

PRESS RELEASE

Universal Children's Day: UNICEF calls for global action on child rights violations

Brussels, 20 November 2016 – Despite enormous progress realized for children since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the rights of millions of children are being violated every day, UNICEF said today as it marked Universal Children's Day.

"Around the world, conflicts, crises, poverty and inequality are putting millions of children's lives and futures at risk," said UNICEF Brussels Director, Noala Skinner. "That makes protecting child rights more urgent than ever, including here in Europe."

A 2016 UNICEF report* showed that in European countries – as in the industrialised world in general -- the risks of poverty are being increasingly felt by youth, while income inequality is having far-reaching consequences for children, harming educational attainment and key health outcomes.

"Every child has the right to grow up healthy and well-nourished, to be educated and protected, and to have a fair chance in life," said Ms Skinner. "Realising these rights is vital if children are to fulfil their potential, bringing positive change to their societies."

With inequity, fragility and crises escalating around the world, UNICEF works with the European Union in more than 70 countries, with a particular focus on reaching the most vulnerable children.

Globally, however, and despite the advances made in recent decades, nearly six million children still die every year from preventable causes – and children from poor households are twice as likely as children from wealthier homes to die before reaching their fifth birthdays.

Around the world, nearly 50 million children have been uprooted from their homes and communities - more than half of them because of conflict. In Europe, the refugee and migrant crisis is contributing to the risks facing children. UNICEF has expressed concern about the large number of children on the move, many of them unaccompanied, who are exposed to heightened risks of smuggling, trafficking and exploitation. Last year, 45,000 unaccompanied children from Afghanistan alone sought asylum in the European Union.

Efforts to provide stronger protection for refugee and migrant children will be the focus of partners – including the European Commission and UNICEF -- attending the 10th European Forum on the Rights of the Child in Brussels later this month.

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* UNICEF Office of Research (2016). 'Fairness for Children: A league table of inequality in child well-being in rich countries', *Innocenti Report Card 13*.

Notes to Editors:

About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org

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