

Joint Statement on the occasion of Universal Children's Day, 20 November

Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and Vera Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, made the following statement:

"We are finally entering the much anticipated post-2015 era: leaders from all over the world have committed to goals which shall improve the lives of millions of children. Had we achieved all the goals we had previously set, our task today would be much easier. In fact, the road ahead is still very long. The post-2015 must be different. We must act more decisively and consistently than ever, to make sure that in the next fifteen years we will truly turn the page. Let us aim high, and try to build a world that does not need a post-2030 Agenda.

Strengthening child protection systems is one of our priorities, as outlined in the new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. We have launched a diplomatic outreach with a global focus on all forms of violence against children and women and a focus on ending child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting.

While we address long lasting cruel practices, the current refugee crisis and the dire consequences for migrant, refugee and internally displaced children adds a new dimension of urgency. Half of the world refugees are children: they need to be treated first and foremost as children. Their protection and rights, including their right to education and non-discrimination, must be a priority, including within the European borders. Increasing cooperation between child protection systems could improve their protection when they seek asylum status in the EU. Despite the global declining trend in funding, the EU has already increased its commitment to education in emergencies. We cannot afford to have lost generations of children with no or little education.

Protecting child victims of trafficking and sexual or non-sexual exploitation and enhancing cooperation on these issues with non-EU countries and international organizations are part of the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking of Human Beings 2012-2016. The EU is also a defender of Fifth Goal of Agenda 2030 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This week new EU rules on victim's rights entered into force. Under these new rules children are entitled to special protection as vulnerable victims in all European criminal justice systems.

Promoting children's rights worldwide requires close cooperation with international organizations and UN bodies. The EU has always promoted such cooperation and keeps reinforcing it. Boys and girls are not only the future of our societies: they are the present. If we deprive them of their fundamental rights, we deprive ourselves of their richness. And we fail in our fundamental duties. Global peace and security cannot be achieved without fair and sustainable development and respect for all the rights of all children. One day they will be adults. The way we protect our world and our children will impact on how they will protect their own world and their own children, in a not-so-distant future."