

## Press Release

PR 14/2013

13 December 2013

### EASO and UNHCR sign working arrangement in Geneva

*The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have signed today a working arrangement to strengthen the cooperation between both organisations in the framework of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the International Law for refugees.*

Today, Dr. Robert K. Visser, EASO Executive Director, and Mr António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have signed a working arrangement which defines areas and objectives of cooperation between EASO and UNHCR.

The European Union (EU) is developing a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) in line with the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the right to asylum and the principle of *non-refoulement* as laid down in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

As an EU agency, EASO plays a key role in the coherent implementation of the CEAS by supporting Member States and the EU Institutions to fulfil their European and international obligations in this field. EASO provides technical and operational support and strengthens practical cooperation among Member States in the field of asylum. UNHCR is mandated under international treaties to lead and coordinate action to ensure protection of refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern worldwide, and to assist governments in implementing durable solutions.

In line with their mandates, the working arrangement signed today aims at establishing a more structured cooperation framework on relevant areas of common work, creating synergies and fostering coherence between the different actions pursued by EASO and UNHCR. Main areas of cooperation include: training and professional development; exchange of best practices and expertise on quality initiatives and projects; Country of Origin Information (COI); data and information gathering and analysis; identifying vulnerable persons; and resettlement and relocation activities.

Dr. Robert K. Visser, EASO Executive Director, commended the excellent on-going cooperation with UNHCR from the inception of the Agency, and stated that *'from the very beginning, UNHCR, as a non-voting Member of the EASO Management Board and as member of the EASO Consultative Forum, has been very active in EASO's activities and has cooperated with EASO on a wide range of issues. I am confident that the working arrangement will further strengthen this cooperation'*.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, underlining the non-political mandates of both agencies to help States to meet their obligations towards persons in need of international protection stressed that: *'The cooperation between UNHCR and EASO should contribute to the strengthening of asylum and protection in Europe and worldwide. This is of crucial importance, not least as we face a*

*humanitarian crisis unparalleled in recent history at Europe's doorstep, with the displacement of millions of Syrian refugees.'*

The agreement can be accessed via the following link: <http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EASO-UNHCR-Working-Arrangement.pdf>

*Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office by contacting Mr Jean-Pierre Schembri on the following e-mail address: [jean-pierre.schembri@easo.europa.eu](mailto:jean-pierre.schembri@easo.europa.eu)*