

## **EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE (OLAF)**

### *Romania strengthens its fraud prevention and control system with European funds*

The Ordinance for the Amendment and Completion of the Government Emergency Ordinance No. 70/2022 on the Prevention, Verification and Detection of Irregularities/Double Financing, Serious Irregularities in Obtaining and Using Non-Refundable/Refundable External Funds Allocated to Romania has been published in the Official Journal of Romania No. 76 (Part I) through the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism and/or the national public funds linked to them and the recovery of the resulting claims. The new ordinance complements anti-fraud measures aimed at protecting the EU's financial interests through European funds allocated to Romania under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRPR). Through these amendments, Romania strengthens its fraud prevention and control system, ensuring the correct and efficient use of European funds from the NRRP and compliance with the commitments made in the loan agreement with the European Commission. With the adoption of the regulatory act, Romania aligns itself with the Member States that reported to OLAF, in 2025, irregularities and suspicions of fraud found within the Recovery and Resilience Facility, through the AFIS-IMS (Irregularity Management System IMS). The Department to Combat Fraud has reaffirmed its commitment and determination to combat fraud, in accordance with its obligations, under Article 325 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

### *OLAF helps stop illegal export of hazardous industrial waste from Albania*

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) supported the Albanian authorities in discovering and stopping the illegal export of hazardous industrial waste from the port of Durrës, Albania, to Thailand, highlighting the growing global threat posed by illegal waste trafficking. The investigation began in 2024, when OLAF alerted Albanian customs authorities to a shipment suspected of containing large quantities of misdeclared hazardous waste. Export documents described the cargo as iron oxide. However, subsequent laboratory analyses later determined that the cargo actually contained a toxic by-product of steel production. Although iron oxide is widely used in legitimate industrial applications, such as building materials and metallurgy, and is generally considered non-hazardous when properly managed, some steel residues are classified as hazardous materials as they often contain high concentrations of heavy metals. If improperly managed or disposed of, they pose serious health and environmental risks, including soil and groundwater contamination and long-term exposure to toxic substances for neighboring communities. This was the case with the identified shipment. Working closely with the Albanian Customs Investigation Directorate, OLAF helped coordinate operational actions that prevented the illegal disposal of hazardous waste abroad. OLAF also supported the investigation by organising and participating in several operational meetings with the Albanian Customs Investigation Directorate and the Durrës Public Prosecutor's Office, facilitating the exchanges that proved crucial in moving the case forward. The cooperation resulted in the interception of the consignment and its subsequent return to the country of origin. It also supported a national proceeding that resulted in the issuance of 33 arrest warrants, including those against customs agents and employees of the National Environment Agency.

*SHIELD VI: More than 3.1 million pills seized as part of EU-wide action against counterfeit medicines*

For the sixth consecutive year, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has facilitated the efforts of customs authorities in 14 EU Member States under Operation SHIELD VI, a coordinated crackdown on the illegal trade in medicines, anabolic steroids, performance-enhancing drugs and unregulated food supplements. OLAF played a coordinating role, working closely with customs authorities to facilitate the seizure of over 3.1 million pills, 104,000 packages of illicit goods, 23,014 vials and bottles, and over 1,000 kilograms of medicines, performance-enhancing drugs, food supplements, and other unauthorized substances. Many of these products may contain unknown or dangerous ingredients, incorrect dosages, or no active ingredients, meaning their consumption could cause serious health complications. Customs authorities from 14 EU Member States - Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain - as well as the Italian Guardia di Finanza participated in the operation. Close cooperation with rightholders ensured the accurate identification and interception of counterfeit goods before they could reach consumers. Operation SHIELD VI underlines the EU's continued commitment to combating illegal trade in medicines and performance-enhancing products. By strengthening control measures and improving coordination between Member States, the authorities have taken a significant step in protecting public health and maintaining consumer confidence in regulated medicines.

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

*EU announces €63 million for Somalia to respond to the worsening humanitarian crisis*

The European Union has announced €63 million in humanitarian funding to support vulnerable communities in Somalia affected by conflict, displacement, severe drought and rising food prices. The country is facing a worsening food crisis, with around 6.5 million people experiencing hunger and approximately 1.85 million children under five at risk of acute malnutrition.

The funding will focus on life-saving assistance, including health and nutrition services, treatment for severe malnutrition, emergency cash support, water and sanitation, protection measures and emergency education. The aid will be delivered through EU humanitarian partners operating on the ground to ensure timely and effective support.

The EU is also participating in an international roundtable to coordinate the response to the growing food crisis following Somalia's activation of its Food Security Crisis Preparedness Plan. With this new contribution, the EU's humanitarian assistance to Somalia has exceeded €750 million since 2017, reaffirming its commitment to supporting the most vulnerable despite global reductions in aid funding.

*EU takes aim at trafficking of illicit firearms*

The European Commission has proposed new EU-wide rules to combat illicit firearms, which pose serious risks including terrorism, organised crime, gang violence, and other offences. Current EU legislation only covers legal ownership and transfers, and definitions and penalties for firearms-related crimes vary across Member States, making enforcement challenging.

The proposal aims to harmonise rules and strengthen law enforcement by introducing EU-wide definitions and penalties for offences such as trafficking, falsifying firearm markings, and using 3D printing blueprints for firearms. It also requires each country to establish a National Firearms Focal Point to coordinate cross-border cooperation and improves data collection, including a registry of seized firearms and regular sharing of firearms offence data every five years.

## **EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGION**

### *ENVE commission welcomes Cyprus presidency's focus on resilience – 04/02/2026*

On February 3, 2026, the CoR's ENVE Commission convened its first session of the year to address critical pillars of the EU's green transition. A primary focus was placed on the Cyprus EU Council Presidency, which aims to mainstream water resilience and climate adaptation across all EU policies. The presidency is advocating for a more robust alignment between the EU's long-term budget and environmental priorities to counter growing water stress across regions. Additionally, international climate diplomacy remains central, with preparations underway for COP31 in Antalya and COP17 in Yerevan, emphasizing a unified approach to climate change and biodiversity loss.

The commission also tackled the European Grids Package, a vital regulatory proposal for the energy transition. Rapporteur-general Clare Colleran Molloy highlighted the necessity of involving local and regional authorities in grid governance to ensure the system's effectiveness on the ground. Furthermore, the ENVE members adopted a draft opinion on EU sound policies, urging the Commission to elevate noise pollution to the same level of regulatory priority as air pollution, citing its significant impact on public health and the economy.

A crucial development for legal monitoring is the upcoming Environment Implementation Review led by rapporteur Stefania Proietti. This initiative will provide a detailed analysis of the practical and legal obstacles in implementing EU environmental legislation at the local level. The final draft is expected to be adopted in Assisi in June 2026, offering a diagnostic view of compliance gaps within the Union. Collectively, these dossiers signal a shift toward more granular, territory-based enforcement of the European Green Deal.

### *Strengthening Europe's preparedness for crises requires strong local and regional involvement – 04/02/2026*

The Commission for Natural Resources (NAT) of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has outlined a new framework for European resilience against geopolitical shocks, supply chain disruptions, and health emergencies. Central to the draft opinions is the EU Stockpiling Strategy, which emphasizes that security of supply requires a coordinated, place-based approach. Local and regional authorities are identified as key actors in ensuring the continuity of essential services and managing EU stockpiling networks.

Rapporteur János Ádám Karácsony stressed that resilience depends on interoperable stockpiling systems and modern logistics infrastructure across all levels of government. Complementing this, the Medical Countermeasures Strategy, led by Antonio Aurigemma, calls for sustained investment throughout the crisis management cycle—from prevention to recovery. Given that healthcare systems are largely decentralized, the CoR advocates for joint procurement, diversified supply chains, and civil-military cooperation to ensure equitable access to life-saving medical resources.

### *Future EU budget: regions demand power to block territorially blind national investment plans – 05/02/2026*

The Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER) has adopted a package of draft opinions to modernize the EU's long-term budget, emphasizing the genuine involvement of regions and cities. Central to the debate is the European Commission's proposal to create National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs), which would merge cohesion, agricultural, and fisheries policies into a single large fund. COTER members strongly oppose this "single pot of money" approach, arguing it risks sidelining subnational authorities in favor of national governments.

To safeguard the partnership principle and multi-level governance, local leaders have proposed a 'subsidiarity clause'. This mechanism would empower regions to request that the European Commission reject NRPPs if regional authorities are excluded from the design process. Furthermore, the committee advocates for maintaining the specific identities of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund, ensuring clearly allocated resources rather than a centralized national budget.

Regarding implementation, COTER supports simplification in monitoring EU spending but warns against the complexity of a performance-based system replacing expense reimbursement. They urge the Commission to provide technical assistance for the new framework. Finally, on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), leaders welcomed increased funding for military mobility, provided that dual-use investments deliver tangible civilian co-benefits for regional connectivity and resilience, staying complementary to Cohesion Policy goals.

## EUROPEAN COUNCIL

### *EU sanctions against terrorism: Council strengthens the scope of the EU Terrorist List and maintains all existing listings*

The Council of the European Union has decided to strengthen EU restrictive measures to combat terrorism by expanding the criteria for listing individuals, groups and entities. The new rules allow the EU to target leading members of already listed organisations who play a key role in planning, facilitating or carrying out terrorist acts, as well as those associated with them through activities such as financing, recruitment or terrorist training.

In addition to the existing asset freeze and the prohibition on making funds or economic resources available, the Council has introduced a travel ban for listed individuals.

The Council also completed its periodic review of the list of persons, groups and entities subject to these restrictive measures and decided to keep the list unchanged, meaning those currently listed remain subject to sanctions.

In earlier conclusions adopted on 16 December 2024, the Council stressed that terrorism and violent extremism in all forms continue to represent a serious threat to the security of the European Union and its Member States.

### *EU terrorist list: Council designates the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation*

The Council of the European Union has formally added the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) of Iran to the EU terrorist list, following the political agreement reached by the Foreign Affairs Council on 29 January.

As a result of the listing, the IRGC is now subject to EU counterterrorism restrictive measures, including the freezing of its funds and financial assets within EU Member States and a prohibition on EU operators making funds or economic resources available to the organisation.

With this decision, a total of 13 individuals and 23 groups and entities are now subject to restrictive measures under the EU terrorist list.

## EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### *Judgment Ramishvili v. Georgia - failure to protect defence lawyer's reputation against clergyman's accusations on live television, application no. 4100/24 – 03/02/2026*

Judgment of the Chamber in *Ramishvili v. Georgia* the European Court held, unanimously, that there was a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the Convention. The case concerned civil defamation proceedings brought by the complainant, a well-known defence lawyer, against a prominent priest of the Georgian Orthodox Church, for statements made during a television interview accusing him of being a “spy” and of providing information to the secret services. The Court held that the priest's statements had been made in the context of a matter of public interest, namely a high-profile criminal proceeding, and that the appellant himself was a public figure who therefore had to demonstrate greater tolerance towards the opinions of others’. However, the charges against him were very serious and should have had a solid factual basis to be protected by the Convention. Instead of verifying whether this had occurred, the national courts had placed the burden of proof on the applicant to refute the charges against him. The Court therefore held that the courts had failed to strike a fair balance between Mr. Ramishvili to respect for his dignity and reputation, on the one hand, and the priest's freedom of expression, on the other.

### *Judgment Navalnyy v. Russia (no. 4) - Unlawful imprisonment, failure to assess the risks to his health and life, and subjecting him to degrading treatment violated the Convention, applications nos. 4743/21 and 37083/21 – 03/02/2026*

The case of *Navalnyy v. Russia (No. 4)* concerned the arrest and detention of Aleksey Navalnyy in January 2021, when he returned to Russia following his alleged poisoning in August 2020 and medical treatment abroad. In the Chamber's judgment, the European Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 2 (right to life) of the Convention; violations of Article 5 § 1 (right to liberty and security) by reason of Mr. Navalnyy pending the outcome of the proceedings regarding the activation of his suspended sentence and his subsequent imprisonment from February 2, 2021, onwards once the suspended sentence is activated; and a violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) due to the general conditions of his detention. The Court held that Mr. Navalnyy in 2014 relied on an unpredictable application of Russian criminal law; therefore, his imprisonment after February 2, 2021, had not been “legitimate”. Furthermore, his detention during the proceedings was based on legal provisions not applicable to his situation, which the Court found to be contrary to the principles of predictability and legal certainty. Furthermore, despite Mr. Navalnyy's near-fatal poisoning in August 2020, national courts, in ordering his detention and imprisonment, had made no attempt to consider the fears expressed for his health and life and had done nothing to undertake any type of risk assessment or consider preventive options, including non-custodial or enhanced protective measures. In addition, Mr. Navalnyy was subjected during his detention to forms of ill-treatment that affected his health, well-being and dignity.

### *Judgment Morawiec v. Poland - Decision suspending judge from duties discouraged judges from speaking out against judicial reforms, application no. 46238/20 – 05/02/2026*

In the Chamber's judgment in *Morawiec v. Polonia*, the Court unanimously held that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1 (access to court), Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), and Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Ms. Morawiec is a judge. Since 2018, he has been president of the *Giudici' Themis* association, which publicly criticizes government reforms affecting the

judicial system. The case concerns rulings by the Supreme Court's Disciplinary Chamber regarding Ms. Morawiec's immunity from prosecution and her suspension from judicial office, which she says were made in response to her public criticism of judicial reforms and a civil action she filed against the Justice Minister in 2017. It was found that the measures taken by the authorities to waive Ms. Morawiec's immunity and suspend her from judicial duties could be characterized as a strategy aimed at intimidating her and that these measures must have had a “chilling effect”, discouraging not only her, but also other judges from participating in the public debate on legislative reforms.

*Judgment Florio and Bassignana v. Italy - Combined confiscation and compensation measures exceeded intended legitimate aim of reparation, applications nos. 34324/15 and 65192/16 – 05/02/2026*

In the Chamber's judgment in *Florio and Bassignana v. Italia*, the Court unanimously held that there had been a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 (Protection of Property) to the Convention. The case concerned the combined effect of a measure imposed by the criminal courts to confiscate the proceeds of a crime and an order by the Court of Auditors to compensate the authorities for the damage caused by the same crime. The Court noted that the Convention does not prohibit the combination of a restorative measure and a traditional punitive measure. In the present case, however, the confiscation measure was intended not only to punish the complainants but also to restore the financial situation that existed prior to their offences by depriving them of the proceeds. This had ultimately left the complainants in more unfavourable circumstances than before they had committed the offences. The Court then held that the national authorities should have examined the combined effect of confiscation and compensation measures and examined whether the restorative and punitive objectives of confiscation could have been achieved by less burdensome means than by the complete combination of the two measures.

*Judgment Green Alliance v. Bulgaria - Regulations in Bulgaria on use of informers did not meet minimum Convention safeguards, application no. 6580/22 – 17/02/2026*

In the Chamber's judgment in *Green Alliance v Bulgaria*, the Court ruled, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The case concerned regulations issued in 2008 and amended in 2018, which allow the Bulgarian State Agency for National Security to infiltrate informants, into private entities or as members of a “liberal profession”. Such agents conceal that they work for the Agency but are not authorized to use covert surveillance techniques or equipment and are considered different from undercover agents. A request filed by Green Alliance in 2018 before Bulgarian courts for judicial review of the regulations was unsuccessful. In this judgment, the Court held that the rules governing the use of “cover agents” did not comply with the minimum safeguards against arbitrariness and abuse required by Article 8. In particular, the reasons why these agents could be employed and the fields in which they could work were broad; there were no time limits limiting their employment; the procedure for their employment did not guarantee that they would be employed only when “necessary in a democratic society”; there were no provisions for their effective supervision; and there was no remedy in relation to their unlawful or unjustified use.

## **EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY (EDA)**

*EDA project develops technology for underwater drones to move in swarms*

In early February 2026, the European Defence Agency (EDA) concluded the second stage of the Swarm of Biomimetic Underwater Vehicles (SABUVIS II) project. This four-year initiative, managed with a €3.7 million budget, marks a significant shift in naval warfare by transitioning from isolated drones to coordinated swarms of autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) operating as a coherent system. Led by Poland, with contributions

from Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia, the project successfully addressed critical technical barriers of the underwater environment, such as the absence of satellite tracking, high latency, and constrained communication bandwidth.

The project's milestones included field demonstrations during REPMUS 2025, where mixed swarms were tested in real-life settings across Poland, Germany, and Portugal. These trials advanced formation control, adaptive mission execution, and interoperability between disparate systems from different nations and manufacturers. A key achievement was the integration of Command-and-Control (C2) architectures and the application of adaptive protocol technologies derived from the EDA SALSA project, ensuring reliable data exchange through self-configurable underwater acoustic networks.

From a legal and institutional perspective, SABUVIS II represents a concrete application of EU defense cooperation, highlighting the agency's role in fostering joint capabilities. For legal scholars, the project raises essential questions regarding the international law of the sea, the regulatory framework for autonomous military assets, and the liability and accountability mechanisms within multi-national integrated command systems. The success of SABUVIS II underscores the EU's commitment to technological sovereignty in the strategic maritime domain.

## **EUROPEAN JUDICIAL NETWORK IN CRIMINAL MATTERS (EJN)**

### *The EJN launches the EJN Fiches Belges for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*

The EJN's Fiches Belges for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have been published on the EJN website. With the aim of supporting judicial practitioners in preparing their MLA (mutual legal assistance) requests to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the new Fiches Belges of the EJN provide information on the judicial systems and criminal procedures of these countries. The tool illustrates the applicability of any investigative measures that may be required by an MLA, as well as any additional national procedural requirements for the enforcement of such requests. The integration of information on the Western Balkan legal systems on the website is one of the EJN's main initiatives in the region. The initiative is supported by one of the EJN's main partners in the region: the WBCJ project.

### *EJN Presidency Board meeting and 47th EJN Regular Meeting*

The 47th Regular Meeting of the EJN took place on 12 February 2026 in The Hague under the Cypriot EJN Presidency, bringing together about 60 EJN Contact Points from EU Member States and EU candidate countries, as well as from EJN associated countries. The participants updated each other on current legislative developments and ongoing work in judicial cooperation in criminal matters. Furthermore, the discussions focused mainly on EJN's role in the e-evidence package, activities related to judicial training and cooperation with the EU institutions. Related to the revision of the Eurojust Regulation, a livestream intervention was made by Mr. Janis Jakobs from DG JUST of the European Commission. The EJN Secretariat updated the participants on judicial cooperation with third countries, in particular with regions such as Latin America, the Caribbean and the Western Balkans. The discussions reflected EJN's cooperation beyond the European Union and its engagement with partner countries and judicial networks. The meeting was also an opportunity for the participants to exchange views on the future priorities, governance and activities of the EJN, including the planning for 2026. The EJN Regular Meeting is a plenary meeting held once a year in The Hague, as provided for in Article 6 of Council Decision 2008/976/JHA of 16 December 2008 on

the European Judicial Network. Its purpose is to discuss key developments in judicial cooperation in criminal matters and the involvement of the EJM in this area. The EJM Regular meeting was preceded by the EJM Presidency Board meeting, currently composed of the Contact Points representing the Presidencies of the Council of the EU from Denmark, Cyprus, Ireland and Lithuania, the elected EJM National Correspondents and the EJM Secretariat.

## **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

### *Violence in north-east Syria may amount to war crimes, warn MEPs*

The European Parliament strongly condemns violence against civilians in north-east Syria and calls on all parties to respect the ceasefire. In its resolution, MEPs highlight that extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, forced displacement and attacks on civilian infrastructure may constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and potentially war crimes. Reports from the United Nations and non-governmental organisations indicate abuses particularly affecting the Kurdish population, including desecration of corpses, vandalised burial sites and the use of unguided munitions in civilian areas. Parliament also expresses concern about the worsening humanitarian situation and urges the EU to increase humanitarian assistance.

MEPs welcome the agreement between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian transitional government and reiterate their strong support for maintaining the ceasefire and recognising Kurdish civil and educational rights. They call on regional actors, including Türkiye, to refrain from military actions or support for armed groups that could undermine stability.

The resolution emphasises that stability in north-east Syria is essential for an inclusive political transition and urges Syrian authorities to guarantee the rights and protection of all ethnic and religious communities, including Arabs, Kurds, Sunnis, Shias, Alawites, Christians, Druze and Yazidis. It stresses that recognising the Kurdish community's rights and political participation is crucial for a stable and inclusive Syria.

Parliament also expresses concern about the potential resurgence of Daesh following escapes from detention camps. It calls on EU Member States to repatriate their nationals, particularly children, from camps such as al-Hol and al-Roj and to prosecute adults through fair trials. MEPs urge the EU and its partners to intensify efforts to prevent any resurgence of the group, while acknowledging the significant role played by Kurdish forces, including women fighters, in combating it. They conclude that any EU engagement with Syria should remain conditional on progress in civilian protection, ceasefire compliance, human rights and minority rights.

## **EUROPEAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE (EPPO)**

### *Spain: Fraudster sentenced to three years in prison for impersonating service provider for EU mission in Somalia*

A Spanish citizen has been sentenced to three years in prison for posing as a service provider for the EU mission in Somalia, in order to fraudulently obtain funds, following an investigation by the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Madrid (Spain). The issue concerns the funds allocated to the EU Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia), which is tasked with assisting the Somali Federal Police Force and Somali authorities in enhancing law enforcement capabilities and strengthening maritime security. On December 27, 2022, the individual, posing as a

medical and laboratory equipment service provider for the EU mission, sent an email requesting that the subsequent transfer of funds be made to a different bank account he owned. He had obtained the information that allowed him to perpetrate the fraud from an unknown third party. In this way, he managed to fraudulently obtain 69,751.40 euros, transferred to his bank account on January 9, 2023. In addition to the prison sentence, the Second Criminal Chamber of the Audiencia Nacional also sentenced the defendant to pay a daily fine of 10€ for 10 months. He was also held civilly liable and ordered to repay the amount of funds obtained illegally. The verdict, issued on February 9, 2026, marks the first conviction in a Criminal Chamber of the Audiencia Nacional, following an investigation by the EPPO of Madrid, and is still subject to appeal.

*Italy: EPPO seizes clandestine cigarette factory and 21.5 tons of tobacco and cigarettes*

At the request of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Palermo (Italy), the Guardia di Finanza of Palermo and Padua seized a large industrial cigarette production plant, as well as 5.5 tons of cigarettes and 16 tons of tobacco, in the province of Padua. The cigarette factory was equipped with all the machinery needed to operate a high-capacity production line, capable of producing up to €2 million worth of cigarettes per day. The estimated value of the site is over 1 million euros. In addition to tons of cigarettes and tobacco, officers also found 14 pallets of precursors, including packaging materials with the logos of well-known tobacco brands, inside the 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> industrial site, and also seized a truck used to transport the goods. At the entrance, three Moldovan citizens were found inside the factory and reported to the national authorities for the crimes of possession of contraband processed tobacco and trademark counterfeiting. The discovery is the result of several months of investigative work. Thanks to months of surveillance, investigators were able to trace the supply chain and identify production sites, despite the sophisticated counter-surveillance measures used by the suspects. If the seized cigarettes had reached the market, the estimated loss in VAT and evaded excise duties would have caused losses of more than €1.3 million to national and EU budgets. The illegal factory was able to generate an illicit profit of €350,000 per day, exceeding €120 million per year, causing an estimated damage to public finances of around €80 million.

*Lithuania: Court of Appeal upholds convictions for cigarette smuggling from Belarus*

The Court of Appeal of Lithuania upheld the convictions of two former Lithuanian customs officers and two Belarusian citizens for smuggling large quantities of cigarettes from Belarus, upholding the lower court's ruling and rejecting the defendants' appeals. The conviction of customs officers for abuse of office was also upheld. The case arose from an investigation by the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Vilnius into a system that involved smuggling millions of cigarettes produced in Belarus across the Lithuanian border. Cigarettes were transported in several trucks and customs controls were bypassed with the assistance of two Lithuanian customs officials. Over three million packs of cigarettes were smuggled in this way, causing an estimated damage of around 10 million euros. On January 28, 2026, the Court of Appeal also confirmed that the defendants acted within an organized criminal group and upheld the civil action brought by the customs authorities, ordering the defendants to pay compensation of over €9.7 million for the damages caused. As a result of the amendments made to the Criminal Code, the fines imposed on convicted persons have been

reduced slightly, from a total of €300,000 to approximately €266,000. Those convicted have three months to appeal to the Supreme Court of Lithuania, after which the decision becomes final.

*First convictions in investigation Moby Dick: 20 defendants sentenced to over 70 years in prison and assets worth approximately €40 million confiscated*

Twenty individuals have been sentenced to more than 70 years of imprisonment for organising and participating in a criminal association and for money laundering, following an investigation by the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Milan and Palermo. These are the first convictions in investigation "Moby Dick", which concerns a criminal syndicate suspected of carrying out a VAT fraud scheme exceeding €500 million.

Between 2020 and 2023, the group issued invoices for the sale of electronic goods, including AirPods and laptops, worth more than €1.3 billion. The network operated through a complex system of domestic and foreign companies, including missing traders, brokers and conduits, structured in several operational cells across multiple European and third countries.

On 23 February 2026, the Preliminary Hearing Judge of the Court of Milan convicted 15 defendants under an abbreviated procedure, reducing their sentences, while three others received prison terms through plea bargain agreements. In total, the 15 defendants were sentenced to more than 55 years in prison, along with permanent disqualification from public office and a two-year ban on conducting business activities. Two additional defendants had already been convicted in November 2024 for money laundering.

The court also ordered the confiscation of assets worth approximately €30 million, representing the profits personally obtained by the convicted individuals.

Further proceedings are still ongoing before the Court of Milan involving additional defendants. The overall investigation concerns more than 400 suspects and legal entities, and some individuals have already repaid around €20 million to tax authorities following the investigation

**EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR CRIMINAL JUDICIAL COOPERATION (EUROJUST)**

*Four years after the full-scale invasion: continuing on the path to Ukraine's accountability*

Eurojust, together with the authorities of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine, has maintained its firm commitment to ensuring accountability for crimes committed in Ukraine during the full-scale invasion. After years of investigation, the first charges and notifications of suspicions were filed and legal proceedings began in Ukraine. Meanwhile, the work of the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) continues, in support of the future Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression. Additional evidence is added to the Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED) and Eurojust continuously provides legal and analytical support to national investigations. Since the outbreak of the war, Eurojust has been at the forefront of supporting efforts to establish judicial accountability for Russian crimes. Just three weeks after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Eurojust helped establish a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) that now includes Ukraine, six EU member states, and the participation of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC-OTP), Eurojust, and Europol. The JIT's work is supported by ICPA, a unique judicial hub where prosecutors and investigators from several countries collaborate to support investigations into the crime of aggression. Having received an additional €5 million in support of national investigations into the crime of

aggression, ICPA continues to coordinate investigative and prosecution activities, as well as the pre-trial efforts of participating national authorities. With the support of Eurojust's legal, analytical and logistical services, ICPA continues to lay the groundwork for the upcoming Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. CISED plays a central role in this effort. Since becoming operational in 2023, CISED has 10,000 evidence files from 17 countries. Eurojust keeps, keeps and analyses evidence. Eurojust then uses this evidence to identify potential overlapping investigations. Based on this structured analysis of evidence, Eurojust provides personalised advice on various investigative and criminal aspects of major international crime cases. This supports the competent national authorities in carrying out their judicial proceedings. Following the establishment of the JIT, the authorities of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine worked with ICC-OTP partners, with the support of Eurojust and Europol, to investigate major international crimes and their perpetrators. Given the scale and complexity of the crimes, JIT focused its work primarily on crimes committed in detention centres. As a result of JIT, the first allegations and notifications of suspicions have been filed in several States, and prosecutions have been initiated in Ukraine.

#### *Cocaine trafficking network exposed by following financial trail*

A high-value target (HVT) at the center of a major cocaine trafficking operation has been arrested, along with six other suspects. The arrests follow an investigation conducted by French, Italian and Swiss authorities, coordinated by Eurojust and Europol. Rebuilding a financial trail, authorities uncovered a money laundering ring that laundered the illicit proceeds of a criminal group trafficking cocaine from South America to Europe. Authorities launched investigations into suspicious financial movements, which uncovered a sophisticated money laundering operation involving Camorra and 'Ndrangheta officials. Il gruppo dietro al servizio si avvaleva di società fittizie, false fatture e investimenti di lusso per riciclare milioni di euro di profitti derivanti dal traffico di cocaina. Si sospetta che il riciclaggio di denaro sia direttamente collegato a un'operazione di traffico di cocaina su larga scala che trasportava droga dal Sud America all'Europa. The criminal network allegedly transported large quantities of cocaine through major European ports. A seizure by Belgian customs at the end of 2025 allowed authorities to link cocaine trafficking to HVT. From 2024 onwards, international judicial cooperation was facilitated by a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) at Eurojust. The JIT allowed French, Italian, and Swiss authorities to exchange information and evidence in real time, preparing the case for legal action against the criminal group. The Agency also ensured the preparation of several European investigation orders for execution on the day of the action. The international investigation culminated in a day of investigations on February 23, which took place in France, Italy, Belgium, and Switzerland. During the day, seven suspects were arrested, four in France and three in Italy. In France, several luxury vehicles, properties worth more than 5 million euros, 600,000 euros in cryptocurrencies, and 26,000 euros in cash were seized.

#### *Successful operation against illegal streaming services with millions of users worldwide*

Authorities from Italy, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, Kosovo, and South Korea, with support from Eurojust and Europol, dismantled a large international network of illegal streaming services that provided live and on-demand pay-TV content to millions of users worldwide.

The investigation began after significant data was seized during the international operation *Taken Down* in 2024. By analysing this data, internet traffic, and cryptocurrency transactions, authorities identified an organised criminal group responsible for the illegal distribution of protected broadcasting content.

A total of 31 suspects are believed to have been involved in offences including unauthorised distribution of pay-TV content, illegal access to IT systems, computer fraud, and money laundering. As the network expanded globally, the group allegedly concealed millions of euros in monthly profits through cryptocurrency investments and shell companies.

Eurojust facilitated judicial cooperation and coordination between the countries involved, while Europol provided analytical support, organised operational meetings, and deployed experts during the action day in Italy.

The coordinated operation across nine countries resulted in the shutdown of the illegal streaming services used by millions of people. In Italy, three major illegal IPTV platforms were seized, while in Romania a significant global IPTV provider operating through servers in the country was dismantled.

#### *Eurojust coordinates takedown of international drug trafficking group*

A transnational operation in Italy and Spain, coordinated by Eurojust and Europol, led to the arrest of 12 individuals suspected of leading a drug trafficking network involved in the production and distribution of marijuana and hashish. Earlier actions had already resulted in the arrest of 13 people and the seizure of more than 900 kilograms of drugs.

The group was allegedly led by an Italian national based in Barcelona, who managed marijuana production in Spain and its distribution to Italy with the help of trusted accomplices. The network included workers at cultivation sites, transporters and individuals responsible for collecting money.

To transport the drugs to Italy, the group used several concealment methods. Initially, the drugs were hidden in pallets of fruit and vegetables on trucks. Later, they were concealed in large sacks of animal feed sealed with a hot-seal system to avoid detection. In later stages, the group also used maritime routes.

A joint investigation team set up at Eurojust enabled Italian and Spanish authorities to share evidence and uncover the international structure of the trafficking network. During the investigation, authorities arrested 13 suspects and seized large quantities of drugs and several weapons.

Europol supported the case by facilitating information exchange, providing analytical support and deploying an expert with a mobile office on the action day.

The final operation took place on 10 February, coordinated from Eurojust. Authorities arrested the leader of the group, who had returned to Italy after a previous arrest, along with five other members in Italy and six in Spain. Searches in both countries led to the seizure of 1,670 cannabis plants, equipment for three indoor cultivation sites, and assets worth about EUR 1 million, including a luxury villa in Barcelona and five vehicles.

#### **EUROPEAN ANTI FRAUD OFFICE (OLAF)**

#### *OLAF helps to stop illegal export of hazardous industrial waste from Albania*

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) supported Albanian authorities in uncovering and stopping the illegal export of hazardous industrial waste from the port of Durrës, Albania, to Thailand, highlighting the growing global threat of illegal waste trafficking.

The investigation began in 2024 when OLAF alerted Albanian customs to a shipment suspected of containing misdeclared hazardous waste. Although the export documents described the cargo as iron oxide, laboratory tests later revealed it was a toxic by-product of steel production containing potentially dangerous levels of heavy metals.

If improperly managed, such waste can cause serious environmental and health risks, including soil and groundwater contamination and long-term toxic exposure for nearby communities.

Through close cooperation with the Albanian Customs Investigation Directorate, OLAF helped coordinate actions that prevented the illegal disposal of the waste abroad. The agency also supported the investigation by organising operational meetings with customs authorities and the Durrës Prosecution Office.

The cooperation led to the interception of the shipment and its return to its country of origin. The investigation also resulted in 33 arrest warrants, including for customs officers and employees of the National Environment Agency.

The case highlights how misdeclaration of hazardous waste—falsely labelling toxic materials as non-hazardous—is a common method used in illegal waste trafficking to bypass environmental regulations and avoid higher disposal costs, shifting environmental and health risks to destination countries.

## **EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR CYBERSECURITY (ENISA)**

### *Updated International Strategy to empower the EU Cybersecurity Ecosystem*

On February 9, 2026, ENISA (the EU Agency for Cybersecurity) released its revised International Strategy, marking a significant shift in the Union's approach to global cyber governance. The strategy reinforces the alignment between ENISA's operational mandate and the EU's broader international cybersecurity policies, focusing on achieving a "high common level of cybersecurity" across the Union. As stated by Executive Director Juhan Lepasaar, international cooperation is no longer a peripheral task but an essential complement to the Agency's core mission, particularly in a borderless digital landscape.

The renewed framework prioritizes partnerships with nations sharing EU values and strategic interests. Key operational pillars for 2026 include tailored working arrangements with Ukraine and the United States for capacity-building, and supporting the European Commission and EEAS in diplomatic cyber dialogues with Japan and the UK. Notably, the strategy extends ENISA's tools to the Western Balkans and makes the EU Cybersecurity Reserve (under the 2025 Cyber Solidarity Act) operational for associated third countries like Moldova.

For legal observers, this strategy is pivotal as it formalizes the working modalities between ENISA, the EEAS, and Member States, consolidating principles of multilateral cooperation within the G7 and other like-minded forums. By integrating cybersecurity expertise into the EU's external action, the strategy strengthens the extraterritorial influence of EU cyber standards and enhances the collective defense mechanism against transnational threats, ensuring that the Digital Europe Programme's tools are effectively projected beyond EU borders.

## **EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**

### *Women fleeing the war in Ukraine face abuse, harassment and exploitation, FRA survey finds*

A survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) reveals that women fleeing the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine face significant levels of violence, harassment, and exploitation both during their escape and after arriving in the European Union. Since February 2022, approximately 2.5 million women and girls have fled Ukraine and received temporary protection in the EU, granting them residence and access to employment.

The report, *Seeking Safety from War – Violence and rights abuses against women from Ukraine*, highlights the severe trauma experienced by many of these women. One in four reported experiencing physical or sexual violence since the beginning of the war, and more than half stated that they had been physically or verbally attacked in the EU for speaking Ukrainian in public. Many respondents also reported sexual harassment, both offline and online, although only a small number of incidents were reported to authorities or support organisations.

The study also documents abuses committed by Russian forces, with some interviewed women reporting physical or sexual humiliation during interrogations. In addition, many women encountered potentially exploitative offers related to work, housing, or transportation, and a considerable number of those employed worked without contracts or were underpaid. Economic hardship and insufficient support services further exacerbate their vulnerability, with many struggling financially and lacking access to mental health care.

The report calls on EU Member States to strengthen protections for women fleeing armed conflict, ensure comprehensive support services, improve police and institutional responses to encourage reporting, and enhance legal frameworks to prosecute all forms of violence against women, including online harassment and labour exploitation.

#### National Preventive Mechanisms discuss fundamental rights monitoring in migration

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) participated in a roundtable organised by the Council of Europe with selected National Preventive Mechanisms to discuss fundamental rights monitoring in the context of migration and the challenges linked to it. Particular attention was given to the new monitoring frameworks introduced by the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Participants, including representatives from national monitoring bodies, the European Commission, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, civil society organisations and FRA, exchanged experiences on monitoring practices at the national level. Discussions focused on the difficulties of overseeing locations where migrants and asylum seekers are held, as well as on ways to strengthen the preventive role of monitoring mechanisms and integrate the new monitoring requirements introduced by the EU Pact into their mandates.

FRA also presented its ongoing work to implement its 2024 guidance on establishing independent national monitoring mechanisms under the EU Pact, including the development of a common monitoring methodology for future monitoring bodies. Its expertise and experience in operationalising these monitoring frameworks were widely referenced during the discussions.

## **INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

### *Led Mission Conducts Marine Environmental Sampling Near Fukushima Daiichi to Support Ongoing Monitoring*

Between 4 and 5 February 2026, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) led an international mission in an effort to conduct seawater and fishery product sampling in the surrounding areas of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (FDNPS). This is the seventh iteration of the Additional Measures framework,

which is an effort to enhance international cooperation and transparency in the discharge of ALPS-treated water that commenced in August 2023.

The main features of the mission are as follows:

**Multilateral Participation:** This mission includes independent sampling activities carried out by independent experts from the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and Switzerland.

**Independent Laboratory Analysis:** Sampling analysis is carried out by an array of diverse and highly specialized laboratories, such as the China Institute for Radiation Protection, the Korea Institute for Nuclear Safety, the Spiez Laboratory in Switzerland, and the IAEA Marine Environment Laboratories in Monaco.

**Safety Standard Verification:** All the participating laboratories are members of the ALMERA network, recognized for their analytical capabilities. The monitoring is a follow-up of the IAEA Task Force confirmation in December 2025 that the discharge is still within the parameters of international safety standards.

This independent verification is an important diplomatic and technical instrument aimed at ensuring that the environmental effect remains within the parameters accepted by safety protocols.

### *Governments must enhance support for air crash victims and their families*

On the occasion of the International Day commemorating the victims of air crash accidents, ICAO Council President Toshiyuki Onuma has made an urgent call to the international community of states to expedite the development of comprehensive support systems. In this regard, following the unanimous adoption of Assembly Resolution A42-15, states are now mandated under the ICAO standard contained in Annex 9 to enact effective family assistance schemes into law. These schemes shall address the need for timely notification, dignified treatment of victims, as well as the effective implementation of advanced legal constructs for compensation and pre-loss financial assistance.

Additionally, ICAO is also improving the standards in the investigation of accidents by expediting the dissemination of preliminary information and considering the voices of families throughout the investigative process. To achieve this, the agency is offering technical support, training, and resources such as the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme to promote accountability. It is also continuing to promote the ratification of the Montreal Convention of 1999 to achieve global consistency in liability and the rights of victims. The end objective of this initiative is to promote a safety culture that is informed by empathy, transparency, and shared responsibility towards the victims of air accidents.

## **INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT**

### *ICC concludes confirmation of charges hearing in Duterte case – 27/02/2026*

On February 27, 2026, the hearing to confirm the charges in the case *The Prosecutor v. Rodrigo Roa Duterte* before Pre-Trial Chamber I of the ICC concluded. The purpose of the hearing to confirm the charges is for the judges to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to support the belief that the suspect committed each of the alleged crimes. If the charges are confirmed, in whole or in part, the case is transferred to the Trial Chamber, which will conduct the next stage of the proceedings: the trial. After hearing oral arguments from the prosecutor, the victims' legal representatives, and the defense, the judges heard their respective closing statements. The hearing to confirm the charges took place in the absence of the accused, following the granting

by the Chamber of Mr. Duterte's request to waive his right to attend the hearing. The judges will now begin their deliberations. In accordance with rule 53 of the Rules of Court, the Pre-Trial Chamber shall issue its written decision within 60 days of the date of conclusion of the confirmation hearing. The Pre-Trial Chamber will then be able to: confirm the charges for which it has found there is sufficient evidence and send the accused to trial before a Trial Chamber; refuse to confirm the charges for which it has determined that there is insufficient evidence and discontinue the proceedings against Mr. Duterte; adjourn the hearing and ask the prosecutor to provide further evidence, to conduct further investigation or to amend any charge for which the evidence presented appears to establish a crime other than the one charged. The defence and the prosecution cannot directly challenge the decision.

## **INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION**

### *IMO sharpens plans to achieve zero plastic pollution from ships by 2030*

The International Maritime Organization's Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR 13) in February 2026 has finalized a comprehensive draft Strategy and Action Plan on marine plastic litter from ships. The new strategy, set to be adopted by the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 84) in April 2026, seeks to achieve zero plastic waste discharge by 2030 through a simplified framework that builds on 2021 and 2025 frameworks. The new strategy will cover reduction of shipping's contribution to ocean pollution, improvements to port reception facilities, and global compliance through better seafarer training and technical cooperation.

Significant steps were taken on the issue of the transport of plastic pellets by ships, as the sub-committee agreed on a new mandatory code under MARPOL and SOLAS Conventions to reduce risks to the marine environment through spills. Additionally, to address the issue of abandoned fishing gear, guidelines on marking systems were approved to facilitate recovery and disposal of fishing gear that has been lost at sea. The meeting has also laid the foundation for a new legally binding instrument on biofouling management to prevent the spread of invasive alien species through ship hulls. Other technical outcomes include approval on amendments to the NOx Code, as well as draft amendments to MARPOL Annexes on volatile organic compounds, sewage, and oily waste, all of which align with the IMO's overall environmental work programme.

## **UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)**

### *UNESCO report: Major blind spot in ocean carbon research could undermine global climate predictions*

A new report by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO reveals a critical lack of understanding of how the ocean absorbs and stores carbon. This glaring uncertainty about our planet's largest carbon sink threatens to skew current climate predictions and hamper our ability to develop effective mitigation and adaptation strategies in the coming decades. The report also lays out a roadmap to bolster international cooperation, strengthen ocean carbon monitoring and update climate models accordingly.

The Integrated Ocean Carbon Research Report finds that scientific models differ widely in estimating how much carbon the ocean absorbs, with discrepancies of 10-20% globally and even greater in certain regions.

These differences stem from limited availability of long-term data, and gaps in understanding how key processes respond to climate change. This means quantifying how changes in ocean warming and circulation

affect carbon uptake, how shifts in plankton and microbial life influence long-term storage, and how coastal and polar regions exchange carbon with the atmosphere. Industrial activities today, and the risks associated with climate engineering in the future may also alter the ocean's natural ability to absorb carbon.

Reducing carbon emissions remains the only long-term solution to protect the ocean and the climate. But without a clearer understanding of how the ocean carbon sink is changing, global mitigation and adaptation strategies risk being built on incomplete information.

Since the start of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), IOC-UNESCO has launched more than 500 projects worldwide and mobilized over one billion dollars to advance ocean knowledge and transform it into measurable action. From strengthening global ocean observing systems and advancing seabed mapping to improving early warning for coastal hazards and supporting ecosystem-based climate solutions, IOC-UNESCO is helping build the scientific foundations required to protect ocean biodiversity and enhance climate resilience worldwide.

## **UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME (UNEP)**

### *UNEP releases its Annual Report for 2025*

In the 2025 Annual Report, UNEP highlights the progress made last year through international cooperation. Stronger environmental policies could add trillions of dollars to global GDP and prevent millions of deaths, new policies on critical mineral for energy transition and against pollution and waste have been approved and are starting to produce effects, a new International Methane Emission Observatory is monitoring leaks from oil and gas installations in 36 Countries. As conflicts continue across the World, UNEP keeps sustaining the recovery efforts and provide recommendations for reversing environmental damage in the Gaza Strip, Ukraine and Sudan.

## **UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)**

### *Palestine: UN rights chief highlights suffering, atrocity crimes 'that remain unpunished'*

On 26 February, the UN rights chief Volker Türk highlighted the “human-made disaster” across the Occupied Palestinian Territory stemming from Israel’s disregard for human rights norms and serious violations also committed by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.

Citing a new report from his office (OHCHR) covering the 12 months to 31 October 2025, High Commissioner Türk said that Israel had “continued attacks on residential buildings and makeshift tents, destroying entire neighbourhoods”.

“Mass civilian deaths” resulted from the Israeli attacks, the UN rights chief noted, with more than 25,500 Palestinians killed in the space of one year, and more than 68,800 injured. A total of 2,435 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli military near food collection points run by the non-UN Gaza Humanitarian Foundation between late May and early October, Mr. Türk also said, adding that most were young men and boys. In the West Bank, Israeli security forces “continued to launch airstrikes and use unlawful force, killing hundreds of Palestinians,” he added.

Since last October’s fragile ceasefire, more than 600 Palestinians have been killed with over 1,600 injured in Gaza, according to local authorities. “Anywhere else, this would be considered a major crisis,” the rights chief said.

## **UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH (UNIDIR)**

### *Guns are fuelling sexual violence in Haiti*

In the past years, Haiti has been facing a “triple crisis”, with escalating insecurity, political paralysis and depending humanitarian needs. The situations continue to deteriorate, with gangs using violence to control critical infrastructures and disrupt essential services. These gangs have systematically used sexual and gender-based violence to control territory, carry out reprisal and intimidate the population. Only in the last year, UN has verified more than 1,400 incidents of sexual violence by armed actors. Sexual violence is facilitated by widespread access to smuggled military-grade weapons and ammunition. To tackle the situation, the Security Council adopted a resolution transforming the existing multinational security mission into a Gang Suppression Force: the new GSF has mandate to use necessary measures to counter gangs, seize firearms and provide Haitian authorities with expertise and training.

### *Strengthening Guinea’s framework for weapons and ammunition*

The proliferation of illicit conventional arms and ammunition in West Africa keeps posing a significant threat to State and human security. Recognizing these challenges, Guinea undertook a national policy plan using UNIDIR’s reference methodology to systematically review institutional and operational capacities. The new policy underlines and strengthens coordination mechanisms between authorities, transfer controls and stockpile management, marking, record keeping and tracing of the weapons.

## **UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)**

### *A/HRC/61/31: Human rights of migrants - Report of the Secretary-General (Advance edited version)*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/217, on the protection of migrants, in which the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council a comprehensive report entitled “Human rights of migrants”, covering all aspects of the implementation of the resolution.

The report is focused on issues related to the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants addressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 78/217 and summarizes information received from States regarding the implementation of the resolution, incorporating submissions from other stakeholders as appropriate.

Migration is a deeply human phenomenon, a constant in history, shaped by people’s aspirations for safety, dignity, opportunity and belonging. At its core, migration is not simply a matter of numbers, management or control. It is a question of lives, families and futures in motion.

The Global Compact offers a comprehensive, cooperative approach to international migration rooted in obligations under international human rights law. Through its 23 objectives, the Global Compact outlines concrete, rights-based policy and measures addressing all aspects of migration governance. Notably, the Global Compact’s focus on migrants in situations of vulnerability represented a transformative shift in global migration governance, and recognition that such situations require targeted, evidence-based and coordinated interventions.

In its resolution 78/217, the General Assembly provided parameters and guidance in this regard, emphasizing the multidimensional character of international migration and the importance of international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue, and calling upon States to address international migration through a comprehensive and balanced approach, consistent with their international human rights obligations, in order to avoid approaches that might aggravate migrants' vulnerability.

## **UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME (UNODC)**

### *UN drug alert stops shipment that could have made 1.6 billion lethal fentanyl doses*

An international early warning system blocked a shipment of chemicals used to make fentanyl that could have produced up to 1.6 billion potentially lethal doses.

The interception highlights the vital role of cooperation in tackling the rapidly evolving illegal drugs trade.

The INCB is an independent, quasi-judicial body mandated to monitor implementation of the three international drug control conventions – adopted in 1961, 1971 and 1988 – which form the backbone of the global drug control system.

Under these treaties, Governments provide it with estimates and statistical reports to monitor the cultivation, manufacture and trade of controlled substances, with the aim of ensuring their availability for medical and scientific purposes only.

According to the report, the efficiency of this system has kept the diversion of legitimately produced narcotic drugs into illicit markets “very low,” while diversion of psychotropic substances – such as heroin and other opioids – has “virtually stopped.”

Despite such cooperation, the Board warns that trafficking networks are adapting rapidly.

Cocaine trafficking remains the fastest-growing illicit drug market, with increased production in South America driving expansion into Asia and Africa.

In Europe, cocaine trafficking to Western and Central Europe has “dramatically increased,” while the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs continues to expand.

In North America, synthetic drug overdoses decreased by 17 per cent in Canada and 27 per cent in the United States, but the Board cautioned that it is “too early to assess whether the decrease will develop into a sustained trend.”

In Africa, trafficking in pharmaceutical opioids – including substandard products – is described as the drug-related issue of greatest concern, while the South Asian region accounts for one third of the world's estimated opioid users.

## **UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNPFA)**

### *The Escalation Crisis in South Sudan is a threat for women and girls*

The United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) has expressed grave concern regarding the escalating violence in Jonglei State, South Sudan. This intensification of conflict is having a profound and detrimental effect on women and girls across the region. By mid-February, the violence had resulted in the closure or destruction of at least 12 health facilities. Essential medical equipment has been

seized, further compounding the crisis. With maternity services significantly disrupted, many women are forced to give birth without access to skilled medical support, placing both mothers and newborns at heightened risk. Since the beginning of the year, over 370,000 people have been displaced, including 280,000 from Jonglei State alone. The displacement has disproportionately affected women and girls, who now face increased risks of gender-based violence. Access to protection and essential care remains extremely limited for these vulnerable groups. In response to the crisis, UNFPA is supporting calls for immediate measures to safeguard civilians. The fund emphasises the urgent need to protect vital infrastructure and ensure unhindered humanitarian access, so that lifesaving aid and services can reach those most in need.

## **UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)**

### *UNRWA situation report n. 210*

The entry of humanitarian supplies from Egypt has remained critically low in recent weeks, due to high rejection rates by Israeli authorities. UNRWA has raised an alarm over what it calls possible ethnic cleansing by Israeli authorities in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, citing intensified violence, destruction, and forcible transfers aimed at the permanent displacement of Palestinians. UNRWA facilities continue to serve as collective emergency shelters for thousands of internally displaced people, despite severe conflict-related damage that has, in some cases, created additional risks and hazards for those seeking refuge. UNRWA is working on additional measures related to the safety of its shelters, including developing awareness-raising posters for installations, allocating funding for repairs, working with communities, identifying at-risk populations in shelters, and outreach to different clusters, to mitigate these risks. UN teams reported a sharp increase in ectoparasitic skin infections (including scabies and head lice) and waterborne diseases. Overcrowding, deteriorated fabric partitions and other shelter materials, and inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities have created a high-transmission environment. Around 11,000 Palestinian UNRWA personnel continue to provide services and assistance to Gaza's entire population in need. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, UNRWA continues to play a central role with over 4,000 UNRWA Palestinian personnel providing education, health, and other services to Palestine Refugees.

## **UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL**

### *Resolution 2816 (2026): Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (1988 Committee)*

On 16 February, the Security Council extended for 12 months the mandate of the team tasked with monitoring sanctions against the Taliban and its associated groups and individuals, as members disagreed over references to human rights and the situation of Afghanistan's women and girls under Taliban rule.

Unanimously adopting resolution 2816 (2026) under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the 15-member organ decided that all States will continue to implement the sanctions measures laid out in Resolution 2155 (2015). Those are imposed both on the Taliban and related "individuals, groups, undertakings and entities" that threaten Afghanistan's peace, stability and security.

It further renewed the mandate of the monitoring team charged with assisting the Afghanistan Sanctions Committee, which was first established in resolution 1988 (2011), for a period of 12 months from the date of its expiration this month.

Among other tasks, the Council directed the monitoring team to gather information on instances of non-compliance with sanctions, keep the Committee informed of such instances and to provide recommendations on actions to respond to non-compliance

## UN WOMEN

### *Concerns on the Decree no. 12 issued by the de facto authorities in Afghanistan*

UN Women expresses profound concern over the implications of Decree No. 12, issued by the *de facto* authorities in Afghanistan. Afghan women and girls are entitled to fundamental rights, including the right to live free from violence and discrimination. These rights encompass dignity, safety, liberty of movement, and the ability to participate in public life. It is essential that the legal framework of any country upholds equality before the law, protects women from all forms of violence, and ensures their meaningful access to justice without discrimination. Decree No. 12 formally abolishes the principle of equality between men and women before the law. The decree places husbands in a position of authority over their wives, thereby restricting women's autonomy and ability to seek protection or justice when faced with abuse or violence. Under the provisions of the decree, a husband is only considered criminally liable for violence within marriage if he inflicts severe and visible physical injuries. Other forms of violence, including psychological and sexual abuse, are not explicitly prohibited. This severely limits women's legal protection and access to justice. Women who seek justice for abuse face significant obstacles under Decree No. 12, especially when compounded by existing decrees. To pursue a case, women must prove abuse before a male judge, remain fully covered, and be accompanied by a male guardian—who may in some cases be the perpetrator of the violence. Such requirements impede women's ability to obtain justice and protection. The decree allows authorities to imprison women, or their relatives, for frequently visiting a relative's home without their husband's permission. Furthermore, acts deemed 'immoral' or 'corrupt' are defined as crimes, punishable by the harshest penalties, including death. Women are particularly vulnerable under these provisions, as they are already subject to intense monitoring within their communities and must comply with numerous restrictive decrees. Decree No. 12 criminalises criticism of *de facto* officials, their policies, or their interpretation of Sharia law. Penalties for such criticism include imprisonment or corporal punishment. These measures further restrict women's participation in public spaces and their ability to advocate for their rights.