

Hailing regional efforts, senior UN official urges Latin America and the Caribbean to continue to protect people on the move

Recognizing Latin American and Caribbean countries as “pioneers” in the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees urged the region to bolster its standards even further given the global increase in number of people being driven from their homes.

“I encourage those States who have not yet done so, to accede to the refugee and statelessness instruments, and to move forward with extending pragmatic protection responses to those in need,” said High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, speaking at a regional consultation on the Global Compact for Refugees, in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil.

In his remarks, Mr. Grandi drew attention to the gaps in the international refugee protection regime and how these could be overcome. He also highlighted the need to support the displaced both at the places of origin and reception.

Further, Mr. Grandi also noted the “innovative practices” in the region to address challenges facing people on the move, such as complementary mechanisms, humanitarian visas, and national and regional migration arrangements.



Arthur Max/FM. Ministério das Relações Exteriores

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi addressing the regional consultation in Brasilia, Brazil.

“I ask you to continue doing so, especially now, when the numbers of refugees are increasing,” he added, noting that the region has more “success stories” on the inclusion of refugees and local communities than anywhere else in the world.

According to estimates, the Latin America and the Caribbean region represents about 16 per cent of the 65 million people who have been forced to leave their homes due to wars, conflicts and persecutions.

Being held on 19 and 20 February, the consultation ([more information](#), in Portuguese) will see officials from 36 countries and territories in the region as well as civil society and other stakeholders discuss and consolidate the region’s contributions to the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) that will be adopted by the General Assembly later this year.

[Ahead of Social Justice Day, UN agency calls for fair labour migration governance](#)

Many migrant workers end up trapped in low-pay, unsafe and unhealthy jobs, the head of the United Nations labour agency warned Monday, calling for the adoption of fair labour migration governance frameworks at the global, regional and national levels.

“Most migration today is linked, directly or indirectly, to the search for decent work opportunities,” said UN International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General Guy Ryder in his message for [World Day of Social Justice](#), which is annually observed on 20 February.

“But many migrant workers end up trapped in jobs with low pay and unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, often in the informal economy, without respect for their labour and other human rights. They often have to pay high recruitment fees to get a job, on average over a year’s wages – this makes them highly vulnerable to forced labour and child labour,” he added.

Marked this year with the theme ‘Workers on the Move: the Quest for Social Justice,’ the [Day](#) focuses on the world’s 150 million migrant workers, many of whom face exploitation, discrimination and violence and lack even the most

basic protections.

“This is particularly true for women, who make up 44 per cent of migrant workers,” he said.

Mr. Guy stressed that migrant workers like all workers are entitled to fair treatment and fair treatment for migrant workers is also key to preserving the social fabric of societies and to sustainable development.

If labour migration is well-governed, fair and effective, it can deliver benefits and opportunities for migrant workers, their families and their host communities.

Governance should be guided by international labour standards, in particular the fundamental principles and rights at work and the relevant ILO and UN conventions. The ILO’s [Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration](#) and [the General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment](#) offer further guidance.

The ILO is encouraging the adoption of fair labour migration governance frameworks at all levels – global, regional and national, including a comprehensive, integrated and “whole of government” approach that engages labour ministries together with business, and employers’ and workers’ organizations – those on the frontlines of labour markets.

“We can choose to make labour migration a win-win situation for migrants and host communities,” he said, noting that how the international community develops and helps Member States implement a global compact on migration – to be adopted later this year – will be instrumental in determining the future course of labour migration.

In 2007, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 20 February as World Day of Social Justice, [inviting](#) Member States to promote national activities in accordance with the objectives and goals of the [World Summit for Social Development](#) and the [twenty-fourth special session](#) of the General Assembly.

[United States: Planned execution of seriously ill man may amount to torture, warn UN experts](#)

Two United Nations human rights experts have urged the Government of the United States to halt the execution a seriously ill person stressing that given his health condition, the use of lethal injection could possibly amount to torture.

In a [news release](#), Agnes Callamard, the UN [Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#); and Nils Melzer, the UN [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#), also expressed concern that Doyle Hamm, who is who is due be executed in the state of Alabama on 22 February, may not have received a fair trial.

The execution is set to go ahead even though Mr. Hamm has cancer and medical professionals have previously had difficulty accessing his veins, the release added.

“We are seriously concerned that attempts to insert needles into Mr. Hamm’s veins to carry out the lethal injection would inflict pain and suffering that may amount to torture,” said the UN rights experts.

The release also noted that judges have ordered a fresh medical report to be delivered by 20 February, two days before the scheduled execution.

“We urge the authorities to halt [Mr. Hamm’s] execution, annul his death sentence, and hold a re-trial that complies with international standards, as we have received information indicating that his original trial did not fully respect the most stringent due process and fair trial guarantees,” they added.

The Special Rapporteurs also said that the planned method of execution, using Alabama’s “three-drug protocol,” may also have torturous effects, because the sedative used is incapable of keeping a convict unconscious in the presence of the “excruciating pain” likely to be induced by the other drugs.

Further, Ms. Callamard and Mr. Melzer said that imposing the death penalty in a manner that constitutes torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment would render the execution arbitrary in nature and thus be in violation of the fundamental right to life.

The news release also noted that the human rights experts have written to the US Government to express their concerns about the case.

UN Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

[‘We are not out of the woods yet’ on drought relief efforts, warns top UN](#)

aid official in Somalia

The top United Nations humanitarian official in Somalia has commended the drought relief and recovery efforts of the authorities in the northern state of Puntland, while cautioning that the current humanitarian crisis is far from over.

“We took stock, together with [Puntland’s] leadership, of the drought response as it has been so far, looking back to what has been a good year in terms of close cooperation and a very successful drought relief effort,” the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, said in Puntland’s capital, Garowe, on Saturday, in the wake of a series of meeting with officials, including the Federal Member State’s President Abdiwali Mohamed Ali.

“At the same time, we talked about the remaining challenges because we are not out of the woods yet by any stretch of the imagination,” he added.

Mr. de Clercq – who also serves as the Secretary-General’s Deputy Special Representative for Somalia and the UN Resident Coordinator – was visiting Puntland to meet with security, planning and humanitarian officials from the local government, as well as representatives of civil society organizations, to discuss the current drought response and other challenges in the region.

Speaking on the collective response so far to the drought that has affected Puntland and the rest of Somalia for over five failed rain cycles, Mr. de Clercq said that, while 2017 was a good year in terms of close cooperation to avoid the worst impact of the drought, further effort would be needed.

He added that, in areas like Sool and Sanaag, there are still massive needs and a strong possibility that famine-type conditions would develop. The two areas, located on the north-eastern tip of the Horn of Africa, form part of a disputed region claimed by both Puntland and neighbouring ‘Somaliland.’

Mitigating the effects of the drought and helping the people who have been displaced by it was one of the main topics covered in the UN official’s meeting with President Mohamed Ali. “Our discussion was frank and candid, very fruitful,” the President noted afterwards.



UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed

Peter de Clercq, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia and UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator accompanied by officials from the UN and Puntland administration interacts with residents of drought-hit Salaxley village., by UN Photo/Ilyas Ahmed

At the end of the visit, which included discussions at the ministries of security and planning, together with Puntland's disaster management agency, Mr. de Clercq said that it was important to get the right resources to the right place and work with the right partners, such as the Puntland authorities, and to consider longer-term factors.

"We try to address the underlying causes of the crisis, like food insecurity and livestock depletion, and to think of alternatives for people to make a living and to rebuild their lives," he said.

In 2017, drought-related famine was averted through the efforts of Somalis and their international partners. However, the risk is not yet overcome as there are 5.4 million people in Somalia needing life-saving humanitarian assistance. Work is being done in all regions, including Puntland, to build and sustain resilience in all communities, especially the populations affected the most by the recurring cycle of drought and famine risk, such as pastoralists, displaced persons and fishing communities.

There is a resilience and recovery framework in Somalia, to help it transition from humanitarian intervention to sustainable recovery and disaster preparedness. Led by the authorities and supported by the United Nations and the World Bank, it is tightly linked to its development plan. It enables the national and regional governments to take the lead in medium- and

long-term developments solutions, going to the root of communities' vulnerability to droughts, and helping them withstand recurrent shocks.

[Korean nuclear crisis, Middle East quagmire eroding global security, UN chief tells Munich summit](#)

A nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula and a quagmire in the Middle East are “two qualitative changes” that further eroded global security over the past year, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres told an annual conference on international security policy in Munich, Germany.

“Conflicts are becoming more and more interrelated and more and more related to a set of a new global terrorism threat to all of us,” Mr. Guterres said in his [keynote address](#) at the opening ceremony on Friday of the Munich Security Conference.

For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the world is facing the threat of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which he called “a development made in total contradiction to the will of the international community and in clear violation of several resolutions of the Security Council.”

He said that it was essential to maintain “meaningful pressure over North Korea” to create an opportunity for diplomatic engagement on the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula within a regional framework.

“The two key stakeholders in relation to this crisis, the United States and [DPRK]” must be able to “come together and have a meaningful discussion on these issues,” he said, adding that it is “important not to miss the opportunity of a peaceful resolution through diplomatic engagement as a military solution would be a disaster with catastrophic consequences that we cannot even be able to imagine.”

The situation in the broader Middle East, which the UN chief said had become a “Gordian knot,” was also eroding global security, with that are crises that are “crossing each other and interconnected.”

Pointing to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya, among others, Mr. Guterres said the entire Middle East has “became a mess,” with varied and intersecting fault lines.

He warned of the absence of a common vision in the region and said that even if interests are contradictory, the threats these conflicts represent would

justify some efforts to come together.

Turning to cyber-security, Mr. Guterres called for a serious discussion about the international legal framework in which cyberwars take place.

“I can guarantee that the United Nations would be ready to be a platform in which different actors could come together and discuss the way forward, to find the adequate approaches to make sure that we are able to deal with the problem of cybersecurity,” he said, noting that artificial intelligence provides “enormous potential for economic development, social development and for the well-being for all of us.”

The Secretary-General said that Governments and others have been unable to manage human mobility. He warned that this had created mistrust and doubts about globalism and multilateralism.

“This is a reason why,” he said, “we need to be able to unite, we need to be able to affirm that global problems can only be addressed with global solutions and that multilateralism is today more necessary than ever.”