 per cent of the food needs of every member of a family for a month, in addition to nutrition support for malnourished children and women. This is the first time that WFP has been able to provide a full food basket in more than a year.

A second priority group of 4.2 million people will receive a reduced food ration, which comprises 60 per cent of the full food basket.

“We have to secure urgent resources to meet the needs of all nine million people who are severely food insecure in Yemen as well as the millions of malnourished children and women,” added Mr. Anderson. “Until we are able to do this, we have to spread out what we have to ensure that we are helping the people who are at the most immediate risk of starvation.”

WFP prioritizes its assistance in consultation with humanitarian partners targeting people in highest priority governorates and districts, which are already showing signs of famine-like conditions – especially in Taiz,

[Global trade to expand by 2.4 per cent in 2017 amid 'deep' geopolitical, economic uncertainty – WTO](#)

12 April 2017 – While forecasting that growth in the volume of global merchandise trade is expected to rebound this year from its weak performance in 2016, the World Trade Organization ([WTO](#)) today cautioned that “deep uncertainty” about near-term economic and policy developments in some countries raise the risk that trade activity could be stifled.

The WTO, which often cooperates with the United Nations on trade matters, [forecast](#) that global trade will expand by 2.4 per cent in 2017, but only if the global economy recovers as expected and governments pursue the right policy mix. Owing to this uncertainty, this figure is placed within a range of 1.8 per cent to 3.6 per cent. In 2018, the WTO is forecasting trade growth between 2.1 per cent and four per cent.

The unpredictable direction of the global economy in the near term and the lack of clarity about government action on monetary, fiscal and trade policies raises the risk that trade activity will be stifled. A spike in inflation leading to higher interest rates, tighter fiscal policies and the imposition of measures to curtail trade could all undermine higher trade growth over the next two years, said the WTO.

“Weak international trade growth in the last few years largely reflects continuing weakness in the global economy,” said WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo on the launch of the organization’s 2017-2018 forecasts, adding that trade has the potential to strengthen global growth if the movement of goods and supply of services across borders remains largely unfettered.

However, if policymakers attempt to address job losses at home with severe restrictions on imports, trade cannot help boost growth and may even constitute a drag on the recovery, he continued.

‘We need to keep using trade to deliver more benefits to more people’ – WTO chief

Picking up that thread in a press conference earlier today in Geneva, he said that overall, while there are some reasons for [cautious optimism](#), trade growth remains fragile and there are considerable risks to the downside. Much of the uncertainty around the outlook is of course political – and not only geopolitical. Part of this is driven by people’s concerns about the impact that trade can have.

The fact is that trade plays a very beneficial role in the economy overall. It is net positive. It drives growth, job creation and development, he said, but stressed: "Nevertheless, people's concerns cannot be ignored. A net gain for the economy as a whole – or for other individuals – means little to someone who has lost their job. But in finding the right response we have to look at the whole picture."

Mr. Azevêdo said that the fact is that the economy is changing fast – driven by technology and innovation. Eight in 10 manufacturing jobs are lost to innovative technologies and higher productivity. It is estimated that 65 per cent of children entering primary school today will end up working in types of jobs that don't yet exist.

Closing the borders to trade would only worsen the situation – it would not bring the jobs back, it would make more jobs disappear

"We have to adapt to this new reality. That means applying the right mix of policies across a range of areas. At the domestic level, policies are needed to help support the workers of today and train the workers of tomorrow," he said, underscoring: Closing the borders to trade would only worsen the situation – it would not bring the jobs back, it would make more jobs disappear."

He called for measures to keep using trade to deliver more benefits to more people. More trade integration can help make the system more inclusive – connecting new industries and smaller players to new markets.