

UN working to address slavery, abuses against African migrants and refugees, Security Council told

28 November 2017 – The United Nations is stepping up its work to stop the grave abuses perpetrated against [refugees and migrants](#) along the Central Mediterranean routes, including alleged slave trade in Libya, two UN agency chiefs told the Security Council Tuesday.

The [meeting](#) was held at UN Headquarters in New York in response to growing international concerns about risks facing migrants and refugees, which were illustrated by recent news reports and videos showing African migrants in Libya allegedly being sold as slaves.

“This is an enormous human tragedy and we can stop it,” said William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), via video link from Geneva, underscoring the need to break the smugglers’ business model.

In such efforts, IOM has helped 13,000 people get out of detention centres in Libya and 8,000 in Niger, he said, noting that there are about 15,000 still in such facilities.

IOM is working with partners, including the Government of Libya, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), the African Union, the European Union, and countries of origin, to forge an agreement to implement a programme to empty those detention centres, Mr. Swing said.

Also briefing was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, who told the Council: “The grave abuses perpetrated against migrants and refugees along the Central Mediterranean routes can [no longer be ignored](#).”

“Compelled to flee, but without legal pathways to safety, refugees are exposed to appalling harm, together with migrants, including torture, rape, sexual exploitation, slavery and other forms of forced labour,” Mr. Grandi said, also via video link from Geneva, adding that these abuses proliferate where governance is weak and transnational criminal networks take root.

“This requires a comprehensive approach encompassing countries of origin, transit, and destination,” he stressed, highlighting the need to strengthen refugee protection and offer solutions along the routes.

UNHCR is stepping up its work – but faces “dramatic” funding gaps, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, he added.

UNHCR is helping the authorities address the needs of displaced Libyans and others affected by conflict. Reception and protection mechanisms are being incrementally strengthened. Plans for a transit centre in Tripoli are progressing positively.

“Too often, measures pursued in relation to the Mediterranean routes have centred on how to control, deter and exclude. This can have a dehumanizing effect – and more importantly, alone, it does not help refugees and migrants avoid exploitative, deeply harmful situations,” Mr. Grandi said, calling for a comprehensive set of political, security, humanitarian, human rights and development investments.

“Your attention is welcome, because your leadership is critical to ensuring that this happens,” he told the Council members.

[Family members linked to nearly half of child trafficking cases, new UN-backed data reveals](#)

28 November 2017 – Almost half of identified child trafficking cases has begun with a family member’s involvement, new data from the United Nations migration agency has revealed.

Statistics on human trafficking prevention efforts and identifying and protecting survivors –based on data released by The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC), the world’s first human trafficking data portal to include such data contributed by multiple agencies – revealed that family involvement is up to four times higher than in cases of adult trafficking.

“Our Organization is taking a leading role in increasing the access to this critical information in order to [strengthen counter-trafficking interventions](#),” said William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)).

According to the new data, children are most commonly trafficked into forced sexual exploitation, begging and domestic work. It also revealed that children are most likely to be coerced into trafficking through physical, sexual and psychological abuse, suggesting the need for more prevention efforts specifically targeting children and their families.

Additionally, boys are more likely to be recruited by a family member than girls.

Meanwhile, adults are more likely to be controlled by having their documents confiscated or their irregular status in a foreign country exploited.

Initiated by IOM, in partnership with non-governmental organization (NGO) Polaris, the new CTDC data portal combats and prevents modern-day slavery by hosting the world’s largest open-access, multi-stakeholder repository of human trafficking data.

The CTDC continues to build partnerships with other counter-trafficking actors and currently hosts nearly 80,000 human trafficking victim cases consisting of 180 nationalities exploited in 117 countries. Forthcoming data, which will be contributed by counter-trafficking partner organizations around the world is expected to have a large counter-trafficking impact.

The statistics related to child trafficking cases with family involvement are based on nearly 12,000 trafficking survivors for which the recruitment process information is known.

In response to these statistics, IOM is calling for governments and other development and humanitarian partners to step-up counter-trafficking interventions aimed at children by helping household heads to make long-term plans for themselves and their family; helping children identify potentially dangerous or exploitative situations and know how to get support; and ensuring that protection and systems are accessible to all children, regardless of their migration status.

Child protection systems should act in the best interests of the child in all circumstances, including by providing solutions to bring sustainable resolutions.

IOM has underscored that more research is needed to better understand the specific risk and protective factors that make children vulnerable to human trafficking, saying that children's voices should be heard in the design, implementation and evaluation of services, policies and interventions, that the legitimacy of their aspirations should be recognized.

Antalya: South-South cooperation offers major opportunities to support vulnerable countries – UN official

28 November 2017 – As the most vulnerable countries continue to face serious development challenges, South-South cooperation offers enormous opportunities and potential to effectively support them in accelerating progress on implementing globally agreed goals, a senior United Nations official has said.

This vital message was delivered to delegations gathered yesterday in Antalya, Turkey, for the opening of the [Global South-South Development Expo 2017](#) by Fekitamoeloa Katoa Utoikamanu, the UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-[OHRLLS](#)).

“These are all countries faced with complex and unique development challenges

which lend themselves to exploring how and where we can maximize South-South cooperation and leverage global partnerships to support countries' efforts toward sustainable and inclusive futures," said Ms. Utoikamanu, who advocates on behalf of 10 billion people in the world's most vulnerable countries.

She is participating in the 2017 Global Expo along with other senior UN officials, government ministers, national development agency directors, and civil society representatives, who have gathered to share innovative local solutions and push for scaling up concrete initiatives from the global South to achieve the [2030 Agenda](#) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

"The central promise of the 2030 Agenda is to 'leave no-one behind,' and thus is about addressing poverty, reducing inequality and building a sustainable future of shared prosperity," explained Ms. Utoikamanu. "But it is already clear that these noble Goals will be elusive if the 91 countries my Office is a voice for remain at the bottom of the development ladder."

As such, she said, South-South collaboration has led to increasing trade between and with emerging economies, investors, providers of development cooperation and sources of technological innovations and know-how. "This trend is confirmed by trade preferences for [least developed country products], enhanced trade finance opportunities, but also innovative infrastructure finance emerging," noted Ms. Utoikamanu.

"The complex and pressing challenges the vulnerable countries experience demand that we further strengthen and leverage South-South cooperation," added Ms. Utoikamanu. "South-South cooperation is not an 'either-or'; it is a strategic and complementary means of action for the transfer and dissemination of technologies and innovations. It complements North-South cooperation," she emphasized.

This week's gathering will focus on a number of issues, including how to transfer science, technology and innovation among developing countries.

With that in mind, Ms. Utoikamanu said that to a large extent, the future will be determined by the abilities to leverage science, technology and innovation for sustainable growth, structural transformation and inclusive human and social development.

"It is proven that innovative technologies developed in the South often respond in more sustainable ways to the contextual needs of developing countries. Last, but not least, this is a question of cost," she said.

In all this, the [Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries](#) has a major role to play in boosting science, technology and innovation capacity. "It must facilitate technology transfer and promote the integration of [least developed countries] into the global knowledge-based economy."

While countries in the South continue to deepen cooperation to achieve the [SDGs](#), the trend of declining official development assistance (ODA) is cause for great concern. ODA remains a crucial source of external financing for the vulnerable groups of countries UN-OHRLLS represents," she said.

“OHRLLS is committed to working with countries both of the North and the South to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and above all its pledge of leaving no one behind,” concluded Ms. Utoikamanu.

[Violence drives more Rohingyas to Bangladesh; in Myanmar, Pope appeals for tolerance – UN](#)

28 November 2017 – While their numbers have dropped in recent weeks, hundreds of Rohingya refugees are still crossing the border into Bangladesh from Myanmar every day, the United Nations migration agency said Tuesday.

People are still arriving in the settlements [with horrifying accounts of physical and sexual abuse](#), harassment and murder. All of them fear for family members left behind in Myanmar, said Andrew Lind, the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Emergency Coordinator in Cox’s Bazar.

Over the past three months, more than 600,000 Rohingya refugees have crossed into Cox’s Bazar, fleeing violence and oppression in Myanmar’s Northern Rakhine state. The most recent influx of some 1,800 in the past week, brings the total population of Rohingya seeking safety in the district to more than 836,000.

One 30-year-old woman who arrived in the Balukhali settlement on Monday with her five children told IOM that she fled seven days ago when her village was burned to ground, saying that while one group of attackers kidnapped people another set houses on fire.

The family hid for two days in a nearby village before making their way to the border. She explained that with no access to healthcare in Rakhine state, her husband died several months ago.

Like the other refugees, the family arrived with almost nothing to the congested settlement, where the humanitarian response tries to catch up with the vast needs of a desperate population.

Concerns raised over water safety, security and fear-mongering on the ground

Meanwhile, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) found that over 60 per cent of water sources tested in the settlements were contaminated with E.coli. Shallow wells located less than 30 feet away from latrines are culpable, with full latrines and a lack of space to drain them contributing to the potentially life-threatening problem.

To date, IOM has drilled a total of 374 deep tube wells and installed 4,973 permanent and emergency latrines in the Cox's Bazar settlements and host communities.

Security concerns are also growing as the settlements have become a target for human traffickers. IOM is seeking funding to help better protect the refugees and offer support to survivors of exploitation and human trafficking.

In other news, Pope Francis, who is currently in Myanmar, has condemned politicians who propagate alarm over immigration, arguing that fear-mongering engenders violence and racism.

In a message about migrants and refugees that the Vatican sent to heads of State and Government before the Pontiff's trip, he said: "Those who, for what may be political reasons, foment fear of migrants instead of building peace are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are matters of great worry for all those concerned about the safety of every human being."

After Myanmar, Pope Francis will travel to Bangladesh, where he is expected to meet a small group of Rohingya refugees.

[UNESCO chief calls for investigation into killing of Nigerian photographer](#)

28 November 2017 – The head of the United Nations agency defending press freedom on Tuesday denounced the killing of a Nigerian photographer, calling for an investigation into the incident.

"I [condemn](#) the killing of Ikechukwu Onubogu," said Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), in a press release.

The photographer's body was found in Obosi town in the state of Anambra on 15 November. Neither his family nor his colleagues at Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS) had seen or heard from Ikechukwu Onubogu since he had left home in the afternoon of 12 November.

"The perpetrators of this crime must be brought to justice in order to preserve freedom of expression, enshrined in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights," Ms. Azoulay said.

"Governments must also protect journalists so as to prevent bloodshed from depriving the public of its right to access information," she

added.

UNESCO Director-General issues statements on violations of press freedoms and condemning the killing of media workers.