

UN struggles with US Mexico City Requirement. By Anna Gawel, *Devex*, 6 May 2026

(Life)line in the sand

Not everyone is keen to bend to Trump’s will — or the various strings he’s attached to U.S. funding.

Tom Fletcher, the top humanitarian official at the U.N., [openly declared that he would walk away from U.S. money](#) rather than accept it **if it’s tied to the Trump administration’s expanded Mexico City Policy** — which restricts organizations from going near programs related to abortion, gender identity, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

“The question is, should we take money under those conditions, knowing that it will save millions of lives, or not?” said Fletcher, head of the [U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#), speaking at London’s [Chatham House](#) policy institute. “At the moment, I’m in the situation where I’m saying I cannot take that money under those conditions.”

Fletcher is referring to a boatload of money. Back in December, he stood alongside U.S. officials in Geneva to announce [\\$2 billion in funding to OCHA](#), a commitment celebrated by both the U.S. government and the British U.N. official as a lifeline for millions of people.

But in life — and especially in politics — money rarely comes for free. Between the [expansion of the Mexico City Policy](#) — and the creation of the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance rule — [U.S. allotments to OCHA](#) **are fraught with questions and controversy.**

For the first time, Mexico City Policy restrictions don’t just apply to family planning or global health funding, **but to all U.S. foreign assistance.** And in addition to the ban on mentioning abortion, gender identity, or DEI, **the restrictions broadened the umbrella,** making the rule applicable to all U.N. agencies, U.S. organizations, and foreign nonprofits that receive a dollar of U.S. cash.

As Elissa Miolene writes, Fletcher seems to be under no illusions about what walking away from American money means. For weeks, rumors of waivers have floated from Washington to Geneva, with many hoping that OCHA — or perhaps, other aid groups — **might be made exempt from the policy** as per [State Department](#) guidelines. But to date, nothing has been announced publicly, including further tranches of U.S. cash.

“I lie awake at night wondering if my principles on that, and the sector’s principles — and I will hold the line — but how many people will die for those principles because I’m not willing to take that money?” said Fletcher. “There’s a trade-off there.”