

Leave no child behind – Joint Statement on the occasion of Universal Children’s Day

Ahead of the Universal Children’s Day on 20 November, Federica **Mogherini**, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Vera **Jourova**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, and Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Society and Digital Economy made the following statement:

“The rights of the child are human rights. They are indivisible, universal and inalienable. As the European Union, we strive to protect and promote the rights of every child. It is our collective obligation and duty and a principle enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union.

A child is a child first and foremost. Every girl and every boy deserves a childhood and it is our responsibility, institutions and societies at large, to make sure that they are never deprived of this right – no matter their ethnicity, gender, religion, or, sometimes, the challenging living environments. No matter whether inside or outside the EU – no child should be left behind. Every voice should be heard.

Across the world, 16,000 children die every day, mostly from preventable or treatable causes. Every five minutes, a child dies as a result of violence in their homes, schools, and communities. Around the world, girls and boys are victims of sexual abuse, deprived of education and living in poverty. Worldwide, 152 million children are victims of child labour and more than 50 million have migrated or are forcibly displaced today. This is why we are working every day, on all fronts and around the world, to provide long-term, sustainable and positive change for children, to ensure their protection, to end violence against children in emergencies and to provide them with their right to education and offer perspectives for the future. Whilst the EU’s efforts are mobilised from the earliest onsets of a crisis – children’s rights and protection concern everyone. We will continue working with partner countries, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and civil society.

Through our humanitarian funding we have supported the education of over 4.7 million children in 50 countries. Projects bringing education to almost half a million Syrian children are under way. Through our development cooperation projects in Mauritania, we help to protect and reintegrate domestic child workers. In Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, we are helping

children impacted by armed violence. In addition, we have stepped up our action and made the protection of children in migration a top priority across all our actions.

Young people shape economic, democratic and societal change. We need to invest in their future and allow them to determine themselves the best solutions to the challenges ahead. This is why youth is the guiding theme of the upcoming African Union – European Union Summit. We need to ensure young people’s political participation and provide them with a platform to be “agenda-setters”.

Our children are the most vulnerable citizens in our societies. They are the present and the future of our world. We will stand up to our commitment and leave no child behind.”

Background

Worldwide, 152 million children are victims of child labour. Research shows that more than 80% of the children in orphanages are not orphans, but are placed there due to reasons such as poverty, disability, and marginalisation – or because of trafficking. And over 15% of the victims of trafficking in human beings registered in the EU in the period 2012 – 2014 are girls and boys.

Children are particularly vulnerable in conflict and crisis situations. Around the world, more than 50 million children have migrated across borders or been forcibly displaced. To the EU, more than 250,000 children arrived by sea to Greece and Italy in 2015. Out of 600,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, 60% are children, while the United Nations recorded at least 15,500 violations against children in armed conflict in 2016.

The EU is a world leader in providing humanitarian support for children, helping deliver food, water, sanitation, healthcare and protection. In Libya, we are giving special attention to work on school rehabilitation, non-formal education and on providing support to transitional care institutions for unaccompanied and separated children. In Jordan and Nicaragua, we address gender-based sexual violence. The EU’s commitment to support the provision of safe, inclusive and quality education in emergencies has reached 6% of the overall humanitarian aid budget in 2017, and will increase to 8% in 2018.

The EU actions at the external front are consolidated in the [Guidelines](#) on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the EU Foreign Ministers in June 2017. The Guidelines provide practical guidance to strengthen the promotion and protection of children, support our partner countries in doing so and further strengthen cooperation with international organisations and civil society. Child protection is also a central priority in the European Agenda on Migration. In April 2017 the Commission put forward a set of [actions](#) to reinforce the protection of all migrant children at all stages of the process, including access to healthcare, education and legal assistance and a swift determination of their status to provide guardianship or facilitate family reunifications.

In this digital age, the EU is a key player in creating a child-friendly and protective environment in the digital sphere. In 2017, through the Better Internet for Kids Strategy, the EU has supported children to learn, express themselves and critically assess what they discover online in order to become responsible and resilient digital citizens.

For more information