

'Historic moment' for people on the move, as UN agrees first-ever Global Compact on migration

For the first time ever, United Nations Member States have agreed an all-encompassing Global Compact to better manage international migration, address its challenges, strengthen migrant rights and contribute to sustainable development.

After more than a year of discussions and consultations among Member States, local officials, civil society and migrants themselves, the text of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) was finalized on Friday.

In a statement, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) welcomed the agreement, calling it “a [significant achievement](#).” He said it reflected “the shared understanding by Governments that cross-border migration is, by its very nature, an international phenomenon and that effective management of this global reality requires international cooperation to enhance its positive impact for all. It also recognizes that every individual has the right to safety, dignity and protection.”

“This comprehensive framework comprises a range of objectives, actions and avenues for implementation, follow-up and review,” added the UN chief, “all aimed at facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, while reducing the incidence and impact of irregular migration.”

Calling today a “[historic moment](#),” General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, spelled out the Compact’s enormous potential.

“It does not encourage migration, nor does it aim to stop it. It is not legally binding. It does not dictate. It will not impose. And it fully respects the sovereignty of States,” he stressed.

Instead, he continued: “It can guide us from a reactive to a proactive mode. It can help us to draw out the benefits of migration, and mitigate the risks. It can provide a new platform for cooperation. And it can be a resource, in finding the right balance between the rights of people and the sovereignty of States.”

“And, in December,” Mr. Lajčák added “it will formally become the first comprehensive framework on migration the world has ever seen.”



UN Photo/Mark Garten

Louise Arbour (l), Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (c) and Miroslov Lajčák, President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly (r), attend a special event for the approval of text for a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, at UN Headquarters in New York, 13 July 2018.

Also taking the floor, Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, drew attention to the profound issues that migration raises, such as sovereignty and human rights; around what constitutes voluntary movement; the relationship between development and mobility; and how to support social cohesion.

“This compact demonstrates the potential of multilateralism: our ability to come together on issues that demand global collaboration – however complicated and contentious they may be,” she pointed out.

Louise Arbour, Special Representative for International Migration, asserted that as human mobility will always be with us, “its chaotic, dangerous exploitative aspects cannot be allowed to become a new normal.”

“The implementation of the Compact will bring safety, order and economic progress to everyone’s benefit,” she underscored.

The agreement will be formally adopted by Member States at an [Intergovernmental Conference](#), which will be held in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 10 and 11 December. Ms. Arbour will serve as the Conference’s Secretary-General.

“This is not the end of the undertaking but the beginning of a new historic effort to shape the global agenda on migration for decades to come,” Director General of the UN migration agency, [IOM](#), William Lacy Swing said on Friday.

“Throughout the process, UN Member States have clearly recognized that

migration is always about people. The migrant-centred approach adopted with the commendable guidance of co-facilitators from Mexico and Switzerland, and of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on International Migration, is unprecedented,” added the IOM chief.

[Security Council imposes arms embargo on South Sudan](#)

The Security Council on Friday narrowly passed a measure aimed at stopping the flow of weapons to armed groups in South Sudan, with those Members in favour saying it would protect civilians, while abstainers voiced concerns that it would undermine the ongoing peace process in the world’s youngest country.

Adopting a resolution by a vote of 9 in favour and none against, with 6 abstentions, the 15-member body obliged all UN Member States to immediately to take necessary measures regarding the arms embargo, that will remain in effect until 31 May next year.

Côte d’Ivoire, France, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and United States were in favour, while Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kazakhstan and Russia abstained.

Under the terms of the resolution, all Member States must prevent arms and related equipment of all types – including weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment, and any spare parts – from entering South Sudan.

The Council also renewed the South Sudan Sanctions regime until 31 May 2019 and the Sanctions Committee’s Panel of Experts until 1 July 2019.

The Council also imposed a travel ban and asset freeze against two more individuals accused of fomenting violence, during the long-running civil conflict, which has driven around four million from their homes and left millions in need of humanitarian assistance.

Speaking for the resolution, US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said: “If we’re going to help the people of South Sudan, we need the violence to stop. And to stop the violence, we need to stop the flow of weapons to armed groups, that they are using to fight each other and to terrorize the people.”

In 2016, the United States, a Permanent Member of the Council, proposed an arms embargo, but failed to get enough support for it to pass. “Since then, we can only imagine how many weapons made their way to parties in South

Sudan, and how many more people had to die,” she argued.

The representatives of Ethiopia and Equatorial Guinea expressed concerns that further punitive measures could undermine the fragile, ongoing peace process in South Sudan.

On 27 June, an agreement was signed by South Sudan’s President, Salva Kiir, and his political rival, former Vice President Riek Machar, which included a ceasefire between government and opposition forces.

Previous efforts to end fighting between the rival forces since 2013, have all failed to hold, leaving tens of thousands of combatants and civilians dead.

[Villages ‘reduced to ash’ amid ‘barbaric violence’ in DR Congo, reports UN refugee agency](#)

Humanitarian needs are enormous in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the UN Refugee Agency, [UNHCR](#), has reported accounts of “barbaric violence”.

In all, 350,000 people are estimated to have fled months of ethnic clashes between the Hema and Lendu groups, in the eastern part of the country.

Spokesperson Charlie Yaxley told journalists in Geneva on Friday that UNHCR staff had obtained access to Ituri province, in the northeast of DRC, where people are now returning, only to find their villages and homes “reduced to ash”.

The development comes amid reports of armed groups attacking civilians with “guns, arrows and machetes”, according to the agency.

The prospects are incredibly slim, the humanitarian funding is really lacking. These people are being forgotten and left to fend for themselves. – *Charlie Yaxley (UNHCR)*

Citing one harrowing account after another, the UNHCR spokesperson repeated the testimony of one 59-year-old woman who described how “people are getting chopped in pieces”, and how she and her family had fled after assailants killed their neighbours in the night

In addition to the bloodshed, hospitals, schools, and other key

infrastructure have been completely destroyed in former communities, raising concerns about the number of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition and in urgent need of medical care.



UNHCR/Anita Cadonau

Aminatha (left) fled violence in Gobo on Lake Albert. She is expecting and is sheltering with eleven other displaced people in Rethy town in Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 21 March 2018.

Conditions at displacement sites are just as desperate, the UN agency said in a statement, warning that there is a lack of clean water and no access to healthcare.

At a displacement site near Bunia hospital, the capital of Ituri province, there is also a “significant and rising” risk of diseases spreading, while the number of people suffering from respiratory diseases and anemia is growing fast.

To address needs, UNHCR has provided emergency and transition shelter kits to replace houses that have been damaged or destroyed.

Cash grants are also being made available to the most desperate cases, with 1,500 families set to receive an average of \$210.

UNHCR is also scaling up community engagement to improve social cohesion among different ethnic groups, but its efforts have been hampered by a lack of funding.

“This is a very resource-poor part of the world,” UNHCR’s Yaxley said. “The prospects are incredibly slim, the humanitarian funding is really lacking. These people are being forgotten and left to fend for themselves.”

To date, the agency has received only 17 per cent of the \$201 million

requested to provide protection, life-saving aid and assistance inside DRC.

[UN Security Council calls for calm following violent protests in Haiti](#)

While acknowledging the right to peaceful assembly, the United Nations [Security Council](#) has strongly condemned recent violence in Haiti, sparked by protests against a Government announcement of fuel price increases, reportedly of up to 50 per cent, last Friday.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the Council condemned “all acts of violence and attacks on civilians, which have resulted in several deaths, and expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of those killed.”

The initial policy change sparked widespread looting in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and other cities over the weekend, during which at least three were killed, and all international flights were cancelled.

Even though the Haitian Government backed away from the price hike on Saturday, and flights have resumed, protesters continued to clash with police on Monday, according to news reports.

The Council statement called for the immediate cessation of all forms of violence and for those responsible for crimes to be held accountable.

Council Members called on “all parties in Haiti to remain calm, exercise restraint, and to avoid acts that could contribute to instability,” underlining the importance of “respecting the rule of law and democratic order and not resorting to violence or criminal activity.”

The Council also expressed support for the Government “to work with all key actors to quickly restore order, ensure the security of people and property, and overcome the challenges faced by the country.”

Its members recognized the important role of the Haitian National Police, with support from the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti ([MINUJUSTH](#)), in protecting the civilian population and maintaining public order.

MINUJUSTH called for “constructive dialogue” to restore security in the capital Port-au-Prince.

“The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for MINUJUSTH, working closely with the UN Country Team, in assisting the Government and the people of Haiti in their efforts to consolidate the security gains made in recent years, to promote the rule of law, and to bring lasting stability to

their country,” the Council statement concluded.

Safe and orderly migration is ‘in everybody’s interest’, says senior UN official

International migration “has been with us forever”, and a safe and orderly means of facilitating it is “in everybody’s interest”, said a UN envoy.

Speaking to UN News during the final round of negotiations on a [global compact](#) for safe, orderly and regular migration, Louise Arbour said that migration should not be seen in terms of good or bad, but as “a phenomenon that’s been part of human history”, with immense benefits if well handled.

As the [Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration](#), Ms. Arbour has worked with Member States and other stakeholders throughout the process to develop the global compact. She said the process had “already come a long way” during the prior 18 months, in pushing back against some of the negative, sometimes hostile, misperceptions about migrants.

Citing the complex motivations causing people to uproot themselves, such as the desire for better education, Ms. Arbour said it was “very unhelpful” to label all the world’s 258 million non-refugee migrants as people in “greedy pursuit of more economic benefits”. The negotiation process had brought to light the enormous economic benefits of migration for countries of both destination and origin, she said.

The UN General Assembly decided to develop the global compact when it adopted the [New York Declaration](#) at the [Summit](#) for Refugees and Migrants, in September 2016. The compact will be the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

While it is not aimed at providing immediate answers to current short-term migration crises, Ms. Arbour said the compact will help enlighten different approaches to address them. She described it as an agreement by Member States to cooperate over a long-term vision on how to harness the benefits and mitigate the challenges of human mobility.

She added, however, that the question of detention of migrants, generally of migrant children, had been very prominently featured in the negotiations. “There’s a lot of concerns about the inappropriateness of detaining people on the move in circumstances where, in fact, the detention increases their

vulnerabilities rather than assisting them," she said.

Pointing out that it was for countries to determine their own migration policies, she said the key was more international cooperation to facilitate the enforcement of such policies. It was not a question of facilitating or reducing migration, she said, the objective was safety and order.

The General Assembly is expected to consider the compact for adoption at an intergovernmental conference to be held in Morocco in December 2018.