

## COURT OF JUSTICE OF EUROPEAN UNION (CJEU)

*Restrictive measures in respect of Russia: the freezing of funds prevents, absolutely and unconditionally, the holder of a depositary receipt from attending a general meeting of shareholders and from voting in that meeting*

The case concerns the application of EU restrictive measures adopted against Sberbank in the context of the sanctions imposed following Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. As SBK Art is an indirect subsidiary of Sberbank, its assets were also subject to the freezing of funds under EU law.

Within this framework, STAK, a Dutch entity responsible for holding and managing shares in Fortenova GroupTopCo, issued depositary receipts and distributed dividends to their holders, including SBK Art, which held a significant share. However, STAK decided that holders subject to sanctions would be excluded from exercising the rights attached to those instruments, in particular the right to participate in and vote at shareholders' meetings. SBK Art challenged this exclusion before the Dutch courts, leading to conflicting decisions at national level and ultimately to a request for interpretation of EU law before the Court of Justice of the European Union.

In its judgment, the Court clarified the scope of the concept of "freezing of funds," holding that it prevents, in an absolute and unconditional manner, sanctioned persons or entities from attending general meetings and exercising voting rights linked to depositary receipts.

The Court reasoned that such certificates qualify as "funds" under EU law and that the exercise of the rights they confer—such as participation and voting—constitutes a form of "use of funds." Moreover, even indirect effects of these actions, including potential changes in the value, ownership, or characteristics of the underlying assets, fall within the prohibition. Consequently, allowing participation or voting would undermine the effectiveness of the restrictive measures, which aim to prevent any economic benefit or control deriving from frozen assets.

## EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY (FRONTEX)

*€374,000 in undeclared cash found concealed in jacket at –Serbia-Bulgaria border*

On March 11, 2026, a joint operation involving Serbian Border Police, Serbian Customs, and Frontex led to the seizure of over €374,000 in undeclared currency at the Gradina border crossing between Serbia and Bulgaria. The detection occurred during a secondary inspection of a German-registered vehicle heading toward Bulgaria, occupied by a German and a Turkish national. Officers discovered that the driver had concealed €195,000 within a jacket specifically modified with handmade internal compartments, while a further search of the luggage revealed an additional €179,000 and \$7,500.

Although the driver claimed the funds were intended for construction materials in Turkey, the failure to declare the cash violated strict legal thresholds. Under both Serbian law and EU regulations, any traveler carrying €10,000 or more must declare it to customs authorities. Aleš Cvetek, Frontex Contingent Commander, emphasized that intercepting such funds is a critical strike against organized crime and money laundering before the capital can enter the formal financial system.

Following the seizure by Serbian Customs, both individuals were detained by the Serbian Border Police and are now subject to a criminal investigation. This successful intervention highlights the effectiveness of the Frontex Standing Corps working alongside national authorities to apply strategic risk analysis and targeted inspections at key external border points.

*Estonian Border Guard vessel taking part in a Frontex joint operation in Greece capsized*

On March 16, 2026, an Estonian Border Guard vessel deployed for a Frontex joint operation capsized and subsequently sank in the Eastern Mediterranean near the island of Megisti. The incident occurred during the afternoon hours, involving five individuals on board: the Estonian crew, a local officer, and the Estonian

Ambassador to Greece. All occupants sustained injuries during the accident but were able to exit the vessel and signal for help.

A swift evacuation was coordinated by the Hellenic Coast Guard. Four individuals were airlifted by helicopter to Rhodes for urgent medical treatment, while one person was treated locally. Currently, two Estonian crew members remain in the hospital in serious but stable condition, while the Ambassador's injuries have been reported as minor.

Frontex is currently collaborating with both Estonian and Greek authorities to determine the exact cause of the capsizing. While the primary focus remains on the recovery and wellbeing of the personnel involved, a formal investigation into the circumstances of the accident is underway. This event highlights the inherent risks faced by the Standing Corps and national authorities during maritime border security missions.

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

### *Supporting humanitarian mine action efforts around the world*

The Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) plays a central role in supporting humanitarian mine action worldwide, contributing to post-conflict recovery by reducing the risks posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Through substantial funding, the European Union has supported operations across multiple regions, enabling displaced populations to return home, restoring agricultural activities, and facilitating the reconstruction of essential infrastructure.

FPI interventions combine direct clearance of contaminated land with broader efforts to strengthen national capacities, including institutional development, coordination mechanisms, and the provision of modern equipment and training. In several contexts, such as Armenia and Ukraine, these actions have led to the release of vast areas of land, the neutralisation of explosive hazards, and significant improvements in safety and economic recovery. In Ukraine in particular, widespread contamination caused by the conflict has made demining essential for civilian protection and the revival of agricultural production.

In highly affected regions such as Syria, Gaza Strip and the West Bank, FPI supports the United Nations Mine Action Service in conducting clearance operations, risk education, and coordination activities. These efforts are crucial for enabling humanitarian access, protecting civilians, and laying the groundwork for future recovery and reconstruction. Particular attention is also given to community engagement and awareness-raising to reduce risks among vulnerable populations.

Similar initiatives are carried out in Libya and Lebanon, where mine action activities focus on clearing contaminated areas, strengthening local institutions, and supporting affected communities, including through victim assistance and rehabilitation measures.

Overall, FPI's approach integrates operational, institutional, and innovative components, including the promotion of new technologies and inclusive practices, with the aim of making mine action more effective, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of affected populations worldwide.

## EUROPEAN COUNCIL

### *Human rights in Iran: Council extends sanctions regime until April 2027*

The Council of the European Union has decided to prolong restrictive measures in response to serious human rights violations in Iran.

These measures include travel bans, asset freezes, and restrictions on the export of equipment that could be used for internal repression or for monitoring telecommunications. Additionally, EU individuals and companies are prohibited from making funds or economic resources available to those listed.

As part of the review of these sanctions, the Council also removed one deceased individual from the list, which now includes a substantial number of individuals and entities subject to these restrictive measures.

### *European Council conclusions on Middle East*

The European Council expresses deep concern over the escalating situation in Iran and the broader region, highlighting the serious risks posed to both regional and global security. It calls for de-escalation, restraint, and full respect for international law, while strongly condemning Iran's military actions and urging it and its allies to cease attacks and respect the sovereignty of other states. The EU also emphasizes the need to strengthen defensive capabilities among its partners and to safeguard key areas such as maritime routes, particularly the Strait of Hormuz. At the same time, it reaffirms its commitment to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and calls for renewed cooperation with international monitoring bodies, alongside condemning internal repression and human rights violations.

Regarding the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, the European Council reiterates its support for a peaceful resolution based on the two-state solution involving Israel and Palestine. It expresses grave concern over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, calling for immediate access to aid, protection of civilians, and compliance with international law. It also condemns unilateral actions in the West Bank, including settlement expansion and violence against Palestinian civilians, and supports further measures against extremist actors. The EU commits to contributing to Gaza's reconstruction and to strengthening the Palestinian Authority.

In relation to Lebanon, the European Council voices concern over increasing hostilities and their impact on civilians, calling for de-escalation and respect for sovereignty. It condemns attacks carried out by Hezbollah and supports efforts by Lebanese authorities to restore control over their territory. The EU reaffirms its support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and stresses that attacks against peacekeepers are unacceptable violations of international law.

Overall, the European Council underscores its commitment to regional stability, the protection of civilians, and the use of diplomatic, legal, and operational tools to address ongoing conflicts and their wider consequences.

## EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### *Judgment Petrov v. Republic of Moldova - Informal caste system among prisoners indicative of structural issue in Moldovan prisons, application no. 38066/18 – 05/03/2026*

The Petrov case against the Republic of Moldova concerned the complainant's complaint regarding the "caste" system in force in Moldovan prisons, linked to an informal hierarchy of prisoners. The complainant had been demoted to the "lowest marginalized group" and subjected to humiliating treatment and forced labour by fellow prisoners. In the Chamber's ruling, the ECHR unanimously ruled that two violations occurred, the first violation of Article 3 (prohibition of degrading treatment), with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the Convention, and one violation of Article 4 § 2 (prohibition of forced labor). The Court noted that the prison system of the Republic of Moldova faces a structural issue related to the existence of an informal hierarchy of prisoners. It was found that the complainant had suffered degrading treatment from fellow prisoners for years and that the authorities had not taken any appropriate measures to protect him despite their knowledge of the situation. The Court also found that the work required of the complainant by other detainees because of his status amounted to "forced or compulsory labour". Lastly, it considered that the impact of the present case went beyond the individual situation of the complainant and, pursuant to article 46 of the Convention (binding force and enforcement of decisions), called upon the Government to take appropriate general measures to resolve the systemic issue that had led to the current findings of violation.

### *Judgment Kaganovskyy v. Ukraine (No. 2) - Lack of appropriate safeguards surrounding stay in social care home of man who lacked capacity, application no. 5694/19 – 05/03/2026*

The case of Kaganovskyy v. Ukraine (No. 2) concerned the stay of a man, with a long history of psychiatric illness and deemed to lack capacity, in a State-run social welfare home. In the Chamber's ruling on the case, the Court unanimously held that there had been a violation of Article 5 § 1 (right to liberty and security) of the Convention. Furthermore, it argues that Mr. Kaganovskyy had been deprived of his liberty, that his detention had not been accompanied by sufficient safeguards against arbitrariness and did not fall within the terms of the Convention. International standards require that the detention of persons lacking capacity be accompanied by appropriate

procedural safeguards, namely judicial authorization. No formal decision had ever been issued in relation to the subject's deprivation of liberty, and furthermore no psychiatric evaluation had been carried out during the period in question, making it impossible to ascertain whether, at that time, his mental disorder had been of a type or degree sufficient to justify mandatory imprisonment. The Court also found, unanimously, that there had been a violation of article 5 § 4 (right to have the lawfulness of detention decided expeditiously by a court) and a violation of article 5 § 5 (enforceable right to compensation in the event of a violation of the above provisions).

*Judgment Manjani v. Albania - Refusal to admit candidate to School of Magistrates on account of spent conviction received as a minor, application no. 32283/23 – 10/03/2026*

The Manjani v. Albania case concerned an incident that occurred in 2020, the refusal to admit the applicant to the Magistrates' School for Public Prosecutor Training due to a conviction he received when he was a minor, for which he had been legally rehabilitated. His appeals against that decision were unsuccessful, as national courts found that the legislation prohibited those convicted by final decision from becoming prosecutors. In the Chamber's judgment, the Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention. The Court pointed out that the refusal to admit Mr. Manjani at the Magistrates' School had as his only reason his previous conviction for a crime committed as a minor despite his legal rehabilitation. The Court held that the national authorities had not carried out a thorough and individualised analysis of the circumstances relevant to the ban on Mr. Manjani to the Magistrates' School and, consequently, to a career as a magistrate despite having all the appropriate qualifications. They had ignored the fact that he was only 15 years old at the time of the crime in question and had treated him the same way they would treat an adult offender. Moreover, they had not considered other relevant circumstances, such as the non-violent and impulsive nature of the offence. The court concludes by stating, therefore, that the ban on admission to the Magistrates' School had been disproportionate.

*Judgment B.G. v. France - Violation of right to fair trial by caution measure, application no. 70945/17 – 19/03/2026*

In the Chamber's judgment in B.G. v. France, the European Court unanimously held that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial) of the Convention. The case mainly concerned the failure to guarantee the right to a fair trial during the “cautionary” proceedings initiated by the prosecutor against the complainant on false rape charges. The complainant, who was 16 at the time, had reported a 17-year-old to the police for rape. After the investigation into this complaint was discontinued, the accused's mother reported the complainant to the police for making a false accusation. The Court stressed the importance and difficulty of establishing the existence of consent considering all surrounding circumstances. In that regard, she noted that the complainant had been granted an alternative to prosecution designating her as the author of a false accusation following the discontinuation of the investigation into her rape complaint. However, she had not admitted the crime, nor had she ever renounced the various guarantees provided for in Article 6 § 1 of the Convention. The Court concluded that the case had involved two successive and inseparable sets of proceedings, namely those that had led to the decision to discontinue the investigation into the rape complaint and those that had culminated in the issuance of a warning for false accusation. In those circumstances, there had been a violation of article 6 § 1 of the Convention, which applied, in its criminal form, to the entire sequence of proceedings.

*Judgment D.M. v. Sweden - real risk of ill-treatment facing Afghan national if deported not fully assessed by authorities, application no. 32694/23 – 26/03/2026*

D.M. v. Sweden concerned an order for the expulsion of an Afghan citizen from Sweden. His removal was ordered because he was not entitled to a residence permit in Sweden after several rejected asylum applications since 2015. In the Chamber's ruling, the Court unanimously ruled that there would be a violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) of the Convention if the expulsion order against the appellant, Mr. DM, were enforced. It was necessary to determine if there was a genuine possibility of ill-treatment based on all relevant factors, taken together and in the context of the general situation of the country in question. The Court further stated that, although serious, the overall security and human rights situation in Afghanistan was not in itself sufficient to conclude that any transfer to that country would necessarily violate Article 3. However, the applicant faced greater

risks due to his Hazara ethnicity. It was also at risk because over the past decade it had adapted to the Western way of life in Sweden, especially bearing in mind the current repressive regime in Afghanistan, which severely punished any failure to comply with the rules and restrictions in place. His behavior during that time could be considered a violation of religious and moral norms in Afghanistan. The Court concluded that the cumulative effect of his personal circumstances, in the context of the general human rights situation in Afghanistan, would create a real risk of ill-treatment in the event of the complainant's expulsion.

## EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY (EDA)

### *Member States expand access to the maritime surveillance network*

the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) signed a pivotal agreement granting broader access to MARSUR III, the latest iteration of the EU's maritime surveillance network. This new arrangement replaces the 2021 framework and extends system access to the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and various operational naval headquarters. The expansion follows a successful 2025 pilot at the EUNAVFOR MED IRINI headquarters in Rome, which demonstrated the system's effectiveness in live operational contexts.

The agreement allows the EEAS to operate dedicated terminals, enabling staff to exchange real-time maritime data—including ship tracking and alerts—directly with European navies. As an EDA-managed project, MARSUR III facilitates the automated exchange of information among 16 participating Member States. This technological layer supports the broader MARSUR community, a voluntary cooperation framework established in 2005 that now includes 23 nations.

By integrating these advanced surveillance capabilities into the MPCC's oversight, the EU significantly strengthens its maritime domain awareness. This streamlined data flow ensures that military missions are supported by high-fidelity technical support and interoperable reporting, reinforcing the security of European waters and the efficiency of joint naval missions.

### *EDA to coordinate ammunition qualification tests*

The European Defence Agency (EDA) announced its coordination of the Joint Ammunition Qualification (JAQ) program, supported by €50 million from the European Commission under the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP). This initiative is designed to streamline the testing and approval processes for ammunition among participating countries, with an initial focus on 155 mm artillery ammunition, a top priority for Member States.

Currently, every Member State utilizes its own independent procedures to verify the safety and performance of ammunition. Consequently, manufacturers supplying multiple nations must often repeat the same testing and approval cycles to comply with varying national rules. JAQ aims to introduce common procedures so that ammunition tested in one Member State is recognized across the others, eliminating the need for redundant re-testing. The primary goal is to establish a unified EU-level qualification framework to reduce delays, lower costs, and enhance the ability of armed forces to utilize identical ammunition in joint operations.

This program builds upon two decades of EDA expertise in Test and Evaluation (T&E). Throughout this period, the Agency has shifted the focus from purely national testing toward a more coordinated European approach by identifying relevant standards and linking test centers across the continent. By applying these established methods to ammunition through JAQ, the EDA continues its mission to reduce duplication and improve interoperability within the European defense sector.

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### *Child sexual abuse online: voluntary detection measures will not be extended*

The European Parliament rejected a proposal by the European Commission to extend a temporary derogation from the ePrivacy rules, which allowed service providers to voluntarily detect child sexual abuse in private online communications.

Although Parliament had previously supported a more limited and shorter extension, aimed at ensuring that such measures remained proportionate and targeted, no agreement was ultimately reached with the Council. As a result, the interim framework enabling these voluntary detection practices will lapse, leaving a regulatory gap pending the adoption of a comprehensive long-term legal framework to address and combat online child sexual abuse.

## EUROPEAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE (EPPO)

### *Customs and VAT fraud are reshaping the criminal ecosystem in the EU, with €45 billion in estimated damage uncovered by EPPO*

In 2025, the European Public Prosecutor's Office recorded a significant increase in its investigative activity, reaching 3,602 active investigations (+35% compared to 2024) and an estimated total damage of €67.27 billion, almost three times the previous year. The largest share of the damage relates to revenue fraud, particularly VAT and customs duties, which alone account for more than two thirds of the total, highlighting a structured criminal sector that has long been underestimated. During the year, 2,030 new investigations were opened, while expenditure-related fraud (EU funds and subsidies), although representing the majority of cases, has a smaller impact on the overall financial damage. There was also a significant increase in investigations linked to the Recovery and Resilience Facility, confirming the high risk of fraud associated with the disbursement of EU funds. On the judicial side, the conviction rate is close to 95%, with an increase in indictments and a strengthening of precautionary asset measures, including seizures and asset freezing. At the same time, the number of crime reports has grown, mainly from private individuals and national authorities, showing increased awareness and trust in the EPPO's work. The investigations also reveal a transformation of organized crime, increasingly focused on complex fraud schemes in the trade of legitimate goods, often on an international scale and involving large criminal networks, making such activities difficult to detect at the purely national level.

### *Investigation Carosello: EPPO investigates large-scale VAT carousel fraud in the IT sector in Italy*

At the request of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the Italian Financial Police carried out a seizure of assets worth over €32 million in an investigation into a suspected VAT carousel fraud in the IT sector involving five companies. The measure was ordered by the Judge for Preliminary Investigations in Naples and concerns a scheme allegedly based on shell companies used to simulate transactions and obtain unlawful tax advantages. The investigation identified invoices for non-existent transactions exceeding €500 million, allegedly used to generate fake VAT credits and reduce tax liabilities. In many cases, the goods were never physically moved, remaining in the same locations despite multiple recorded transactions. The seizure covered company shares, business units and an industrial warehouse, up to the stated value. The case is part of a broader investigation into a criminal network specializing in intra-EU VAT fraud, involving 64 suspects. All individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

### *Slovakia: EPPO conducts searches in investigation into suspected misuse of EU funds for digitalisation project*

The European Public Prosecutor's Office, through its Bratislava office, is investigating suspected EU subsidy fraud involving an IT project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The beneficiary company allegedly received about €189,380 to develop a digital tool, but there are suspicions that the project was not carried out in line with the grant agreement, leading to possible misuse of EU funds. During searches in Košice and Rožňava, investigators seized computers, project-related documents, procurement records, software, and other digital evidence. The operation was supported by the Office for the Fight against Organized Crime in Košice. All individuals involved are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

## EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE COOPERATION (EUROJUST)

### *Financial crime investigation culminates in arrests and frozen assets of high value*

An international operation coordinated by Eurojust led to the arrest of two individuals suspected of serious economic and financial crimes, causing losses of tens of millions of euros. More than 400 investigators from six countries participated, carrying out searches at 49 properties. The suspects are under investigation for bankruptcy fraud, embezzlement, and breaches of accounting obligations. The main suspect allegedly transferred large sums of personal assets before insolvency proceedings, concealing millions of euros. Authorities seized electronic devices, documents, valuables, and cash during the searches. The operation was centrally coordinated to ensure simultaneous action across countries, and the investigation continues in Germany based on the collected evidence.

### *International operation hits supply chain of migrant smugglers*

Authorities from Belgium, Germany, and the UK, with the support of Eurojust and Europol, are targeting a migrant smuggling network operating across the English Channel. The investigation, launched in 2025, led to the arrest of four individuals suspected of organizing the supply of nautical equipment used for dangerous crossings. The criminal scheme involved importing equipment from Asia via Türkiye into Germany, where it was assembled into packages including inflatable boats, engines, and flotation devices. These kits were then sold to smuggling networks in France, generating profits of up to €100,000 per boat. In 2025, over 41,000 migrants reached the UK via the Channel, with more than 31 fatalities. The operation was coordinated across jurisdictions, enabling cooperation and information exchange, including the use of European Arrest Warrants and Investigation Orders. Seizures included cash, boats, weapons, and mobile phones, while investigations into the broader network continue.

### *Eurojust marks 20th Consultative Forum: Europe's top prosecutors shape the future of judicial cooperation*

Prosecutors General and Directors of Public Prosecutions from EU Member States gathered at the headquarters of Eurojust in The Hague for the 20th Consultative Forum. The event serves as a key platform to address challenges linked to transnational and organised crime and to discuss the future of judicial cooperation in Europe. A central topic is the development of Eurojust's "Vision 2035," which will define the agency's strategic direction for the coming decade, with input from national prosecution services. Discussions also focused on a possible revision of Eurojust's legal framework following an EU Commission evaluation, aiming to strengthen cross-border investigations and international cooperation. The Forum thus plays a crucial role in shaping the future tools and strategies of judicial cooperation, ensuring Eurojust remains responsive to evolving criminal threats and operational needs.

### *Servers used for cybercrime around the world taken down*

A website offering IP proxy services for cybercriminals across 102 countries was dismantled in an international operation involving authorities from eight countries, coordinated with the support of Eurojust and Europol. The investigation began after identifying victims of malware used to compromise devices and build a global proxy network. The service relied on over 369,000 infected devices in 163 countries, had around 124,000 users, and generated more than €5 million through anonymous cryptocurrency payments. The infrastructure included servers located in multiple countries and an associated payment platform. The coordinated action led to the takedown of 24 servers, the seizure of 34 domains, and the freezing of about €3.5 million in cryptocurrency, while the infected devices were disconnected from the service.

### *Judicial cooperation key to arresting leaders of online fraud group*

A criminal group suspected of running an online fraud scheme in Germany, causing losses of around €1 million, has been dismantled following coordination by Eurojust. Cross-border cooperation between France and Germany was essential, as the alleged leader was located in France. During a joint action day on 10 March, authorities arrested three suspects. The main suspect was detained in France and is awaiting a decision on surrender to Germany under a European Arrest Warrant. Assets, including cryptocurrency and jewellery, were seized, with investigations

supported by a European Investigation Order. The group allegedly used phishing techniques to access victims' banking credentials and transfer funds to cryptocurrency accounts to conceal them. Investigations continue based on the evidence collected.

## EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (FRA)

### *EU gender-based violence survey results presented to UN experts on statistics on children*

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) presented selected findings from the EU survey on gender-based violence during a meeting of experts convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in collaboration with UNICEF.

Within this context, the group of experts engaged in a substantive discussion on the ongoing development of a minimum set of indicators aimed at improving the statistical monitoring of children in vulnerable situations, including those exposed to violence, those placed in alternative care, and children with disabilities. Particular attention was also devoted to the emerging need to strengthen the measurement of children's mental health, an area increasingly recognized as central to child well-being and policy intervention.

The expert meeting was followed by a session of the TransMonEE Network, which brought together national statistical institutes with the objective of enhancing the overall quality and usability of data on children. Discussions focused on improving data coverage, ensuring greater disaggregation, and fostering accessibility, with a view to supporting more evidence-based and targeted policymaking processes.

Held in Geneva from 4 to 6 March, the meetings underscored the critical role of robust and harmonized data systems in informing policies aimed at safeguarding children's rights and addressing gender-based violence in a comprehensive and effective manner.

## EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION (EUROPOL)

### *Major operation targets one of Scotland's most violent crime networks*

A major international operation coordinated by Europol and Eurojust targeted one of Scotland's most violent organised crime networks involved in drug trafficking and money laundering. On 27 March 2026, 13 suspects were arrested in Spain and the United Kingdom for allegedly importing large quantities of cocaine into Scotland and laundering millions in criminal profits. The group maintained control through violence and intimidation, while senior leaders operated from abroad, particularly in Spain and the United Arab Emirates, managing operations and finances. Asset seizures in Türkiye included real estate and company shares, alongside coordinated searches across multiple countries. The investigation, ongoing since 2020 and reinforced in 2024 through a dedicated task force, enabled authorities to map the network's structure and international operations using large-scale data and encrypted communications analysis. Authorities continue to investigate related violent incidents linked to the group.

### *The grip on migrant smuggling tightens: new department at Europol to step up the fight*

Europol has launched the European Centre Against Migrant Smuggling (ECAMS), strengthening the EU's response to increasingly global and digitally active migrant smuggling networks. The centre combines intelligence, advanced analytics, and operational coordination to identify and dismantle criminal networks, with a strong focus on data-driven investigations and financial tracking. Smuggling networks operate through complex structures, using online platforms to recruit and deceive migrants while relying on underground financial systems to manage profits. ECAMS enhances digital investigations, including through tools like DigiNeX, and strengthens international cooperation across migration routes. Europol's support has already led to thousands of arrests and dismantled networks; in 2025 alone, it processed over 12,000 intelligence inputs and supported numerous operations. ECAMS aims to disrupt the entire criminal business model, targeting profits that can reach tens of thousands of euros per migrant, while reinforcing prevention and global collaboration.

### *Global cybercrime crackdown: over 373 000 dark web sites shut down*

In March 2026, a major international operation led by German authorities and supported by Europol targeted a large dark web criminal network responsible for over 373,000 fraudulent websites. The investigation, initiated in 2021, focused on a platform linked to child sexual abuse material and cybercrime-as-a-service, leading to the identification of one operator and 440 customers worldwide, as well as the seizure of 105 servers and multiple electronic devices. The network used onion domains to conceal its activities, falsely advertising illegal content and services in exchange for cryptocurrency payments, without delivering any service. Authorities also opened investigations into customers attempting to purchase such content, treating them as relevant targets for further intelligence. Europol played a central role in coordinating international efforts, analyzing data, and tracing cryptocurrency transactions, contributing to identifying the main perpetrator. Authorities also prioritized victim protection and continue ongoing investigations to fully dismantle the network.

### *Europol coordinates largest referral action targeting terrorist audio propaganda*

Europol coordinated one of the largest Referral Action Days targeting terrorist propaganda, involving 13 European countries. The operation, led by Europol's EU Internet Referral Unit, resulted in the referral of 17,298 URLs across 40 platforms, containing over 1,100 hours of extremist audio content. The action targeted audio propaganda linked to jihadist and violent right-wing extremist groups, including speeches, songs, and nashids used for radicalisation. Around 77% of the referred content has been removed so far. The operation highlights the growing use of audio content as a tool for spreading terrorist propaganda, as it is harder to detect and moderate compared to other formats. Europol coordinated data collection, analysis, and referrals, strengthening cooperation between Member States and online platforms to combat extremist content.

### *Europol leads international operation against environmental crime and waste trafficking*

Europol coordinated the global operation *Custos Viridis* (January–December 2025) to combat environmental crime across five continents with 71 countries and multiple international organisations. The operation targeted organised networks involved in waste trafficking, pollution, money laundering, and related crimes, with the aim of protecting the environment and public health. It involved an intelligence phase followed by large-scale enforcement actions, resulting in 1,048 inspections and 337 arrests. Seizures included over 127,000 tonnes of waste, hundreds of tonnes of hazardous substances such as fluorinated greenhouse gases and mercury, agricultural chemicals, and significant financial assets. Authorities also confiscated vehicles, machinery, and other assets tied to criminal activities. Investigations revealed complex global trafficking routes, including illegal export of waste from Europe to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as illicit imports into the EU. The operation highlighted links between environmental crime, document fraud, corruption, and financial crimes. The results confirm the scale and transnational nature of environmental crime and reinforce the need for continued international cooperation and coordinated enforcement efforts.

### *Major data leak forum dismantled in global action against cybercrime forum*

Europol coordinated an international operation that led to the dismantling of the online criminal forum *LeakBase*, which had been active since 2021 and used for trading stolen data and credentials obtained through malware. The platform was a major hub in the cybercrime ecosystem, allowing users to buy, sell, and exchange compromised information. By December 2025, it had over 142,000 registered users and a large volume of posts and messages. Between 3 and 4 March, coordinated law enforcement actions across multiple jurisdictions resulted in around 100 enforcement measures, including arrests and searches, and the identification of key users. This was followed by a technical phase in which the domain was seized and replaced with a law enforcement notice. Investigators gained access to the forum's databases, enabling the identification of individuals who believed they were operating anonymously. The operation highlighted how stolen data continues to circulate and can be reused for fraud, identity theft, and cyberattacks. The case reflects a broader strategy of international cooperation, data analysis, and coordinated enforcement to disrupt cybercrime infrastructures and identify those involved.

## IAEA

### *IAEA Mission Finds Poland Committed to Safe Management of Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel, in Line with Plans for Nuclear Power Development*

The International Atomic Energy Agency experts confirmed that Poland is making remarkable progress in the safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel, an essential part of the developing nuclear energy program in Poland. The experts of the ARTEMIS team, comprising international experts from Canada, France, Germany, Spain, and Sweden, recognized the robust national strategy developed by Poland, at the same time emphasizing the need for Poland to continue making progress in the implementation of its National Plan, as the country prepares to operate the facility by 2036.

In their report, the mission recognized that, as many of the key safety aspects are already in place, the Polish Government should now concentrate efforts on reinforcing the implementation of the plan by defining the objectives of the plan, as well as developing performance indicators. The ARTEMIS team has recommended that the Polish Government should specify the timeframe that could be allocated for the possible introduction of the "very low level waste" category, as well as develop a more comprehensive roadmap for the construction of the new facility, especially with regard to the development of human resources.

The IAEA also praised Poland's openness and commitment to international safety standards, stating that "as the first EU Member State in which the ARTEMIS peer review is a repeated exercise, Poland continues to set a benchmark in safety and accountability in radioactive waste management.

## ICAO

### *New aircraft will face stricter environmental standards*

In March 2026, the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) adopted more demanding technical standards aimed at reducing the environmental footprint of global aviation. These regulations reinforce ICAO's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 through the integration of advanced technologies and stricter certification procedures.

A central pillar of the decision is the tightening of CO<sub>2</sub> emission requirements. The standard for new aircraft type designs has been made 10% more stringent, effective as of 2031.

Noise reduction is another priority within the updated framework. New aircraft type designs will face stricter noise limits as of 2029. These standards are intended to foster innovation and investment in fuel efficiency.

## IMO

### *Global treaty on fishing vessel safety to enter into force in 2027*

The 2012 Cape Town Agreement (CTA) is expected to come into effect in February 2027, after the accession of Argentina on 24 February 2026. This is the formal completion of the requirements, with 28 contracting states, representing over 3,600 qualifying vessels. The agreement is the first that sets mandatory safety standards for fishing vessels of 24 meters and over, filling an important gap in maritime law.

The CTA is concerned with the design, construction, and equipment of vessels, including stability, lifesaving appliances, and fire protection. The agreement, by allowing flag and port states to conduct inspections, is expected to lower the high mortality rate of fishers, improve working conditions, and combat the problem of plastic pollution from lost fishing gear.

Importantly, the CTA complements three other agreements: the STCW-F Convention of the International Maritime Organization, the Work in Fishing Convention of the International Labor Organization, and the Port State Measures Agreement of the Food and Agriculture Organization, which together form the "four pillars" of the international regulatory framework of the fishing industry worldwide.

### *Statement on the Strait of Hormuz*

The International Maritime Organization has expressed deep concern after learning of a fatality and various cases of injury to seafarers as a consequence of attacks on merchant ships. While noting that no attacks on civilian ships are ever justified, the Organization has underscored that seafarers should always be protected from the effects of geo-politics. The IMO Secretary-General has considered latest seafarer deaths in the Strait unacceptable.

The main points that can be drawn from this statement include the reaffirmation of the freedom of navigation as a guiding principle in international maritime law that all parties should respect without any exceptions. As such, shipping companies are advised to take maximum precautions and avoid areas that are prone to attacks whenever possible.

The importance of using reliable sources of information to avoid misinformation has also been highlighted by the IMO. The Organization is dedicated to ensuring that the safety and welfare of civilian mariners remain the topmost priority in ensuring that global maritime security is maintained.

## INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

### *IACHR issues resolution about organized crime and human rights, 10/03/2026*

The IACHR introduced resolution 1/26, Organized crime and human rights, which aims to provide OAS member states with an updated framework on the issue. The document includes recommendations for effectively addressing organized crime, giving priority to victims and ensuring the protection of human rights in all security policies. This resolution stems from the IACHR's concerns about the exponential growth of organized crime in the Americas and its profound impact on democracies, the rule of law, and human rights. Because of this, the IACHR noted the urgent need to update its standards, to provide States with guidelines that could serve as a reference in designing comprehensive human rights-focused responses. The resolution in question recognizes the complex, serious and multidimensional nature of organized crime, as well as its multiple effects on respect for human rights. The document therefore emphasizes that effective public safety management requires globally compact, rather than individual and fragmented, policies and strategies. It promotes, therefore, social prevention, stronger and more effective administration of justice, genuine participation by victims and guarantees of comprehensive compensation. Furthermore, all measures taken to combat organized crime must comply with the provisions of international human rights law.

### *IACHR rejects ruling by Peru's Constitutional Court overturning conviction for murder of journalist Hugo Bustíos, 18/03/2026*

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights rejects the Peruvian Constitutional Court's decision to overturn the conviction in the murder of journalist Hugo Bustíos. The IACHR expresses concern at the non-compliance with the recommendations made in this case, as well as the potential impact of this decision on other prosecutions concerning serious human rights violations committed. In this context, the IACHR recalls that the Peruvian State continues to have an inalienable obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish these acts, as well as to prevent any form of impunity in the event of serious human rights violations and international crimes. According to the IACHR and its Office of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, this decision also represents a significant setback in the fight against impunity for crimes committed against the press and in the context of the armed conflict. According to journalists' associations', this was the only case involving the murder of a journalist in Peru that led to a final conviction. The overturning of the sentence weakens the message of zero tolerance for violence against journalists and undermines the right of victims and their families to seek justice, nearly four decades after the events.

### *Amid serious human rights violations and absence of democratic rule, IACHR warns of humanitarian crisis in Cuba, 25/03/2026*

The IACHR and its Special Rapporteur on economic, social, cultural and environmental rights express concern about the worsening humanitarian crisis in Cuba, in a context marked by the lack of democratic institutions and widespread, serious and systematic human rights violations. REDESCA has closely followed recent UN statements warning of the risk of humanitarian collapse and continues to monitor the situation. Since the end of 2025, a

significant worsening of conditions has been observed, linked to a sharp reduction in fuel supplies to the island and to a context of extreme social vulnerability and a critical situation for public health. This situation is exacerbated by the steady rise in food prices and widespread power outages across the country. The health system is further weakened by the heavy dependence on imported fuels, which leads to shortages of medical supplies and medicines, as well as limited diagnostic and therapeutic capacity.

The 2012 Cape Town Agreement (CTA) is expected to come into effect in February 2027, after the accession of Argentina on 24 February 2026. This is the formal completion of the requirements, with 28 contracting states, representing over 3,600 qualifying vessels. The agreement is the first that sets mandatory safety standards for fishing vessels of 24 meters and over, filling an important gap in maritime law.

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## INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

### *ICC Appeals Chamber confirms decision on inadmissibility of the case against Edmond Beina, 11/03/2026*

On March 11, 2026, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) upheld Pre-Trial Chamber II's decision on the Central African Republic's appeal for admissibility in the case against Edmond Beina. On September 12, 2025, Pre-Trial Chamber II ruled that the case against Mr. Beina before the ICC is inadmissible under Article 17 of the Rome Statute. The Pre-Trial Chamber found that the Central African Republic was willing and able to genuinely investigate and prosecute the case against Mr. Beina. The defence of Mr. Beina appealed that decision, raising five grounds of appeal. In a public judgement read in open court, the Appeals Chamber rejected the appellant's five grounds of appeal and found that the appellant did not demonstrate any error in the Pre-Trial Chamber's approach or findings. Accordingly, the Appeals Chamber upheld the decision of Pre-Trial Chamber II. The fact is that ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II had issued an arrest warrant for Mr. Beina for crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed in Guen between at least February 1<sup>o</sup> and early April 2014. On 3 May 2022, the "Cour pénale spéciale" of the Central African Republic

issued an arrest warrant for Mr. Beina. In June 2024, Mr. Beina was arrested in the Central African Republic, and in October 2024, the Central African Republic challenged the admissibility of Mr. Beina's case before the ICC.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANIZATION (INTERPOL)

### *45,000 malicious IP addresses taken down in international cyber operation*

From 19 to 23 January 2026, an international consultant from the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe conducted consultations with national stakeholders in Tajikistan on money laundering risks related to virtual assets and virtual asset service providers. The information gathered will guide future legislative and regulatory changes, supporting a risk-based approach to licensing, supervision, and compliance in line with FATF standards. The mission included meetings with the National Bank of Tajikistan and other government agencies, aiming to produce a preliminary risk assessment and strengthen the country's institutional capacity in combating money laundering.

### *INTERPOL report warns of increasingly sophisticated global financial fraud threat*

The 2026 report by INTERPOL identified financial fraud as a central and rapidly evolving threat linked to organized crime, human trafficking, and cybercrime. Artificial intelligence has significantly increased profitability and enabled fully automated fraud campaigns, while practices such as sextortion are now embedded in romance and investment scams. Criminal networks are increasingly global and collaborative, working with money laundering groups and, in some African regions, using fraud, including crypto scams, to fund terrorism. Scam centres have expanded worldwide, often involving trafficked individuals forced into criminal activities. At the same time, law enforcement cooperation has improved, with a rise in international notices and support for over 1,500 cross-border cases involving USD 1.1 billion. In response, INTERPOL launched "Operation Shadow Storm," an international task force targeting fraud and its links to other crimes, and issued guidelines for national anti-scam centres, presented at the Global Fraud Summit organized with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

### *Hope for Justice first in aid sector to implement INTERPOL safeguarding channel*

Hope for Justice has become the first aid-sector organization to implement safeguarding checks through a dedicated channel of Project Soteria by INTERPOL. The system allows candidate data to be securely screened against INTERPOL's databases and global law enforcement networks to detect individuals linked to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. The initiative addresses gaps in international recruitment processes that can allow offenders to move undetected between organizations and countries. Launched through a 2024 agreement and piloted in 2025, it strengthens information-sharing between NGOs and law enforcement while complying with data protection and human rights standards. The aim is to enhance prevention, ensure safer hiring practices, and better protect vulnerable individuals—particularly trafficking survivors and children—through closer cooperation between the humanitarian sector and police authorities.

## OPCW

### *OPCW releases landmark report on AI and the Chemical Weapons Convention*

In a landmark report released by the OPCW's Scientific Advisory Board in March 2026, the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has been evaluated. The key findings of the report indicate that AI technology is significantly affecting chemical research by virtue of molecular modelling and predictive analysis, thus providing OPCW with opportunities to improve data verification, satellite imagery, and spectral detection.

However, the report indicates that AI could reduce the threshold of designing harmful chemicals. In this respect, the Temporary Working Group of OPCW proposes measures to improve monitoring of AI technologies, facilitate dialogue with the scientific community to promote responsible innovation, and incorporate AI into training and mission preparation to address potential risks.

The aim of this approach is to utilize AI for peaceful purposes in the realm of chemistry and disarmament, while improving OPCW's verification indicators to take into account evolving technologies such as automated and remote laboratory technologies. This approach will ensure the effectiveness of the CWC against the re-emergence of chemical weapons in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

## ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

### *New OSCE Survey Report: Rising identification of human trafficking victims reflects improved detection, yet implementation gaps and a digital divide remain*

OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings released the 2026 Survey Report, the most comprehensive assessment of anti-trafficking efforts in the OSCE region. Between 2021 and 2024, around 102,000 victims were identified, including about 30,000 in 2024, reflecting both improved detection and the growing scale of the crime. Labour exploitation is the most prevalent form (32%), followed by sexual exploitation (21%) and forced criminality (17%), which is rapidly increasing. Women, girls, and children remain the most vulnerable, while gaps persist in support for men and LGBTQ+ individuals. Despite significant legislative progress, there is a clear gap between laws and their enforcement, with low conviction rates and underused financial investigations. Criminal networks are increasingly using digital tools, widening the gap between traffickers and law enforcement.

### *OSCE advances regional co-operation in countering terrorist financing in South-Eastern Europe*

OSCE Mission to Montenegro and the OSCE Transnational Threat Department, part of the OSCE, held a regional workshop in Budva (10–11 March) on countering terrorist financing in South-Eastern Europe. The workshop aimed to strengthen regional cooperation in investigations, particularly involving cryptocurrencies and emerging technologies. Participants exchanged insights on trends and engaged in practical exercises to improve coordination, information sharing, and investigative processes. Experts from organizations including Europol and FINTRAIL contributed with presentations on virtual assets, new payment methods, and real-case examples. The event concluded with recommendations to enhance cross-border cooperation and counter-terrorism financing efforts.

### *OSCE tackles the misuse of virtual assets in financial crime and human trafficking at Global Fraud Summit side event*

OSCE hosted a side event during the Global Fraud Summit to examine the use of virtual assets in fraud, human trafficking, and related financial crimes, bringing together law enforcement, financial intelligence units, international organizations, and the private sector. The discussion highlighted how cryptocurrencies and digital tools are exploited by criminal networks to expand operations, linking fraud schemes with trafficking and financial crime. A coordinated, cross-sector response focusing on victim protection and enhanced detection capabilities was emphasized. Participants stressed the importance of international cooperation and public-private partnerships to strengthen investigations and disrupt illicit financial flows, alongside new guidance to support the identification of trafficking cases involving virtual assets.

### *OSCE study visit strengthens Ukrainian-Belgian co-operation in countering cross-border trafficking via vehicle concealment*

OSCE organized a study visit in Brussels (10–13 March) to strengthen Ukrainian authorities' capacity to combat illicit trafficking. The visit involved Ukraine's Border Guard, National Police, and Customs Service, focusing on detecting hidden compartments in vehicles used for smuggling weapons and drugs. Belgian experts shared detection techniques, training methods, and legal frameworks, emphasizing international cooperation and information exchange. The program included practical workshops and exercises to provide hands-on operational experience. The initiative aims to improve inter-agency coordination and enhance border security in Ukraine and the OSCE region. It is part of an OSCE project funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

### *Are OSCE countries making progress on combating trafficking in human beings? Launch of the 2026 Survey Report*

OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings announced the launch of the 2026 Survey Report, presented on 23 March in Vienna, providing the most comprehensive assessment of anti-trafficking efforts in the OSCE region. The report identifies around 102,000 victims between 2021 and 2024 and highlights a sharp rise in emerging forms of exploitation, particularly online sexual exploitation, increasing from 9 cases in 2021 to 1,665 in 2025. Despite legislative progress, a gap remains between laws and their implementation, especially in child protection, where practical measures are declining. The findings stress the need to strengthen investigative and prosecutorial responses as trafficking continues to evolve faster than enforcement capacity.

### *Moldovan authorities team up with OSCE and INTERPOL to stop crypto-crime*

OSCE, in partnership with the National Institute of Justice, held a workshop in Moldova to strengthen judges' and prosecutors' skills in handling cases involving virtual assets. The sessions covered investigative techniques, admissibility of digital evidence, and blockchain analysis, with an emphasis on international cooperation. Participants highlighted the increasing number of cryptocurrency-related cases and the need for preparedness among judicial authorities. A representative from INTERPOL explained global cooperation mechanisms to trace illicit financial flows and how Moldova can benefit from such support. The initiative is part of an OSCE project aimed at mitigating money-laundering risks linked to virtual assets, funded by several European countries and the United States.

### *International and regional co-operation to combat drug trafficking focus of OSCE side event at 69th UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs Session*

OSCE Transnational Threats Department, together with CARICC, UNODC and the World Customs Organization, organized a side event in Vienna to strengthen cooperation against drug trafficking along the Trans-Caspian transport corridor. The event brought together policymakers and law enforcement to discuss evolving trafficking routes and improve information sharing across Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Europe. It emphasized the need for enhanced regional cooperation as growing trade routes may be exploited by criminal networks. The discussion highlighted the importance of coordinated efforts to ensure secure and efficient transport routes while preventing their misuse by trafficking organizations.

## UNICRI

### *EU and UNICRI Strengthen Cooperation on Asset Recovery and Social Re-use through Study Mission to the French AGRASC and PIAC*

In March 2026, the European Union (EU) and UNICRI conducted a study mission in Paris to strengthen regional cooperation on asset recovery and social re-use. Part of the "Transparency Now" project aims at enhancing their capacity to trace, seize, and manage, assets that have been illicitly acquired. The event involved officials from eight Mediterranean partner countries, including Algeria, Egypt, and Tunisia. Participants explored the centralized management of seized goods and the technicalities of international asset tracing through networks like CARIN.

A key focus of the mission was the transparent and social re-use of confiscated assets. Discussions and field visits illustrated how recovered wealth can be reinvested into public interest projects and community initiatives, reflecting the EU's commitment under the new Pact for the Mediterranean to foster security, accountability, and the rule of law through strategic regional partnerships.

## UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

### *Up to 4 million people could be pushed into poverty after escalation in Middle East*

The military escalation in Middle East is reversing more than a year of economic growth in the Arab States region, costing the economies up to 6% of their GDP. The situation exposes the concerning reality of structural vulnerabilities characteristic to the region. UNDP stresses the need of regional collaboration to diversify

economies and to expand production bases, secure trades and logistic systems. The economic losses is expected to increase poverty in the region by 5%, pushing almost 3 million people into poverty, declining Human Development Index by approximately 0.2 to 0.4 percent, corresponding to a setback of roughly half a year to nearly one year of human development progress.

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

### *Middle East: UNESCO deploys first emergency measures amid escalating violence*

Tens of millions of children across the region are facing severe educational disruption, with schools at risk, closed, or used as shelters.

To date, 65 schools have been damaged, and attacks on educational facilities and universities have resulted in fatalities among teachers and students.

UNESCO is providing emergency assistance to establish temporary learning spaces, strengthen online teaching capacity, and supply learning kits. These measures aim to ensure that displaced students can continue learning remotely.

UNESCO is also offering guidance and resources to promote mental health, well-being, and resilience among students, teachers, and parents. The Organization emphasizes that psychological safety is a prerequisite for learning, as stress and trauma impair memory, attention, motivation, and cohesion.

UNESCO will scale up psychosocial support to all countries requesting it, recognizing its critical role in maintaining educational continuity and preventing dropout, marginalization, and long-term conditions.

UNESCO will be expanding online training for heritage professionals and authorities responsible for combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property. Simulation exercises will help museums and cultural institutions anticipate risks and prepare for emergencies.

UNESCO condemns attacks on education and reiterates its calls to protect schools and other educational institutions, students, teachers, and education personnel. In line with its mandate and UN Security Council Resolution 2601 (2021), the Organization reminds all parties of their obligations to safeguard education.

### *UNESCO launches a global course to safeguard cultural property from illicit trafficking*

When cultural property is stolen, looted, or trafficked, entire communities lose pieces of their identity, history, and future. Illicit trafficking often begins with theft or illegal excavations, crimes that not only damage the objects themselves but also erase the scientific, historical, and emotional knowledge they carry.

Protecting cultural property is, therefore, not only about preserving beautiful objects - but it is also about safeguarding the knowledge, values, and creativity of past civilisations whose legacy shapes our present. These objects bear witness to human achievement and resilience and are key for the full enjoyment of cultural rights. They also inspire learning, support scientific discovery, and connect people across cultures and generations.

To strengthen international efforts in this field, UNESCO, through the Antenna in Sarajevo of its Office in Venice and together with the 1970 Convention Secretariat, is launching a massive open online course (MOOC) on preventing illicit trafficking of cultural property.

The development of the MOOC is the result of UNESCO's long-standing commitment and global efforts to support its Member States. The course responds directly to Member States' requests for a comprehensive educational tool to strengthen national capacities in preventing these crimes; its development has been possible thanks to the generous support of the European Union.

Once launched, the MOOC will be accessible on UNESCO Open Learning Platform.

UNESCO invites its Member States to share this resource and encourages both experienced professionals and newcomers to engage with this course. By doing so, they contribute to UNESCO's mission of protecting the knowledge, values, and creativity of past civilisations that continue to shape our present.

## UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

### *UNHCR mobilizing across region as Middle East crisis escalates*

Staff at UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, are mobilizing from Iran and Afghanistan to Lebanon and Syria to support people forced to flee their homes as the regional crisis intensifies.

Given its footprint in the region, UNHCR is ready to play a leading role in the emergency responses.

Even before this conflict, refugees in Iran were impacted by the country's dire economic situation. High inflation and a rising cost of living have eroded fragile incomes, while limited access to employment left many struggling to meet their needs. UNHCR urges all countries to keep their borders open to those fleeing the attacks; any rejection would amount to refoulement.

UNHCR is also highly concerned about the situation inside Afghanistan. The protection of civilians, including refugees and returnees, must remain a priority.

Mass and hasty returns significantly heighten protection needs, and risk further instability in Afghanistan and the region, including onward movement.

UNHCR is concerned by the escalation along the Lebanon-Israel border and calls for the protection of civilians as it closely monitors the situation and coordinates with the authorities and partners to respond. Our teams are providing core relief items to displaced families arriving at government-designated shelters across Lebanon.

## UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC)

### *UN Commission concludes that deportation and forcible transfer of Ukrainian children by Russian authorities, as well as enforced disappearances, amount to crimes against humanity*

Russian authorities committed the crimes against humanity of deportation and forcible transfer of children, and of their enforced disappearance, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine said in its latest report to the Human Rights Council.

Thousands of children have been deported to the Russian Federation or transferred to occupied areas in Ukraine by Russian authorities, according to the Commission. It has so far verified the deportation or transfer of over 1,200 children from five regions in Ukraine.

Russian authorities have coordinated legislative, administrative, and practical measures to facilitate deportations, transfers and subsequent placement of children in families and institutions in the Russian Federation.

The Commission further investigated the conduct of trials by courts in the Russian Federation and in Russian occupied areas of Ukraine. During the trials, Russian authorities systematically presented evidence that was fabricated by use of torture.

Finally, the Commission documented violations reported during mobilisation for the Ukrainian armed forces. These include irregular administrative detention, lack of access to a lawyer, and hurried examinations by military medical commissions that ignore possible underlying medical issues. Instances of violence have been recorded against conscientious objectors, who were taken by force to recruitment centres and military bases, regardless of expressed readiness to carry out alternative civil service.

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

### *Ending war between USA-Israel and Iran must focus on human rights of Iranians: UN experts*

Military strikes by the United States and Israel have dramatically worsened the human rights situation in Iran, with a growing death toll and exacerbating existing economic and environmental pressures for people in the country.

According to Iranian authorities, close to 2,000 civilians have been killed in Iran in airstrikes by Israel and the United States that also hit schools, hospitals, cultural and religious buildings, civilian housing and infrastructure. More than 3 million people are temporarily internally displaced, many fleeing cities that lack functional air-raid sirens or bomb shelters, with particularly severe impacts on groups in vulnerable situations, including at least five million Afghans living in the country.

Some retaliatory strikes by Iran have gone beyond the right of self-defence in the UN Charter, at great cost to countries in the region, they warned.

Any diplomatic process to resolve the present crisis must address the immediate release of those arbitrarily detained for exercising their fundamental rights, protection of civic space, restoration of Internet access, independent accountability for all violations by all parties, and the protection of civilians across the region, the experts said.

## UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH (UNIDIR)

### *Digital tools driving more effective conflict response*

During the onset of war or armed conflict, numerous parties mobilize to contain its expansion and assist those affected; however, without adequate coordination, efforts may overlap or fail to address essential needs. The absence of timely, reliable information diminishes the effectiveness of interventions and can impede aid delivery to those most in need. Enhancing coordination is vital, yet access to comprehensive data remains a challenge in many circumstances. Integrated data systems, dashboards, and mapping tools offer stakeholders improved visibility into events, requirements, and appropriate responses. These resources facilitate the identification of service gaps, minimize redundancy, and foster more cohesive planning. While they do not independently resolve underlying difficulties, they establish a robust basis for prompt, informed decision-making in rapidly evolving situations, thereby supporting communities facing urgent challenges. Technology significantly contributes to this transformation; digitization expedites information exchange. Data collection from remote areas via mobile devices, coordination among multiple entities through unified data platforms, and automated analysis streamline processes previously performed manually. Collectively, these advancements enable more precise and timely responses to the needs of populations affected by conflict.

### *AI can play a role in preventing orbital crises*

The rapid increase in satellite launches has turned Low Earth Orbit (LEO) into a highly congested and complex environment. This congestion brings with it significant challenges, including frequency interference, orbital crowding, and the heightened risk of cascading collisions. These hazards underscore the need for innovative approaches to space traffic management. Artificial intelligence is now being deployed to monitor orbital traffic efficiently, without requiring uninterrupted human oversight. AI systems are able to predict potential collisions and optimise frequency usage, making them integral to modern space operations. AI-driven conjunction assessment solutions offer earlier and more accurate collision warnings, giving satellite operators the opportunity to plan avoidance manoeuvres that use less fuel and cause minimal disruption to satellite services. Both private companies and national or intergovernmental space agencies, including ESA and NASA, are using AI algorithms to enhance the management of satellite constellations and reduce the risks associated with congestion. However, the autonomy granted to these systems introduces new complexities. Automated collision avoidance mechanisms that operate

independently, without shared coordination protocols, may interpret the same challenge differently, leading to conflicting responses and increasing the likelihood of secondary conjunctions. Existing legal and normative frameworks, such as the Outer Space Treaty, lay out broad principles for the peaceful use of space. Nevertheless, they do not specifically address decision-making by AI-driven systems. As autonomous technologies, including those enabled by artificial intelligence, begin to assume greater operational control in orbit, the development of new governance tools will become essential to ensure coordinated and safe management of space activities.

## UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

### *Child marriages surge in Gaza*

The rise in child marriages across Gaza is linked to displacement, poverty, and the breakdown of legal, health, and protection systems. Families often see marrying daughters as a financial solution or as protection against abuse, though marriage itself brings risks like intimate partner violence and adolescent pregnancy. Progress had been made, with girls under 18 making up just 17.9 percent of registered marriages in 2022, down from 28 percent in 2009, but rates are now increasing. In December 2025, nearly 10 percent of new pregnancies were among adolescents, many facing poor health and limited care. Reports of coercion, gender-based violence, and distress are rising. To help, UNFPA supports 20 safe spaces, 15 youth hubs, and 11 girls' tents in Gaza, providing support, protection, health services, and awareness programs.

### *Medics expose dire conditions in Sudan territories*

As violence keeps raging in Sudan's North Kordofan State, medics are exposing the dire conditions the people is facing, without proper medical structures and facilities. As tens of thousands of people are fleeing the violence, other parts of the country are being engulfed, incapable of taking care of all those people in need of medical care. The violence is not sparing hospitals, killing and injuring health workers and patients, worsening the crisis. Maternity hospitals are collapsing, serving more than 200,000 people, most of the women and girls facing sexual violence, hunger and a total lack of healthcare. UNFPA is providing economical assistance to cover referral costs of surgical operations and technical assistance to hospital against power shortages. The Population Fund is operating a mobile health clinic in the South Kordofan State, providing a safe space for women and girls who are survivors of sexual crimes or at risk of abuse.

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

### *The situation in the Gaza strip and occupied West Bank*

In the Gaza Strip, the population continues to endure severe hardships due to ongoing conflict and adverse weather. Repeated rainstorms, combined with sustained airstrikes, shelling, and gunfire, have led to the destruction and damage of shelters across the region. Most people remain in displacement sites, where the living conditions are extremely poor. Overcrowding is common, and the accumulation of water and sewage further exacerbates the situation. Residents face inadequate access to essential items such as drinking water, soap, lighting, safe cooking fuel, and shelter materials. Additionally, rodent infestations are becoming an increasingly serious concern. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has depleted its stocks of lubricant oils for vehicles and generators, and these supplies are unavailable in the local market. To mitigate risks and safeguard its assets, UNRWA has implemented several measures: operating hours for generators have been reduced across all facilities, and vehicle movements have been restricted. The Agency is also closely monitoring the trend in infectious diseases within numerous collective emergency shelters. Concerns are heightened due to overcrowding, deteriorating wastewater management systems, shortages of hygiene supplies, and restrictions on the entry of chemical products. In response, UNRWA is strengthening its disease surveillance mechanisms and conducting targeted interventions to address these health risks. At present, 127 UNRWA facilities are situated within the Israeli-militarized zone, behind the area known as the "Yellow Line," where access is subject to Israeli approval or coordination. All UNRWA international staff are prevented from entering the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, as well as East Jerusalem. The Israeli authorities have not granted visas or permits

to the Agency's international staff, further restricting UNRWA's ability to operate and respond to the urgent needs on the ground. In the West Bank, Israeli settlers shot and killed a Palestinian and injured three others in Harmala village, near Bethlehem, on 26 March, following the dismantling of a settlement outpost in the area by Israeli forces. Access to religious sites in Jerusalem, including Al Aqsa Mosque, remained restricted, with entry curtailed since the regional conflict began on 28 February. On 29 March, Palm Sunday, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem was denied entry to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

## UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

### *Resolution 2817 (2026): the situation in the Middle East*

On 11 March, the Security Council adopted a resolution condemning Iran's "egregious attack" against its regional neighbours amid rapidly spiraling violence in the Middle East, while rejecting a second draft tabled by the Russian Federation.

The 15-member Council adopted resolution 2817 (2026) by a vote of 13 in favour to none against, with 2 abstentions (China, Russian Federation). It comes as the war, which began with Israeli and United States airstrikes against Iran on 28 February, nears its two-week mark and has spread to nearly a dozen nations across the already fragile Middle East region.

By the terms of the resolution, the Council condemned "in the strongest terms" Iran's attacks against Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan and reiterated its strong support for those countries' sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

It specifically condemned Iran's attacks against residential areas and civilian objects while also demanding that Tehran halt its threats, provocations and actions aimed at interfering with maritime trade, as well as support to proxy groups across the region.

### *Resolution 2818 (2026): the situation in Afghanistan (UNAMA)*

On 16 March, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2818 (2026), extending UNAMA's mandate for an additional three months, until 17 June 2026, with no changes to its current operational provisions.

The Council reaffirmed its full support for the work of UNAMA, welcomed the Mission's efforts to implement its mandated tasks and priorities and underscored the need for its continued presence.