

[Bonn: new efforts announced at UN climate conference to push for further, faster climate action](#)

11 November 2017 – Cities, the transport sector and ocean advocates today announced a number of new initiatives to push for further, faster climate action, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP 23](#)) in Bonn, Germany.

These announcements were made under the auspices of the [Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action](#), created last year to spur action by state and non-state sectors to help implement the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change.

New Transport Decarbonisation Alliance

In a major new partnership, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Costa Rica and the Paris Process on Mobility and Climate (PPMC) launched the *Transport Decarbonisation Alliance* to stimulate greater political leadership in the sector.

Transport contributes about one quarter of all energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and about 15-17 per cent of the entire spread of human CO₂ emissions.

“More ambitious and coordinated action on transport is required to deliver on the Paris Agreement,” said José Mendes, Deputy Minister for Environment of Portugal.

Six new voluntary sector initiatives were also introduced in Bonn to address specific aspects of transport and climate change. These include: the ‘below50’ (expanding the global market for the world’s most sustainable fuels); the EcoMobility Alliance (cities committed to sustainable transport); EV100 (accelerating the transition to electro-mobility); Walk 21 (valuing and delivering more walkable communities); the Global Strategy for Cleaner Fuels and Vehicles; and the Transforming Urban Mobility Initiative (accelerating implementation of sustainable urban transport development and mitigation of climate change).

Cities and communities speed coordinated climate action

Similarly, global cities and communities also announced new efforts Saturday to coordinate their climate action commitments to deliver bigger and faster results together.

“Local and regional governments are making commitments that will help national Governments close the gap between current national commitments and the emissions reductions needed to achieve the Paris Agreement targets,” said Gino Van Begin, Secretary General of ICLEI – Local Governments for

Sustainability, a global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions working together for sustainable development.

Urban areas account for around two-thirds of the world's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from global energy use. Their overall contribution to total greenhouse gas emissions is estimated at between 37 and 49 per cent globally, depending on base assumptions of data used.

Also at a press conference at COP 23, the Mayor of city of Pittsburgh (in the United States), William Peduto, announced that 367 American mayors have agreed to be part of the Paris Agreement no matter what our Federal Government did.

It's going to happen at the local level, he said.

The new initiatives announced include efforts ICLEI and the global NDC Partnership (a coalition of countries and institutions working to mobilize support for climate goals and enhancing sustainable development) to design, implement and align climate action strategies across all levels of governments.

Similarly, the Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance (a group of some 40 organizations working to mobilize investment in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure in cities and urban areas internationally) is mapping available finance to match known infrastructure projects a critical requirement to help local governments identify funding.



Rabi Island, Fiji. Rising sea levels and more extreme weather events pose an imminent threat to low-lying atoll islands across the Pacific. Photo: OCHA/Danielle Parry

Threat of ocean warming and ocean acidification

Also Saturday at COP 23, a new declaration was signed to strengthen global response to climate change impacts on oceans and coastal zones.

Oceans are the planet's largest carbon sink, a major regulating force of global climate, and fundamental to the survival and well-being of humanity.

Oceans have featured little in the UN climate negotiations to date, and yet they are not only important for planetary survival but also offer great opportunities for innovation towards a low-carbon blue economy, said Biliana Cicin-Sain, President of the Global Ocean Forum.

Isabel Torres de Noronha, Executive Secretary of the Future Ocean Alliance, a non-governmental organization, in an interview with *UN News*, underscored that ocean acidification might put at risk not only ecosystems but also many economic activities and food security of coastal populations.

Among initiatives at national level, she highlighted one from Viet Nam about

strengthening the coastline by planting forests of mangroves.

[In wake of 'Paradise Papers' leak, UN experts urge States to act against tax abuse by corporations](#)

10 November 2017 – Ratings agencies must downgrade businesses responsible for unethical practices such as tax evasion carried out through off-shore-registered companies, two United Nations human rights experts warned, while urging countries to cooperate to counter this global tax abuse problem.

“States must stop harmful tax competition amongst each other and work together to stop [unethical tax avoidance schemes](#) for wealthy individuals and international corporations,” said Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, UN Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and human rights, who also monitors the impact of illicit financial flows.

Mr. Bohoslavsky made the comment as information from the leak of the so-named ‘Paradise Papers’ continues to be exposed, following series of tax abuse scandals.

The Paradise Papers presented systematic tax avoidance by well-known international corporations, making use of tax havens in places such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and the Isle of Man.

“Wealthy individuals and international corporations are continuing to engage in unethical practices, reducing their tax burdens to minimal levels by using tax havens, which undermines the realisation of human rights” stressed Mr. Bohoslavsky.

In this connection, Surya Deva, chairperson of the [UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights](#), called on businesses to assume their corporate responsibility, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

“All business enterprises have a responsibility to avoid adverse human rights impacts caused or contributed by their tax evasion practices,” said Mr. Deva.

Noting that many countries are struggling with increased debt levels as tax revenues do not match public expenditure, the experts urged Governments to make greater efforts to ensure tax justice rather than reducing spending on infrastructure.

They also warned law firms that facilitate tax avoidance schemes to assume their responsibility.

“The [UN Guiding Principles](#) apply to law firms too – they should consider human rights implications of their legal advice given to businesses,” said Mr. Deva.

The experts further underscored that corporations should extend their commitments for respecting human rights to taxation, to be considered ethical.

The issue of corporate tax avoidance will also be addressed at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 27 to 29 November 2017.

[France's former Culture Minister appointed new UNESCO chief](#)

10 November 2017 – Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) on Friday appointed Audrey Azoulay, a former culture minister of France, to the top post of the agency.

“I now think of all the people I met in recent months, or had met in my various professional capacities, who have great expectations from UNESCO,” Ms. Azoulay [told](#) the UNESCO General Conference, which endorsed her 13 October nomination by agency’s Executive Board.

Ms. Azoulay, who will replace outgoing Director-General [Irina Bokova](#), will take office on 15 November.

“I think of UNESCO’s mandate, which is strikingly modern. I think of all of you who are aware of the difficulties of the Organization but who know that it is irreplaceable, that it is essential, in facing current global challenges and who aspire to the unity and serenity necessary to let it exercise its mandate to best effect,” Ms. Azoulay said. Born in 1972, Ms. Azoulay was France’s Minister of Culture and Communication from February 2016 to May 2017.

She has occupied senior positions in France’s public broadcasting sector and then served as rapporteur to France’s public auditing authority, the *Cour des comptes*, and as a European Commission legislative expert on issues of culture and the media.

Ms. Azoulay served France’s National Cinema Centre (CNC), first as Deputy Audiovisual Director, then as Director of Financial and Legal Affairs, and finally as Deputy Director-General.

A graduate of the *Ecole Nationale d’Administration* and the *Paris Institut d’études politiques*, Ms. Azoulay also holds a Masters degree in Business

Administration from the University of Lancaster (UK).

She is the 11th Director-General of UNESCO and the second woman to occupy this position.

UNESCO is [responsible for](#) coordinating international cooperation in education, science, culture and communication. The organization's theme is 'Building peace in the minds of men and women,' and the themes that fall under its mandate include education in the twenty-first century, fostering free expression, protecting cultural heritage and stewardship of the planet's oceans.

[Central African Republic: Nearly 700 people seeking refuge near UN base relocated](#)

10 November 2017 – This week the United Nations migration agency completed the relocation of 698 internally displaced households from an impromptu camp that formed around the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) following attacks in Kaga Bandoro on 12 October 2016.

Over 20,000 people settled around the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic ([MINUSCA](#)) base after ex-Séléka members attacked an internally displaced person (IDP) camp in Evêché, the Prefect's office and the UN mission's camp.

"Consultation sessions with the households allowed us to ensure that their particular [needs are met](#) and they are fully informed and consulted all along the process," said [IOM](#) CAR Chief of Mission Jean-François Aguilera, referring to numerous sessions held with camp residents in partnership with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

Following August's visit of the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Ministry of Humanitarian Actions of Kaga Bandoro, it was recommended that all IDPs be urgently relocated to safe nearby locations.

The relocation of the first bloc of the provisional camp ran from 17 to 25 October and involved 312 households, 15 of which returned to their old neighbourhood.

The relocation of 'Bloc Nine,' which was near a fuel depot – exposing residents to health risks – began on 26 October and finished on 3 November. It included a total of 319 households, with one returning to its old neighbourhood.

From 4 to 7 November, 67 households close to 'Bloc One' were also relocated. Bloc One had complicated the landing and take-off of planes, forcing humanitarian aviation operators to suspend flights – gravely affecting humanitarian efforts by preventing programme implementations and medical evacuations.

"The dangerous position of Blocs One and Nine made it very clear to IOM and CAR's humanitarian team that everyone must be urgently relocated to a safer location," Mr. Aguilera said.

IOM assisted the 682 relocated households in transporting all their belongings, including huts and hangars, to safe new locations. They also received non-food item kits and \$44 per household, which totalled \$30,103. The 16 returning households were provided with return kits and assisted in rehabilitating their homes and transporting their belongings.

CAR is experiencing a resurgence of violence and faces the risk of repeating the devastating crisis that beset the country four years ago. The number of both IDPs and refugees in neighbouring countries have dramatically increased over the past few months.

[UN, partners building roads to reach Rohingya refugees camped in muddy, flood-prone terrain](#)

10 November 2017 – The United Nations migration agency and its partners are rushing to build roads in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar to improve humanitarian access to hilly terrain, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees have settled in makeshift camps.

The sites where the Rohingyas have settled are desperately overcrowded and located on [inhospitable terrain](#) with insufficient drainage and little or no road access, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) said Friday.

The few roads that exist are impossibly congested, making it extremely difficult to reach refugees with the support and services they need.

Since 25 August, an estimated 613,000 Rohingya refugees have arrived in Cox's Bazar, fleeing violence in Myanmar. The total refugee population in the area is now over 826,000.

IOM is responsible for coordinating site management at a site now home to an estimated 423,000 refugees.

IOM officials said that people hike for hours under the scorching sun, often

carrying heavy loads from distribution points, to reach their shelters. Steep hills and dangerous paths mean that children, the elderly and people with disabilities are often unable to move around the site.

In October, IOM built some 850 metres of road into Balukhali to enable humanitarian agencies to deliver lifesaving assistance to at least 50,000 refugees.

“The road has vastly improved access for both refugees and humanitarian actors,” said IOM Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Project Officer Stephen Waswa Otieno.

“Contractors can now deliver materials inside the site, which has allowed us to build new, essential infrastructure. For example, one of our partners has just built a new distribution centre, bringing aid much closer to the families who need it,” he notes.

IOM is currently working on six other projects, providing more access from main roads outside the sites, and inside the sites. It is also building five bridges, which will allow people and vehicles to cross canals and streams in different areas of the sites.

The agency is also working to mitigate the threat of landslides on the newly de-forested land where many of the shelters perch on steep hillsides.

IOM teams have been distributing bags that the refugees can fill with soil and use to create retaining walls and steps. These can also be used to raise shelters off mud floors, helping to keep them dry, especially when flash floods occur.

Immunizing new arrivals against measles

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) are [stepping up immunization efforts](#) in overcrowded camps and makeshift shelters close to the border with Myanmar in response to an increase in the number of suspected measles cases among the newly arrived Rohingya and their host communities.

“Children are especially at risk from outbreaks of measles and other communicable diseases that result from the crowded living conditions, malnutrition and severe lack of water and sanitation in the camps and other sites,” said Edouard Beigbeder, UNICEF Bangladesh Representative.

“To halt any wider outbreak, it’s essential that coordinated efforts begin immediately to protect as many children as possible.”

The UN agencies and its partners will administer measles and rubella vaccine to nearly 360,000 people in the age group of six months to 15 years among the new Rohingya arrivals in Cox’s Bazar and their host communities.

As of 4 November, one death and 412 suspected cases of measles have been reported among the vulnerable populations living in Cox’s Bazar.

“As part of stepped up vaccination efforts, 43 fixed health facility sites, 56 outreach vaccination teams and vaccination teams at main border entry points will administer MR vaccine to population aged six months to 15 years,” said WHO Representative to Bangladesh N Paranietharan.