

Migration should be act of hope, not despair; UN chief proposes ways to maximize migrants' contributions

11 January 2018 – Laying out his vision for concrete steps the world can take in 2018 to maximize the contribution millions of migrants are already making to our societies and to agree a set of actions to ensure that the rights of all migrants are fully respected, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Thursday said the issue of migration calls for a truly global response.

[Let me emphasize](#): migration is a positive global phenomenon. It powers economic growth, reduces inequalities, connects diverse societies and helps us ride the demographic waves of population growth and decline,” said Mr. Guterres, launching [Making Migration Work for All](#) at UN Headquarters, in New York.

Globally, migrants make a major contribution to international development – both by their work as well as through remittances back to their home countries. Last year, migrants remitted nearly \$600 billion, three times all development aid.

“The majority of migrants live and work legally,” said the UN chief, noting however, that “others live in the shadows, unprotected by the law and unable to contribute fully to society.”

A “desperate minority” even put their very lives at risk to enter countries where they face suspicion and abuse, he noted, underlining that the impact can be seen not only in the humanitarian crises affecting people on the move and horrific violations of their fundamental rights, but also in public perception that wrongly sees migration as out of control leading to increased mistrust and policies that seek to stop rather than facilitate human movement.

Furthermore, authorities that erect obstacles to migration, actually end up, inflicting economic self-harm, as they impose barriers to having their labour needs met in an orderly, legal fashion.

“Worse still, they unintentionally encourage illegal migration,” said Mr. Guterres, noting that aspiring migrants, denied legal pathways to travel, inevitably fall into irregular methods that increase their vulnerability as well as undermine governments' authority.

I call for us to focus on the overwhelming positives of migration and to use facts not prejudice as the basis for addressing its challenges
Secretary-General Guterres

The best way to end the stigma of illegality and abuse around migrants, he added, is for governments to put in place more legal pathways for migration as well as for development cooperation policies to take human mobility into account.

In the report, which also serves as his principal input to the 'zero draft' – a document forming the basis for final negotiations of the proposed [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), Secretary-General Guterres calls for concerted effort to implement the declarations and commitments on migration its grounding in human rights.

The UN chief underscores: "The basic challenge before us is to maximize the benefits of migration rather than obsess about minimizing risks: we have a clear body of evidence revealing that, despite many real problems, migration is beneficial both for migrants and host communities in economic and social terms – our overarching task is to broaden the opportunities that migration offers to us all."

At the same time, it also highlights the important role of all stakeholders – including municipalities, legislatures, civil society, the private sector, regional organizations, the media, academia and migrants themselves.

The report also notes the need for the UN system to be better placed and equipped to support the implementation of the Global Compact, in particular, its oversight.

"I stress my determination to strengthen how we work on this issue, consistent with my proposed management reforms and strengthening of the UN development system," said Mr. Guterres.

More to follow...

[UN agencies call for funds to reverse food ration cuts for refugees in Rwanda](#)

11 January 2018 – United Nations humanitarian agencies on Thursday called for more donor funding to reverse a 25 per cent reduction in food or cash assistance for more than 100,000 refugees in Rwanda.

"We thank donors for their continued generosity and support, while urging them to further [fund humanitarian assistance](#) so that we can give refugees the assistance they depend on," said Jean-Pierre de Margerie, Rwanda Country Director of the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)).

Some 130,000 Burundian and Congolese refugees in Rwandan camps rely on humanitarian assistance.

Full rations of nutrition support for refugees provide 2,100 calories per person per day, the minimum for a healthy life. However, funding shortages forced WFP to trim assistance to 90 per cent in November and December, and since January, WFP has reduced the ration sizes to 75 per cent.

Some \$11 million are needed to restore full support for the next six months.

For its part, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) had secured only 19 per cent of its total funding needs as of December 2017.

UNHCR, WFP and others have started moving towards targeting to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are considered, while continuing supplementary feeding and promoting self-reliance by supporting a Government pledge to 'graduate' 18,000 camp-based refugees from food and/or cash for food assistance programmes by mid-2018.

Now more than ever is the time to find innovative and long-term solutions for refugees in Rwanda," said UNHCR Representative Ahmed Baba Fall.

A Government-UN joint strategy on economic inclusion of refugees enables more refugees to become self-reliant and contribute to the economic development of their host communities by creating access to formal employment opportunities for up to 60,000 refugees and providing banking services for a similar number of refugees by mid-2018.

[Colombia: Reintegrating 14,000 ex-combatants remains a challenge, Security Council told](#)

10 January 2018 – Colombia's peace efforts remain challenged by the task of reintegrating 14,000 former rebel combatants, the top United Nations official in the country said Wednesday as he also reported to the Security Council that the UN will 'closely follow' reports of a just-broken ceasefire between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Colombian Government.

While the building blocks of stabilization are being put in place, we cannot lose sight of the challenges of reintegration," Jean Arnault, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, told the Security Council, presenting the first quarterly report on the activities of the [UN Verification Mission in Colombia](#), which he heads up.

The mission, which started its operations on 26 September 2017, was established to verify the commitments of the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) on reintegrating former FARC-EP members into society, and on ensuring security in territories most affected by the decades-long conflict, which was ended with a peace deal between the two sides in November 2016.

Mr. Arnault said that the political reintegration of the former guerrilla organization is on course, noting that the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections this year and local and departmental elections in less than two years will be an opportunity for the new FARC party to gain seats.

“But we continue to view with concern the socioeconomic reintegration of the 14,000 former combatants,” he said, explaining that many of them are still in prison and are extremely frustrated with the reintegration process.

President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón has taken the important step of recognizing the need for access to landownership as a major incentive for reintegration.

For their part, many FARC members have demonstrated on the ground that they are willing and able to engage in agriculture, environmental protection and crop substitution.

These are promising developments, but only that. The next few months must be the opportunity to “turn the corner” and make a fragile process more durable.

Regarding a temporary ceasefire between the Government and the National Liberation Army (ELN), Mr. Arnault stressed that the clamor for the continued suspension of military action has been unanimous, and reiterated the need to preserve the lower level of violence as seen in the past three months, while also advocating for a clearer and more reliable ceasefire.

“Unfortunately, it was just announced that attacks against pipelines by the ELN have just resumed. We will follow closely developments and keep the Council informed,” Mr. Arnault said.

Meanwhile, UN Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric told reporters in New York that the Secretary-General will be travelling to Bogotá, Colombia, on 13 January to support peace efforts.

On Saturday, Mr. Guterres will meet with the President, officials of the Government and armed forces, as well as with the leadership of the FARC and the Catholic Church.

On Sunday, the Secretary-General will travel to Meta Department, where his agenda will include a visit to a territorial area for training and reintegration of former FARC combatants.

Asked if the UN chief will meet with the ELN, Mr. Dujarric said “we’re concerned by the incident this morning” an attack on an oil pipeline. “We’re obviously following the developments very closely and we’re keeping the

[Syria: UN rights chief condemns spike in civilian casualties in 'de-escalation' areas](#)

10 January 2018 – The United Nations human rights chief on Wednesday condemned an upsurge in civilian casualties in Eastern Ghouta in Syria amid the recent escalation in airstrikes and ground-based attacks by Government forces and their allies, noting that at least 85 civilians have been killed since 31 December.

“The suffering of the people of Syria knows no end,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, noting that residential areas in Eastern Ghouta on the outskirts of the nation's capital, Damascus, are being hit day and night by strikes from the ground and the air, forcing civilians to hide in basements.

He stressed that all parties are obliged under international law to distinguish between lawful military targets and civilians and civilian objects.

Since 31 December, at least 85 civilians, including 21 women and 30 children, have been killed and at least 183 injured in Eastern Ghouta, where at least 390,000 civilians have been living under siege for four years, according to information gathered by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

On 9 January, airstrikes and ground-based strikes hit a residential area in opposition-controlled Hamourya, reportedly killing at least 13 civilians. The previous day, two airstrikes and simultaneous ground-based strikes on a residential area near a market in the opposition-held town of Duma reportedly killed 12 civilians.

Armed opposition groups also continue to fire rockets into residential areas in Government-controlled Damascus. On 4 January, a rocket fired into Old Damascus hit the vicinity of a bakery, reportedly killing a woman and injuring 13 other civilians.

The High Commissioner also noted that the failure to evacuate urgent medical cases from Eastern Ghouta runs contrary to its international humanitarian law obligations to collect, care for, and take measures to evacuate the sick and wounded.

In Idlib, ground attacks and airstrikes have escalated as a rapidly-moving

Government offensive gains momentum, jeopardizing the safety of hundreds of thousands of civilians, said Mr. Zeid, noting that an explosion on 7 January reportedly killed 28 civilians.

Both Eastern Ghouta and Idlib are considered de-escalation areas brokered in May by Iran, Russia and Turkey under the Astana process, with the stated aim to put a prompt end to violence and improve the humanitarian situation.

I repeat my call for the parties to ensure strict adherence to international law including by ensuring the protection of civilians from the effects of hostilities and to allow unhindered access by humanitarian agencies to provide badly needed aid, said Mr. Zeid.

[Tragic start to New Year for migrants as hundreds feared dead in Mediterranean – UN](#)

10 January 2018 – A little more than a week into the New Year, reports reveal that close to 200 migrants or refugees have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea with up to 100 unaccounted for since Saturday, the United Nations migration agency said Wednesday.

It's very distressing that during the first 10 days of 2018 we have seen close to [800 migrants rescued or intercepted](#) off the Libyan coast, with more lives lost at sea, said Othman Belbeisi, Chief of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Libya Mission.

More has to be done to reduce irregular unsafe movements of people along the Central Mediterranean route, he added.

By contrast, at a time when Mediterranean migrants' death dropped sharply, IOM recorded only 26 on the Mediterranean Sea lanes in December.

While January 2017 had witnessed some 254 deaths, this week's reports suggest that the start of 2018 may be even deadlier.

IOM reported on Tuesday that 81 Mediterranean Sea deaths of migrants or refugees were recorded in the [first eight days of the year](#) five in Western Mediterranean waters off Spain and Morocco, the rest between Italy and Libya.

In the latest, and third deadliest, shipwreck in the Mediterranean since Saturday, the Libyan Coast Guard [rescued](#) three rubber boats with 279 migrants 19 women, 243 men, 13 boys and four girls in an operation

lasting at least 12 hours.

According to survivors, and a press release by Libya's Coast Guard, about 100 people on board remained missing.

IOM was present at the disembarkation point in Tripoli and provided the survivors with food and water.

IOM's Christine Petré reported that the boats departed from the coastal towns of Azzawiyah and Al Khums with most of the survivors hailing from African countries, including Senegal, Mali and Nigeria. The Libyan Coast Guard reported that eight are from Bangladesh while two are from Pakistan.

The UN migration agency continues to provide support and direct humanitarian assistance to the survivors of this latest tragedy, many of whom now are at Libya's Tajoura detention centre.