

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and UNICEF Ambassador Ewan McGregor spoke yesterday within the framework of the opening of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly in New York at an event called "Children in the Refugee and Migration Crisis", which was organised by Estonia's Permanent Mission to the UN. The Estonian head of state stressed that the focus of Estonian state aid is to provide education to refugees.

In his opening remarks, President Ilves said that all of us must contribute to making it possible for refugees and their children to live a full life. "Therefore, along with protecting the rights of children, it is especially important to give them an education. By ensuring that refugees receive an education, we are ensuring that they have a more secure future," said the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves stated that Estonia is systematically investing in education for refugees through state aid. "For example, computer classes were provided with Estonian state aid to a refugee camp in Jordan and the children there have been given computer training. Continued education is also ensured for refugee children who have resettled in Estonia," he added.

The Estonian Mission to the UN was one of the main organisers of the event. Sven Jürgenson, Estonia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, is President of the UNICEF Executive Board for 2016. Estonia was elected President of the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board for 2016, where one of its priorities is to organise events in cooperation with UNICEF, the Council of Europe and the U.S. Fund for UNICEF.

In addition to President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Ewan McGregor, the other speakers included: Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; Thorbjørn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe; Isabella Lövin, Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation; Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia; Gerd Müller, German Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development; Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources; Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees; William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration; along with two refugee girls. An exhibition about the Zaatar refugee camp in Jordan was also opened during the event.

According to UN statistics, there were a total of 244 million refugees in the world in 2015. In the

last 15 years, the number of refugees has increased proportionally faster than the world's population (by 70 million or 40%). One in eight refugees is a child. Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in the refugee and migration crisis.

Today, 19 September, the first Summit for Refugees and Migrants will take place in New York under the auspices of the UN Secretary General. In the course of the summit, the heads of state and government leaders will pass a final political resolution affirming joint responsibility for improving the management of global migration and assisting refugees and migrants.

Office of the President  
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