

UN agency 'alarmed' again by forced refugee returns to Nigeria from Cameroon

29 June 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency is alarmed by a fresh incident of forced returns of refugees from Cameroon into northeast Nigeria due to an absence of conditions to make such movements safe and sustainable.

"The involuntary return of refugees must be avoided under any circumstances," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi in a press release issued today by his Office ([UNHCR](#)).

"In addition, returns to Nigeria put a strain on the few existing services and are not sustainable at this time. A new emergency, just as the rainy season is starting, has to be avoided at all costs," he added.

In March, UNHCR raised concerns over incidents of forced return from the border areas. More recently, the agency warned that large numbers of refugees were returning from Minawao camp to conditions dangerously unprepared to receive them.

In the latest incident happened on 27 June, some 887 Nigerian refugees, most of them children, were rounded up and forcibly removed to Banki in Nigeria in desperate conditions. They were repatriated in six trucks provided by the Nigerian military and Cameroonian police from the Kolofata border site. This happened after Cameroon gave the refugees seven days' notice on June 19 to return.

Inside Nigeria, insecurity is preventing refugees from returning to their places of origin. UNHCR has repeated its appeal to the authorities in Cameroon to allow newly arrived Nigerian refugees to reach Minawao camp, where some 58,000 are currently being hosted, with another 33,000 living in nearby villages.

UNHCR has renewed its call on Cameroon and Nigeria to refrain from further forced returns, urging both to take urgent steps to convene a meeting of the Tripartite Commission, established under a recent agreement with UNHCR to ensure a facilitated voluntary return process in line with international standards.

Northeast Nigeria has been plagued by violent attacks carried out by the Boko Haram terrorist group.

Conference on Cyprus off to constructive start but hard work remains, says UN facilitator

28 June 2017 – On the opening day of the Conference on Cyprus, a senior United Nations official expressed hope that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders as well as the guarantors – Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom – have the determination to overcome the challenges and resolve the issues before them.

“This is an historic opportunity to solve a problem that has been there for decades,” Jeffrey Feltman, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, told reporters after the opening of the Conference, which is being held in the Swiss town of Crans-Montana.

Mr. Feltman is representing [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres at the Conference, which the UN chief is expected to attend later in the week.

Speaking alongside Mr. Feltman, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide, told the media that the Conference had gotten off to a constructive and good start.

“I am encouraged with what I heard so far,” he said, adding that the “hard work will remain” and that everyone was prepared to hold discussions in larger as well as smaller groups and to “do what is possible” to facilitate an outcome.

“But at the end of the day, of course, it is the responsibility of the Conference participants to go that final mile, to think outside the box, to try out some new ideas so that we finally [leave with] a plan.”

Earlier this month, the Secretary-General held a meeting with the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akinci, at UN Headquarters in New York, after which he announced the reconvening of the Conference on Cyprus.

In addition to the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders and the guarantor powers, the European Union also participated, as an observer, in the Conference.

‘Inclusive, equitable and quality

education' at the heart of high-level UN event

28 June 2017 – Education leaders from around the world convened today at the United Nations to discuss ways to advance action on Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.”

“Inclusive, equitable and quality education goes to the heart of the [2030 Agenda](#) as a key enabler of sustainable development,” said Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly, in his opening remarks at the High-level SDG Action Event on Education.



HIGH-LEVEL SDG ACTION EVENT
EDUCATION

28 June 2017, UN Headquarters, New York



General Assembly President Peter Thomson. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Mr. Thomson pointed out that education taps the Earth's greatest asset, namely the inherent potential of the world's people.

"Access to quality education is not only a goal in itself, but a fundamental building block to creating a better world of sustainable peace, prosperity and development," he underscored.

He went on to explain that education holds the key to fuelling sustainable growth, building social cohesion and stability, and promoting human rights and equality – calling it "the golden thread that runs through all 17 [SDGs](#)."

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed dubbed education as "the cornerstone of sustainable development."

Ms. Mohammed [maintained](#) that the world can only be shaped by quality and relevant education, stressing the importance of investments to ensure a strong framework.

"We know when we deliver education to a young person, we're not only delivering the knowledge and skills they will need to chart their own future – we're preparing them to lend their hands, their mind, and their heart to shaping a more peaceful, prosperous future for their society, and indeed, for the world," she said.



Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed addresses the General Assembly High-

level Action Event. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

The UN deputy chief focussed specifically on the five interrelated areas of finance, innovation, girls' education, lifelong learning, and education in humanitarian contexts.

Noting that the wealthiest children enjoy up to 18 times more public education financing than the poorest, she exhorted, "This injustice must be reversed."

"There is no better investment in the future peace and resilience of a society than in the education of its citizens," she stated.

For her part, Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), emphasized education as a basic human right and the foundation for inclusive sustainable development.



Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), addresses the General Assembly High-level Action Event. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

"Education is a transformational force that cuts across all of the Sustainable Development Goals, making progress sustainable across the board," said Ms. Bokova.

Citing UNESCO's regular global monitoring reports, she noted that 264 million

children, adolescents and youth were out of school – most of them girls.

“Girls and women face the steepest challenges. Two-thirds of the more than 750 million illiterate adults in the world are women,” stressed Ms. Bokova, adding that they are often discriminated against, prevented from enrolling or continuing their education, dropping out of secondary education and facing strong barriers.

“If we do not move these barriers away... we will not achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4,” she underscored.

“If all adults completed secondary education, 420 million people could be lifted from poverty, reducing the number of poor people by more than half globally, by almost two-thirds in Sub-Saharan Africa, in South Asia... and yet, aid to education has fallen for the sixth consecutive year,” Ms. Bokova indicated. “This can simply not go on.”

As experts discussed how to advance SDG 4, the event also highlighted innovations in education through a panel discussion and a “marketplace” that showcased solutions to delivering low-cost or free learning resources to students and educators.

Today’s event, which also featured musical performances, was the last in a series of SDG action events convened by the Office of the President of the General Assembly. Others focussed on sustainable peace, climate action, financing and innovation.

[Harness ‘immense’ potential offered by migration, UN officials urge at global forum](#)

28 June 2017 – Speaking at a major international meeting on migration and development, senior United Nations officials have underlined the need for safe, orderly and regular migration options to ensure that people around the world are not forced to undertake arduous and dangerous pathways in their search for a better future.

Such efforts would also address a number of security, development and human rights concerns regarding migration, said Louise Arbour, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, in her keynote address to the plenary of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, currently underway in the German capital, Berlin.

“Failure, on the other hand, would leave us unequipped to harvest the immense potential of migration,” she said.

“Worse still, the negative impact of irregular migration – both human and societal – would develop roots which would become ever harder to eradicate.”

In her address, Ms. Arbour also emphasized that effective international cooperation and political leadership were vital for the success of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and called on all participants for strong leadership as well as the “willingness to compromise.”

She also highlighted that the UN Charter, the international human rights framework and the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development already offered a framework for the global compact and urged everyone to “resist the temptation to reinvent the wheel.”

Also speaking today, William Lacy Swing, the Director-General of the UN International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), noted that [it is a fact that migration will continue](#) and called for safe and legal pathways to prevent migrants from being abused or risking their lives in perilous journeys.

In that context, he underlined that efforts to assist them should be centred on their rights, needs and capacities.

“We need to address the relationship of migration to critical adjoining policy domains, including development, humanitarian, climate change, and peace and security, in a truly comprehensive way,” he said, urging the international community to move away from “reactive, unidimensional approaches” to migration governance.

“I believe we all agree that we dare not miss this ‘rendezvous with history,’ as this opportunity may not present itself again,” he added.

In the same vein, Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the UN International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), [stressed the importance of taking action that made “a real difference” in the lives of migrants](#) arriving on foreign soil, with hopes for a better future.

“If we are to foster the benefits of these movements for all concerned, our policy choices matter greatly,” he said, while citing the need to remove what he called “the toxicity” from the public debate.

He also emphasized the contributions made by migrants and called for better recognition of their skills and experience to allow them to attain their full potential.

Also speaking at the Global Forum, Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, called for action to ensure better protection of migrants and refugees as well as their rights.

In particular, he urged all stakeholders for expanding legal pathways that benefit both these vulnerable groups.

The Global Forum on Migration and Development was set up by the UN in 2007 as an informal, non-binding, voluntary and government-led venue for high-level

discussions on policies, challenges and opportunities presented by the “migration-development nexus.”

[Outcomes of the tenth session](#) will feed into the ongoing process of forging a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, a framework for effective migration governance. The current session also marks the culmination of more than a decade of international dialogue and cooperation on migration and development.

[‘Disproportionate emphasis’ on security would undercut sustaining peace in Sahel – UN deputy chief](#)

28 June 2017 – The United Nations deputy chief today stressed the need to “avoid a disproportionate emphasis on security” when carrying out a strategy to help Africa’s Sahel region achieve sustained peace and development.

“Given the trans-border and multidimensional nature of instability in the Sahel region, there can be no purely military solution,” [said](#) Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed in her remarks to the meeting on the situation in the Sahel, jointly organized by the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

She described how transnational organized crime, violent extremism and terrorism have become growing threats to stability in the Sahel region, and how the scarcity of food and challenging living conditions have spurred a steady flow of migrants on dangerous, sometimes deadly, journeys through the desert towards the Mediterranean and beyond.

“The continuing deterioration of security in the Sahel is the result of several unresolved underlying causes of instability, including a lack of development, good governance and respect for human rights,” she said, adding that the region has also chronically suffered from harsh climatic conditions, exacerbated by climate change.

Gap between humanitarian and development work must be closed

In that regard, she stressed the need for renewed efforts to close the gap between humanitarian and development work through an integrated approach to development, governance, security and human rights.

A woman and her severely malnourished son leave a UNICEF-supported health centre, in Maradi Region (2012). Photo: UNICEF/Olivier Asselin

Ms. Mohammed said that the UN remains deeply committed to supporting governments in the Sahel, including those of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, in navigating “this balance” through the [United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel](#), the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, the [New Way of Working](#) between humanitarian and development actors, and other relevant mechanisms.

For his part, ECOSOC President Frederick Makamure Shava recalled that last year’s joint meeting highlighted complementarity between the UN’s peace and security efforts and its development, human rights and humanitarian work.

One of the recommendations from that meeting included “forging closer collaboration between ECOSOC and the PBC” to achieve the 2030 Agenda and to sustain peace, he said.

“It is widely acknowledged that if we want to make the [SDGs](#) a reality for all, we need to make sustaining peace an integral part of a coordinated and coherent approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” he said.

Also addressing the meeting was the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Cho Tae-yul, who briefed the participants, including high-level representatives of UN Member States, civil society and the UN system, on the Commission’s recent activities.

He said that since the adoption of the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture by the Security Council and General Assembly in April last year, the Commission has been making greater efforts to play a bridging role among the principal bodies of the UN, by making use of its convening role and recognizing that peace, development, and human rights are closely interlinked.

In particular, he explained how the Commission has been using its convening role to assist the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in implementing the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.