“REFUGEE CRISIS”
A STRONG AND DIGNIFIED EUROPE CAN SAVE CHILDREN’S LIVES

All children, no matter migration status, origin and religion, hold the right to be protected.

No one should be surprised by the new arrivals in Europe, considering the clear trends and early warning indicators. More than four hundred thousands have crossed into Europe since the beginning of 2015. The vast majority come from conflict zones, mainly Syria, Iraq, Eritrea or Afghanistan. All decision makers are conscious that this crisis will last.

Half of those displaced are children. They flee war, persecution, hunger and poverty and undertake dangerous journeys to seek protection in Europe. They are at risk of becoming sick, malnourished, abused, exploited or victims of trafficking. Many died on the way already.

All children, no matter migration status, origin, ethnic background or nationality, should have their rights respected, fulfilled and implemented. The members of the Destination Unknown Campaign refute and reject the discussion of “real” or “false” refugees, “irregular” migrants, EU national children or third-country nationals when speaking about children. Non-discrimination is one of the pillars of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The resulting chaos in Hungary, Serbia, FYROM, Greece or Italy, the shocking images of the building of fences, violence at borders, ill-treatment of migrants and refugees and the heart-breaking photo from the coast of Turkey have caught the attention of the world in recent days. Today European citizens are mobilized to provide help to these children and their families at their arrival. This extraordinary mobilization is a call for a strong and dignified Europe to handle the worst refugee crisis since World War II.

A DIGNIFIED EUROPE CANNOT WAIT FOR TRAGEDIES TO SAVE CHILDREN’S LIVES

The members of the Destination Unknown Campaign urge EU and its Member States for an emergency and concerted European response to migration and the humanitarian crisis in the Euro-Mediterranean region, together with the specialized UN agencies and NGOs, based on solidarity, respect of fundamental rights and core principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A STRONG EUROPE MUST BE COMMITTED IN SOLVING THE NEIGHBOURING CRISIS

The members of the Destination Unknown Campaign urge EU and its Member States to support the efforts of the countries neighbouring conflict zones to welcome refugees or to use, if needed, any diplomatic efforts as source of influence or pressure to protect refugees. As these countries are in “frontline” with volatile situation and because hosting
communities are being over-stretched by the dramatic afflux of extremely vulnerable populations.

A STRONG AND DIGNIFIED EUROPE MUST ANSWER NOW TO THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS AND PROTECT ALL CHILDREN ON THE MOVE AND THEIR FAMILIES

All 28 Member States of the EU have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Promotion and protection of the rights of the child is a core objective of EU Treaties. Solidarity and burden-sharing in refugee matters is not only and just a EU principle or value, it is a requirement of international law.

The EU and European governments will endorse and will engage to implement the SDGs migrant-related goals and targets at the UN Summit 25th-27th September in New York. Non-discrimination and no violence principles are the pillars for an international governance of “Migration” which they will commit on. How are European Heads of States and EU institutions going to explain us why some EU leaders close borders and build walls and barb-wires fences to block access to many refugee and migrant children and families? Why children are detained and ill-treated in Europe? Why migrant and refugee children continue dying at the door of Europe?

DESTINATION UNKNOWN CAMPAIGN 5 MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS:

THE MEMBERS OF THE DESTINATION UNKNOWN CAMPAIGN URGE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES TO:

1. Save the life of migrant and refugee children and their families by establishing safe and legal ’humanitarian corridors’ from the departure countries;

2. Deliver international protection to all migrant and refugee children in Europe regardless their migration status, nationality or religion;

3. Ensure international protection measures be based on the views and consent of children, be they unaccompanied or with their families;

4. Support integration paths of migrant and refugee children in host countries by considering integration as an investment today for tomorrow’s host society

5. Stop violence against migrant and refugee children generated through accelerated return procedures to the so called “safe countries”, through building fences denying access to EU territory which are de facto a refoulment, through detention and use of coercion in fingerprinting process in case of refusal by the child

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DESTINATION UNKNOWN CAMPAIGN 24 DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES

A DIGNIFIED Europe cannot wait for tragedies to save children’s lives

The members of the Destination Unknown Campaign urge EU and its Member States for an emergency and concerted European response to migration and the humanitarian crisis in the Euro-Mediterranean region, together with the specialized UN agencies and NGOs, based on solidarity, respect of fundamental rights and CRC core principles:

1. Prevent deaths and ensure protection along the route: open safe and legal regular routes and humanitarian corridors from the departure countries and maintain search and rescue operations. These measures are the most effective way to prevent deaths of children along the route and to disrupt smuggling (and trafficking) business and networks
2. (As temporary measure) Step up efforts to really alleviate the pressure on EU external border countries (Italy, Greece and Hungary) by activating immediately binding relocation scheme and increase the relocation efforts for each country to be put in place for at least two years. All refugee children, regardless their nationality, religion and origin, must benefit from the relocation scheme. The relocation scheme should be based on the needs and will/consent of children about the country where to be relocated
3. Increase the number of resettled refugees to be carried out not on a voluntary basis by EU Member States but with a binding approach
4. As long term strategy, overcome Dublin rules and develop a uniform status of asylum for third country nationals valid throughout the EU
5. Increase investment on full integration path for migrant and refugee children
6. Stop return children (including children in families) to “safe countries” of origin or in unsafe conditions: No country can be defined “as safe” in general if not grounded on the best interests of the child and on objective elements gathered in countries of return.
7. Develop or strengthen appropriate reception systems for refugee children and families
8. Stop the use of violence, refoullement and detention measures (including the risks of new possible detention measures such as the so called Hotspots, centres where the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex and Europol will work on the ground with frontline Member States to identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants. Who will refuse to be fingerprinted will be closed within this new centers…. risk of new forms of detention?); stop to close borders and build walls and barb-wires fences which provoke tragic consequences;
9. Capacitate the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)
10. Fight against smuggling not with the arms but with more development cooperation assistance. Any EU plan for military naval interventions to destroy vessels of smugglers is not acceptable from both political and ethical points of view as this puts at high risk migrants’ lives, including of children. Change radically approach and consider migration NOT a threat to peace and security but as driver of development.

A STRONG Europe must be committed in solving the neighbouring crisis

The members of the Destination Unknown Campaign urge EU and its Member States to support the efforts of the countries neighbouring conflict zones to welcome refugees or to use, if needed, any diplomatic efforts as source of influence or pressure to protect refugees.
As these countries are in “frontline” with volatile situation and because hosting communities are being over-stretched by the dramatic afflux of extremely vulnerable populations:

11. Not to divert funding away from the Afghan and Syrian situations;
12. Accompany governments in coping with overwhelmed public services, such as health, education, law enforcement, labour market, inclusion, etc.
13. Provide registration and protection services to refugee children and families and strengthen child protection systems
14. Maintain the Sphere standards in refugee camps and within the host communities, together with the international humanitarian actors

At last, EU and its Member States should decide on a firm **common foreign policy in the Euro-Mediterranean region** to encourage the actors of stability and fight the terrorist groups (Taliban, ISIS, etc.) and their supporting forces:

15. Develop common rigorous standing positions in the region promoting European values and principles, **putting protection of children on the move as political priority** and respecting cultural and societal differences of national counterparts
16. Apprehend concretely the present international **diplomatic vacuum in the Middle-East** in order to restore inclusive and genuine dialogue and exchanges with the countries of Euro-Mediterranean region; reopen dialogue with Turkey
17. Participate to strategic alliances to support stabilisation forces and **peace keeping** processes and the elimination of any armed groups recognised as guilty of crime against humanity by the international legal institutions.

**A STRONG Europe must invest much more on linking migration and development to support the SDGs**

The members of the Destination Unknown Campaign urge EU and its Member State to take their responsibility of the failure of their policies in development context and redress their action for a radical change. **Protecting and empowering children on the move and their families is a tool to reinforce development:**

18. **Increase development cooperation** assistance in countries of origins to tackle the root causes of irregular and unsafe migration, including conflict, poverty, inequality, climate change, discrimination and violations of human rights, economic, cultural and social rights.
19. **Cooperation with third countries in the MENA region** (but also Africa) should be built upon the Sustainable Development Goals framework
20. **Increase aid budget on inclusive development**, social protection and decent work in countries of origin so that migration becomes an option, among others, and not a necessity
21. Ensure that **children on the move children and their families have access to protection services**, durable solutions and alternatives to mobility. Integration of migrants and refugees is crucial to reduce vulnerability and reinforce their own development and that of the host communities
22. **Build a new paradigm of migration policies** and increase resources on social cohesion, protection and integration of children in countries of origin, transit and destination.

23. **Consider development cooperation** assistance as consistent part of policies and strategies to fight against smuggling and trafficking.

24. **Develop labour mobility schemes for non-high skilled workers**, including **youngsters** as the best way for migrants not to be a “burden” for the host country (e.g. since they can pay taxes) and to be part of the host society. To facilitate labour mobility to Europe only for talented and skilled migrants, to “choose” migrants on the basis of their high skills is discriminatory, does not reflect the reality (since the majority of migrants arriving in Europe, including minors are not skilled) and produces new brain and skills drains in countries of origins.

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