

UNHCR welcomes deal to end latest migrant stand-off in Mediterranean Sea

UN Refugee Agency chief [Filippo Grandi](#), on Thursday gave a cautious welcome to the decision by several EU countries to take in some 450 migrants who have been stranded at sea for days, warning that a “ship-by-ship” arrangement was not sustainable.

The development comes after the Governments of France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Spain and Portugal ended a disembarkation stand-off involving the migrants – who had set out from the Libya coast – by agreeing to take them in and process any asylum claims.

High Commissioner Grandi’s comments follow the rescue of the migrants near the Italian coast. They were reportedly picked up by two ships; one was operated by EU border agency Frontex, the other by Italian police.

In a statement, the [UNHCR](#) chief noted that at an EU Summit in June, some Member States had agreed to a more collaborative and well-managed approach to dealing with people rescued at sea.

He also underlined that while States “have obligations to save lives” under international law, those rescued at sea did not have “the unfettered right” to choose their final destination.

“We hope that these arrangements will now be quickly and effectively implemented,” he said. “As well as ending an ordeal for these individuals, this sets a positive example of how...countries can uphold sea rescue and manage borders while simultaneously meeting international asylum obligations.”

Noting that solutions are needed that go beyond “piecemeal or ship-by-ship arrangements”, Grandi warned that “lives will be at risk with each new attempted boat journey”.

He cautioned that EU arrangements for managing the rescue, disembarkation and follow-up processing of migrants are far from adequate.

Too little was being done to address the desperation that drives people to flee by sea in dangerous boats, Mr. Grandi insisted, just as these migrants had done.

Since the beginning of the year, 50,872 migrants and refugees have entered Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

This compares to 109,746 at the same point last year, and 241,859 by the middle of 2016, according to [IOM](#), the UN Migration Agency.

Although slightly fewer people now risk their lives travelling from North

Africa to Italy than to Spain, it remains the region's deadliest sea route, with 1,104 deaths to date this year.

This is almost four times the number of drownings as the Spanish route has registered since 1 January, despite having almost similar arrival totals, at around 18,000.

FROM THE FIELD: Weather reports come to aid of Uganda's farmers

Farmers in Uganda are keeping their crop yields high, thanks to improved weather data supplied by the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#))-backed push to modernize climate monitoring systems.

The majority of farmers in the East African country rely on rain to grow crops, but as that rainfall becomes less reliable and drought conditions increase, agricultural production has suffered.

These changing weather patterns across the region are testing age-old farming practices, and making it harder for some growers to make a living and feed their families.

The Government of Uganda has responded by embarking on an ambitious plan to revolutionize its weather, water, and climate monitoring systems in order to provide farmers with better information about growing conditions.

It's hoped the initiative will help build resilience when rainfall fails to arrive.

[Click here](#) to see exactly how the climate information is helping Ugandan farmers.

'Embed the essence of 2030 Agenda into everything,' UN chief urges at close of Global Goals forum

As the eight-day High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ([HLPF](#)) drew to a close on Wednesday, the United Nations chief called on everyone to

support the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development for “prosperity and peace on a healthy planet.”

“We need to embed the essence of the 2030 Agenda into everything that we do,” said Secretary-General António Guterres.

The UN chief stated that the Forum has been a time to recommit to the 2030 Agenda, assess where we are and what needs to be done ahead. At the HLPF, More than a thousand government, business and civil society leaders have been taking stock of progress made towards meeting the 2030 Global Goals, and what help countries need to accelerate progress.

Marking the end of the high-level ministerial segment on Wednesday evening at UN Headquarters in New York, a detailed Ministerial Declaration was adopted, with 164 countries in favour, two against, and no abstentions. The declaration reaffirmed the support of countries which are working towards making the SDGs a reality. Last-minute debate on the declaration forced revisions and representatives from several national blocs and Member States, voiced concerns over changes to the draft text, and specific paragraphs which proved controversial.

In his address, Mr. Guterres pointed to the pressing challenges of expanding conflicts and inequality; the erosion of human rights; an “unprecedented” global humanitarian crisis; and “persistent pockets” of poverty and hunger – while laying out pathways to move forward.

“Mobilize the transformative power of the world’s young people,” Mr. Guterres said, noting that a UN strategy to address that need, will be launched in September.

He underscored that greenhouse gas emissions must be brought under control, saying that there was a lack of political will to meet commitments and that he would convene a Climate Summit in September “to galvanize greater climate ambition.”

Moving to the crucial issue of funding the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), the Secretary-General said a High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda would also be taking place later in the year.

He described technology as a double-sided coin which helps deliver the SDGs but also exacerbates inequality. Last week he announced the formation on a new High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, which will be reporting to him in the coming months.

Mr. Guterres stressed that development is not only a conflict-prevention tool, but fosters conditions for resilient societies and a peaceful world. “Multilateralism is the only way to tackle the complex, inter-connected and long-term challenges we are facing,” he told delegates to the forum.

The UN chief drew attention to the Global Compacts for Migration and on Refugees as central in addressing SDGs, and expressed gratitude that States have embraced UN Development System reform to help Governments respond to the

2030 Agenda.

“Let us demonstrate through decisive actions that the transformation demanded by the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is well and truly underway,” concluded the Secretary-General.



UN Photo/Manuel Elias

High-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the ECOSOC

Beginning the development journey

Taking stock of the Forum in her closing remarks, Marie Chatardová, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), commended the “record” 46 countries that had presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) which spell out how they are implementing the SDGs, ahead of the ambitious finishing line of 2030.

She heralded the first-ever VNR Lab where countries talked about “what they have accomplished, what is holding them back and how the VNRs can help...It is clear,” she said, “that we are only at the beginning of the journey.”

Ms. Chatardová also reflected on the HLPF’s many “vibrant” special events, including the first Local and Regional Governments’ Forum, the SDG Business Forum, and the Partnership Exchange; as well as the “record number of side events.”

“We cannot afford to lose this momentum,” she stressed, urging everyone to put the recommendations into action, make stronger commitments, and scale up best practices.

She also encouraged decisive action before September, when the HLPF meets during the new General Assembly session to review the entire 2030 Agenda.

“We need your tireless efforts and commitments if we are to reach our collective goals for a better world,” concluded Ms. Chatardová.

UN-African Union partnership ‘not a choice but a necessity’, Security Council hears

A stronger partnership between the United Nations and the African Union is “not a choice but a necessity” in tackling today’s complex peace and security challenges in Africa, a senior UN official said on Wednesday.

“The complex peace and security challenges we face in Africa are such that neither the United Nations nor the African Union can address the challenges on their own”, [Sahle-Work Zewde](#), the UN Special Representative to the AU and Head of the UN Office there (UNOAU), told the UN Security Council.

“As the Secretary-General noted during his briefing to the AU Peace and Security Council in Addis Ababa last week, the African Union is the most important strategic partner between the United Nations and a regional organization in peace and security, development and human rights,” she added.

The two organization have prioritized the development of a systematic, predictable and strategic partnership, based on mutual respect, shared values and comparative advantage, Ms. Zewde noted.

The UN and AU signed the Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security in April last year, and the Joint Framework for Implementation of Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) in January 2018.

The partnership has since been “characterized by closer collaboration, more regular exchange of information and consultations, and coordinated action including joint field visits and joint statements”, she said.

Ms. Zewde was briefing the UN Security Council on the Secretary-General’s report on strengthening the partnership between the two organizations on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of her Office.

A key point of the report is that the UN and the AU recognize their inter-dependence.

They also need to recognize the critical role of sub-regional organizations, which are often the first to detect early warning signs of impending conflict, and are important partners in promoting dialogue and

reconciliation.

She stressed however, that even though the UN-AU relationship is stronger than ever, they need to work even more closely.

She also underscored the importance of conflict resolution by reacting quickly and decisively to head off conflict before it escalates, while ensuring African ownership of this process.

In the report, the Secretary-General has expressed his support for the financing of AU-led peace support operations authorized by the Security Council, including through UN assessed contributions.

It is also essential that the issue of predictable and sustainable financing for AU peace operations authorized by the Security Council is – on a case-by-case basis – framed within the context of a mutually-agreed political strategy, and informed by joint analysis, she added.

[Funding shortfalls threaten health services for a million vulnerable Iraqis, says UN health agency](#)

Almost one million vulnerable Iraqis will have to go without basic medicines and other life-saving healthcare if funding is not found to save critical health facilities, the United Nations health agency said on Tuesday.

“Support for health services in Iraq has [drastically declined](#) since the end of the Mosul campaign just over one year ago,” said the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), pointing out that 22 health service delivery points have already closed this year, due to funding shortages, “leaving critical gaps” in providing care for displaced persons, and those that have returned to heavily damaged homes.

Moreover, WHO said that 38 per cent of remaining health facilities are in danger of closing by the end of this month, “increasing risk of communicable diseases outbreaks and the roll back of recovery efforts in areas devastated by conflict.”

These facilities offer services to over 900,000 displaced Iraqis and their hosts, helping to treat common diseases, provide gynecological services, vaccinations, nutrition screening and referring complicated medical cases for advanced treatment.

So far, only \$8.4 million of the \$67.4 million required for the Iraq

Humanitarian Response Plan for 2018 has been funded. WHO flagged that \$54 million is urgently required to continue servicing Iraq's newly-accessible governorates, following the military defeat of the ISIL terrorist group, which occupied large swathes of the country after 2014.

"Health cluster partners play a crucial role in providing health care for displaced people and host communities in Iraq. Since 2018, health partners have treated more than 1.2 million Iraqis," WHO underscored.

Fully respect and address the people's legitimate concerns – *Ján Kubiš urges Iraqi Government*

Protest repercussions

Meanwhile, following recent demonstrations over a lack of services and jobs, and the need for improved living conditions, UN Special Representative for Iraq Ján Kubiš urged the Iraqi Government to "fully respect and address the people's legitimate concerns."

According to news reports, widespread unrest began across southern Iraq last week, spreading from the oil-rich city of Basra, in the wake of parliamentary elections held in May. No one party gained an outright majority and a new coalition government has yet to be formed.

In a [statement](#) on Tuesday, Mr. Kubiš called on politicians to ensure that "the next administration prioritizes good governance, reforms and the fight against corruption that will enable economic development and progress, job creation and delivery of critical public services."

He regretted the loss of life and injuries on both sides, as well as the destruction of public and private property.

Mr. Kubiš underscored the people's inalienable right to free expression, including participating in peaceful demonstrations "without fear and intimidation or arbitrary detentions while abiding by the law," and "unfettered access to information."

"It is the duty of the authorities to enable such lawful demonstrations and to protect their participants," he said.

He added that while maintaining law and order, security forces must exercise restraint and avoid disproportionate, lethal force.

The UN envoy also warned against "allowing intruders and opportunists to exploit the otherwise legitimate demonstrations for their political purposes, to trigger disturbances."