

## The Portuguese Republic

### Positions for the United Nations Children's Fund

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#### **I. Protecting the Rights of Refugee, Migrant, and Internally Displaced Children**

Unlike other European nations that fear refugees, Portugal offers a warm welcome to refugees. According to a 2018 statistical report, there were 1285 refugee applications, out of which 220 were granted the refugee status while 405 were provided with a subsidiary protection<sup>1</sup>. The country welcomes people fleeing their home countries involved in war and instability. Refugees are given safety and security immediately after they enter the country's borders. A welcoming community encourages refugees to prefer Portugal over other European countries. However, many refugees who enter the country end up leaving it. The country even struggles to fill its yearly quota for refugee intake.<sup>2</sup> Differences in the culture between the refugees and the local citizens are the main reasons cited for the country's inability to attract more refugees willing to enter the country.

Portugal has always supported the intake of refugees domestically and in the international forums such as the UN. In some of the resolutions passed by the country<sup>3</sup>, it has supported initiatives to take in more refugees. Like many other European countries, Portugal is also facing the problem of declining population. One of the key reasons for Portugal to welcome refugees is to compensate for its declining population. Portugal needs at least 75,000 new residents to keep its population numbers.<sup>4</sup> As part of this policy, Portugal supports the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration that wants to make it easy for migrants to move from one country to other.<sup>5</sup>

The developing countries of the world with low incomes and access to resources take up 85 percent of the world's refugees. The developed countries should take a fairer share of refugees. The Global Compact on Refugees aims to change this by making it easy for refugees to move to third countries.<sup>6</sup> This is one of the areas where Portugal is willing to negotiate with the United Nations to take more refugees. Currently there are 445,000 regular migrants living within the boundaries of Portugal. This accounts to a total of 4 percent of the country's population.<sup>7</sup> In order to prevent the fall of the country's population, Portugal is willing to start accepting more refugees. As many of the country's refugees who enter the country are preferring to leave the country, the government is willing to take steps to halt the outflow of immigrants from the country. Refugees are planned to be provided with awareness regarding the local culture so that they would later prefer to stay within the country and refrain from leaving the country. Portugal's government is willing to negotiate with the UN to increase its quota for the intake of refugees. It is also willing to negotiate with its neighboring countries to send the surplus refugees to the country so that it can maintain its population numbers in the long run. Another recommendation is to ask United Nations for additional support in designing some developing programs that keep refugees in Portugal. Examples of such programs include

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<sup>1</sup> "Statistics - Portugal | Asylum Information Database". *Asylumineurope.Org*, 2019, <https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/portugal/statistics>.

<sup>2</sup> Jurriaans, Kim-Jenna. "Portugal Offers Refugees a Warm Welcome, but Can't Get Them to Stay." *News Deeply*, 1 September 2017, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/09/01/portugal-offers-refugees-a-warm-welcome-but-cant-get-them-to-stay>.

<sup>3</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR Submission on Portugal: 33rd UPR Session*, May 2019, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ccad2737.html> [accessed 25 October 2019]

<sup>4</sup> *Starit Times*. "Portugal, the European country that wants more migrants." 2 July, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/portugal-the-european-country-that-wants-more-migrants>

<sup>5</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations. "H.E. Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President." 26 September 2018,

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR. "First resettled refugees arrive in Portugal from Turkey." UNHCR, 4 April 2019, <https://gadebate.un.org/en/73/portugal> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/4/5ca64ec54/first-resettled-refugees-arrive-portugal-turkey.html>

<sup>7</sup> IOM UN Migration. "Migration activities." n.d. <https://www.iom.int/countries/portugal>

Education programs for the children at discounted rates and job quota for refugees in certain industries depending on their skills etc. To conclude, the focus should also be on retaining the people who are entering the country rather than just negotiating for an increase in the quota numbers.

## **II. Preventing the Recruitment of Children in Armed Conflict**

The Portuguese Republic alongside the whole U.N. takes part in supporting the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We value the CRC and fully supports all of its efforts to improve the lives of children. It is stated under the CRC that their efforts are “taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child, Recognizing the importance of international co-operation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries.”<sup>8</sup> This goes to show that although the recruitment of children during armed conflict does not directly affect our country, we have taken part in prevention efforts. We believe every child deserves to live through their childhood and not be restrained from it due to the conflict that is going on in the world. We strongly oppose the use of children for the benefit of those who want to have more power at the cost of children’s lives and future.

As a Southern European country, we understand that children are one of our world’s greatest assets for a peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world. Every child has the right to reach their full potential in life, but by being recruited to take part of armed conflict they are being stripped away from that. Portugal wants to make sure that not only our country keeps moving forward but that the world does the same. That is why we have taken part of the global initiatives to better the safety of children. Like we did when the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict came to rise in May of 2000 by September, we were on board with this and signed into the treaty<sup>9</sup>. With this and the pledge that is found under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is an international agreement on childhood safety. We are one of the fifty-two countries that are part of this pledge. Along with this we strongly believe that the use of schools for military purposes cannot continue and urged other states to sign up to the Safe Schools Declaration<sup>10</sup>, which we along with another eighty-eight states have endorsed. We can no longer allow for educational facilities to be used by parties of armed conflict as bases, barracks or detention centers<sup>11</sup>. Such actions expose children to harm, all while denying large numbers of children their right to education. Which in return, deprives many communities of the foundations on which to build their future.

The Portuguese Republic believes we should no longer allow having national authorities who fail to take the necessary steps to ensure accountability. We recommend that the Security Council, as seen appropriately, play a more proactive role in the actions towards further preventing this issue. We believe that this would serve as a sign to demonstrate that we have a bigger problem, and this should serve as the start for the need of further action-oriented change. It is shown that despite the existence of normative international instruments like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which we take part of, the minimum human rights standards in times of war are still systematically ignored and broken by governmental forces. In order to see major change, we need action to be seen and more to work on the field for it. We would be willing to do whatever is in our hands to ensure something is being done to further assist on this worldwide mission, that is much bigger than some states.

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<sup>8</sup> UNICEF “Convention on the Rights of the Child text” <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

<sup>9</sup> UN “Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict” [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&clang=en)

<sup>10</sup> UN “Much More Must Be Done to Ensure Full Protection for Abducted, Detained Youngsters, Delegates Tell Security Council, in Day-Long Debate on Children and Armed Conflict” <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13909.doc.htm>

<sup>11</sup> UN “Children’s Rights Violations during Armed Conflicts on Rise despite National Action Plans to End Abuse, Security Council Told in Day-long Debate” <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12470.doc.htm>

