

Recognize migration's positive impact and address its challenges in realistic way, urges senior UN official

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“There is a lot of misperception in the migration field that needs to be addressed,” Louise Arbour, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for International Migration, said at the opening of a stocktaking meeting on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

“The global compact for migration is an opportunity to reorient the often-toxic narrative against migrants towards a more accurate narrative on migration that recognizes its overwhelmingly positive impact and is prepared to address its challenges in a sober, realistic way.”

In her remarks, Ms. Arbour also spoke of the need to be “realistic” about how migration happens and how migration policies work and stressed that the complex phenomenon should not be reduced to “simple, binary categories” such as refugees or economic migrants; security or human rights; or legal pathways versus returns.

“Nor can we see migrations as being divided on geographical lines, even while respecting the regional particularities that do exist. Migration is a truly global phenomenon, neither a unique gift nor burden on any one set of countries,” she added.

The [stocktaking](#) meeting being held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, follows an intensive preparatory process around the world to inform the development of the global compact. The process saw five regional meetings in Santiago (Chile), Beirut (Lebanon), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Bangkok (Thailand) and Geneva (Switzerland). The process also included two multi-stakeholder hearings, seven regional civil society consultations, and numerous national consultations.

“It is the global nature of migration that brings us here today,” said Ms. Arbour, noting that migration’s inherent international nature necessitates a global response and, at the same time, noted that it does not contradict a State’s sovereign right – subject to international and domestic law – to

manage who enters and stays within its borders.

“A successful global compact will need to reflect this: its success will rest on maximum State political and moral buy-in and willingness to enhance cooperation at the regional and international levels,” she said.

On the [agenda](#) for the three-day meeting are discussions on the global, regional, subregional and national perspectives; perspectives from stakeholders; an ‘Idea Lab’ session which includes ‘TED Talks’ on data and evidence, public perceptions and narratives, and migration and identity; and follow-up and implementation.

Rapid, large-scale, coordinated action needed to beat pollution – UN chief

4 December 2017 – Noting the severity of the threats posed by pollution to both people and the planet, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres highlighted the need for rapid, large-scale and coordinated action by all actors to make the world pollution-free.

“We already have much of the knowledge and technical solutions we need to prevent, mitigate and manage pollution,” said the Secretary-General, in a [message](#) to the UN Environment Assembly, currently under way in Nairobi, Kenya.

“Beating pollution will help reduce poverty, improve public health, create decent jobs, address climate change and protect life on land and sea,” he added.

Being held from 4 to 6 December, the UN Environment Assembly brings together Governments, entrepreneurs, activists and others to share ideas and commit to action to protect on environment.

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres noted the assembly’s focus this year on tackling pollution and said that important successes have been achieved towards that target, including the entry into force of the [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#) (a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury), as well as the announcement that the [Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer](#) will enter into force on in January 2019, having obtained the required threshold of 20 ratifications.

“Making our planet pollution-free is a long-term necessary endeavour. The world counts on this Assembly to show strong leadership by sounding the alarm and calling on all Governments to act to beat pollution,” he said.

Discussions at the Environment Assembly are focused on a new UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report, [Towards a Pollution-Free Planet](#), that urges greater political leadership and partnerships at all levels; strengthened environmental governance ; improved resource efficiency and lifestyle changes; low-carbon tech investments; and advocacy to combat pollution in all its forms.

[According](#) to UNEP, environmental degradation causes nearly one in four of all deaths worldwide, or 12.6 million people a year, and the widespread destruction of key ecosystems.

In addition to the impact on health and environment, pollution also extracts a high economic cost – estimated at over \$4.6 trillion (equivalent to 6.2 per cent of global economic output) each year in welfare losses due to pollution.

“Given the grim statistics on how we are poisoning ourselves and our planet, bold decisions from the UN Environment Assembly are critical,” said Erik Solheim, the Executive Director of UNEP.

“That is as true for threats like pollution as it is for climate change and the many other environmental threats we face,” he added, noting that all global processes linked to the environment, such as the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the [Paris Agreement](#) on Climate Change distil to one simple message, “we must take care of people and planet.”

[UN voices support for Somali Government's efforts at first-ever security conference in Mogadishu](#)

4 December 2017 – At Somalia's first-ever security conference, hosted by the country's Federal President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed “Farmaajo” in the capital, Mogadishu, participants agreed to speed up security sector reform and develop a plan to transfer primary responsibility for the country's security from the United Nations-backed African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to its own security forces.

“Security is our greatest requirement if this country is to realize its full potential,” President Farmaajo said in his keynote address. “As a Government, we are absolutely determined to win the war against al-Shabaab and (Islamic State) with the full support of our international partners. Without security and counter-terrorism, there cannot be a peaceful, prosperous and progressive Somalia to which we all aspire.”

The conference was jointly convened with the UN and the African Union (AU) and featured the participation of Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairi, the

presidents of Somalia's five federal member states, cabinet ministers and a host of ambassadors and other senior representatives of the international community. The top UN official attending was the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Michael Keating.

In his remarks, Mr. Keating voiced support for the Federal Government's commitment to pursue a comprehensive approach to security in the country.

"Defeating al-Shabaab cannot be done exclusively by military means," he said. "Rule of law and policing are essential, stabilization activities [in recaptured areas] are essential. Countering and preventing violent extremism are also essential as well as addressing and solving the many conflicts around the country on which al-Shabaab and other extremists thrive."

The conference was organized as a follow-up to last May's London Conference on Somalia, which endorsed a landmark political agreement on a new national security architecture reached by federal and state leaders earlier this year and formally adopted a security pact for the country.

A [communiqué](#) issued at the end of the meeting identified three priority areas that require immediate action by Somali authorities with the support of the international community. These include the implementation of the approved national security architecture, the urgent development of a realistic, conditions-based transition plan to enable Somali security forces to take over primary responsibility from AMISOM for protecting the people and Government of Somalia, and continued international support to build the capacity of the country's security forces and institutions.

Security has been a major issue for the east African country, which has suffered a range of violent attacks linked to extremists. In mid-October, hundreds of civilians were killed and injured in a massive car bomb blast outside the entrance to a hotel in Mogadishu's K5 junction, which is home to government offices, hotels and restaurants.

Senior Somali Government officials and leading representatives of the international community will reconvene on Tuesday for a so-called Somalia Partnership Forum that will address the pressing humanitarian and development issues facing the country.

[Urgent action needed to address rising global hunger, says UN agency head](#)

4 December 2017 – Immediate action is needed to address the rise in global hunger, the head of the United Nations food security agency has urged, highlighting the need to build resilience in poor and vulnerable communities.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), the number of hungry people around the world rose to 815 million – [the first increase after more than a decade of steady decline](#).

“The most important thing to do now is to build the resilience of poor people to face the impacts of conflicts and climate change,” José Graziano da Silva, the Director-General of FAO told the UN agency’s Council meeting in Rome, Monday.

In addition to rising hunger, obesity and overweight are also growing in developed and developing countries, adding further challenges and raising the cost of current food systems.

It is, thus, critical to ensure that humanitarian assistance is combined with development actions to chart a course to eradicate hunger by 2030, added Mr. Graziano da Silva, calling for new and increased investments from both the public and private sectors.

At the FAO Council, which manages administrative and financial affairs between biennial meetings of the UN agency’s Conference, the Director-General outlined major events in 2018, including those on agroecology, globally important agricultural heritage systems, innovation for smallholder and family farmers, as well as plan to launch an international platform for biodiversity.

These initiatives are designed to support countries put in place sustainable agricultural practices that combine food production, ecosystem services and climate-change resilience at the same time, Mr. Graziano da Silva explained.

[Top UN humanitarian official in Yemen calls for ‘humanitarian pause’](#)

4 December 2017 – Amid a sharp escalation of fighting in Sana’a, the capital of Yemen, with reports that dozens have been killed and hundreds injured, the top United Nations relief official in the country has urged for an urgent humanitarian pause to allow civilians to seek assistance, aid workers to reach them, and for the wounded to be evacuated.

“[The streets of Sana’a have become battlegrounds](#) and people are trapped in their homes, unable to move out in search of safety and medical care and to access basic supplies such as food, fuel and safe water,” said Jamie McGoldrick, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, in a statement Monday.

He also noted that humanitarians have received “desperate calls” for help by families trapped in the midst of the fighting but added that ambulances and medical teams cannot reach the injured due to ongoing clashes.

There are also reports that some have come under attack and life-saving activities have been impacted as aid workers are unable to move.

“Thus, I call on all parties to the conflict to urgently enable a humanitarian pause on Tuesday, 5 December, between 10.00 AM and 16.00 PM to allow civilians to leave their homes and seek assistance and protection,” he added.

Mr. McGoldrick also urged UN Member States with leverage on the parties to the conflict to step up their engagement “for the sake of the protection of the civilian population.”

Further in the statement, the senior UN relief official also stressed that deliberate attacks against civilians, humanitarians and health-care personnel, as well as against civilian and medical infrastructure, are clear violations of international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes.

UN rights chief appoints experts to investigate violations and abuses in Yemen

In related news, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, Monday appointed members to the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, [established](#) by the Human Rights Council in September this year, to monitor and report on the situation in the war-torn country.

In the [resolution](#), the Geneva-based Human Rights Council –the highest intergovernmental forum on human rights within the UN system – requested the experts to carry out a “comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights and other appropriate and applicable fields of international law committed by all parties to the conflict [...] and to establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged violations and abuses and, where possible, to identify those responsible.”

The members appointed Monday are Kamel Jendoubi (Tunisia), who will serve as chairperson, Charles Garraway (United Kingdom) and Melissa Parke (Australia).

“The group’s creation is an important step toward accountability and ending impunity for the serious violations of human rights committed by all sides in Yemen amid a worsening humanitarian crisis in the country, and ensuring justice and remedy for the victims,” said the UN rights chief, in a [news release](#) announcing the appointments.

According to the release, the experts will submit a comprehensive written report to the High Commissioner by September 2018.

A child’s bicycle lies amid rubble of a destroyed house in Yemen’s capital, Sana’a. (File) Photo: OCHA/Charlotte Cans 12-04-2017_OCHA-Yemen.jpg