

UN agency seeks \$421 to support alternatives for refugees, migrants crossing to Europe

18 July 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency today appealed for about \$421.2 million to help improve protection of [refugees and migrants](#) crossing the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea, and to back European countries working to assist asylum seekers.

“We need to provide [meaningful and viable alternatives](#) to these movements or the deaths and the suffering will continue to mount,” said the Special Envoy to the Central Mediterranean Situation at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ ([UNHCR](#)), Vincent Cochetel.

In the first six months of this year, at least 2,171 refugees and migrants died or went missing in the Central Mediterranean.

The funds would be used to raise awareness of the risks of irregular migration, support law enforcement mechanisms, address human trafficking, and ensure humanitarian assistance to those rescued at sea, among others.

The latest appeal incorporates earlier requests, and complements activities of other organizations, UNHCR said.

Concerns about Italy’s save and rescue operations

With thousands of refugees and migrants being pulled from the Mediterranean Sea each week, the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today warned that Italy’s proposed code of conduct for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) carrying out search and rescue operations could put many lives at risk, especially those of children.

The code would limit the movement and operations of NGO rescue vessels in the Central Mediterranean, giving priority to law enforcement and security objectives, and inadvertently prevent lifesaving work to save children from drowning, the UN agency said.

UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Justin Forsyth said while Italy should be applauded for its efforts to save refugees and migrants, restrictions on sea rescues is not a solution

“The rest of the EU and international community more broadly must step up to help Italy, by supporting rescue missions, allowing boats to disembark and doing the right thing for children uprooted,” he said.