

UN envoy and Pope Francis meet on enhancing cooperation to protect children from violence

23 March 2017 – The United Nations envoy advocating an end to violence against children has met with His Holiness Pope Francis to discuss greater cooperation on protecting children from sexual and other forms of violence.

“Accelerating progress in children’s protection from violence needs to be at the heart of the actions of every nation, every faith and every person,” said Marta Santos Pais, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children, during a private meeting with the Pope this past weekend in Vatican City.

The also meeting provided an opportunity to enhance collaboration on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and she noted that in a world free from fear and from violence, “everyone counts and everybody is needed.”

The meeting was meant to strengthen cooperation between the office of Ms. Santos Pais and the Holy See, which has permanent observer status at the UN, alongside 193 Member States.

The Pontiff reiterated his call for a ‘zero tolerance’ policy and reaffirmed the high priority given by the Holy See to protecting the rights of all girls and boys who are victims of violence, neglect, maltreatment, abuse and exploitation.

“This is a plague, a hidden scream that should be heard by all of us,” highlighted Pope Francis, further recognizing the need to “take all necessary measures to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated.”

RELATED: With more than half of all children in danger, UN envoy Santos Pais highlights how to keep them safe

Ms. Santos and the Pontiff also discussed the perils endured by children on the move who are exposed to constant incidents of violence especially when traveling unaccompanied or separated from their families, and who often lack the support of a nurturing and protective environment and in many cases end-up locked behind bars.



Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General chats with Pope Francis in her private audience at the Apostolic Palace. Photo: L’Osservatore Romano

Pope Francis and Ms. Santos Pais also discussed the growing risk of the

criminalization of children living in socially excluded and poor communities, who lack support to develop to their full potential and who often become an easy target for armed gangs and organized crime networks. Victims of marginalization and exploitation, these children are at high risk of deprivation of liberty, where they may be exposed to incidents of neglect, abuse and ill treatment.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a target, 16.2, that calls for an end to “abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.” As this is a top UN priority, this meeting provided a significant opportunity to identify ways of enhancing collaboration and supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda targets on violence against children.

Pope Francis and Ms. Santos Pais reaffirmed the importance of continuing to foster the cooperation between the UN and the Holy See in the promotion of children’s rights and protection from violence, and in process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

[In cyclone’s wake, UN appeals for \\$20 million to help affected populations in Madagascar](#)

23 March 2017 – The United Nations and humanitarian partners are appealing for \$20 million to address the devastating consequences of Cyclone Enawo in Madagascar.

“Despite the fact that 200,000 square kilometres covering half of Madagascar’s 22 regions have been affected, the country will not be left behind,” said Bary Rafatolaza, Deputy Foreign Minister of Madagascar, in a news release from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

“We are working closely with national and local authorities to meet the needs of those affected by the storm,” said Violet Kakyomya, UN Resident Coordinator in Madagascar, commending the Government both in evacuating people endangered by the storm before its arrival and in mobilizing the national and international response to the cyclone.

Enawo struck the coast of Madagascar as a Category 4 cyclone on 7 March, causing extensive damage due to high winds and flooding in north-eastern parts of the country. Between 8 and 10 March, the cyclone traced an arc nearly the length of the island nation, bringing heavy rainfall and flooding to central and southeastern areas.

At least a quarter of a million people in the worst-affected areas require urgent life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection in the storm's wake. The Government has declared a national emergency and requested international support.

Some 20,000 families who lost their homes need emergency shelter and more than 100,000 children whose schooling has been disrupted need temporary learning spaces.

Up to 85 per cent of planted subsistence crops were lost in some areas, while more than 1,300 wells – the major source of household water – are flooded and contaminated. More than 100 health centres and 3,300 classrooms were damaged by the cyclone.

Of the nearly 250,000 people who sought shelter in evacuation centres during the storm, more than 5,300 of the most vulnerable have no home to return to and remain in displacement sites.

In addition to providing water, sanitation and hygiene assistance for 168,000 people, the \$20 million will fund food assistance for 170,000 people, and support more than 230,000 farmers in replanting crops and replacing livestock.

Images of the devastation wreaked by Cyclone Enawo in Madagascar. Credit: Johnnah Raniriniaina (Maroantsetra)/OCHA

News story: Westminster incident

For latest updates on the incident that took place in Westminster on 22 March you can [read more on the Metropolitan Police website](#).

Twitter updates

You can follow [@Terrorism Police UK](#) and [@MetPoliceUK](#) for Twitter updates on the incident.

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If you see anything that causes you concern or raises your suspicions do not hesitate to call the Police on 0800 789 321 or in an emergency 999.

Edinburgh students take part in Young Engineers' Competition

Three 3rd year Agriculture students from SRUC's Edinburgh Campus will be taking part in a prestigious young engineers competition.

Problematic metro cables to be replaced

The contractors of Chengdu subway projects promised on Wednesday to replace all the electric cables used in the city's subway lines which were provided by a company failing to meet standards, according to the subway's official Weibo account.

The two contractors, China Railway Group and Power Construction Corporation of China, said the replacements will be made regardless of whether tests show the cables used in Chengdu subway lines meet the standards or not.

A planned cooperation with the electric cable company on Chengdu subway Line 2 will be canceled, said the announcement.

Eight people at Shaanxi Aokai Cable Corporation, based in Xi'an city in Shaanxi province, have been detained for providing substandard electric cables for Xi'an subway Line 3. The company has been shut down.

An online tip-off revealed last week that the electric cables provided by the company for Xi'an subway Line 3 were problematic, and questioned the process by which the company won the bid.

A subsequent investigation showed that all of the five samples of the low-

voltage cables from Xi'an subway Line 3 failed to meet set standards.

The Xi'an metro company said at a news conference on Monday that it will replace all the substandard cables.

Wang Zhiwei, a legal representative from the company, knelt down and apologized to the public after the investigation result was published.

A joint probe examined the Xi'an subway Line 3 project's data and documents, and looked into the supervision work carried out by administrative bodies and law enforcement departments, said Yang Xin, head of the commission for discipline inspection in Xi'an, the city's top anti-graft authority.

The police have impounded the rest of the cable stock at Aokai and have taken samples for testing, Yang said.

Established in late 2012, the company was a private firm producing items such as electric cables, control cables and cables for rail transportation.

Xi'an subway Line 3 was put into use in November last year and carried 345,000 passengers on the first day of operation.