

## UN humanitarian officials call for global solidarity ahead of pledging conference on Rohingya refugee crisis

16 October 2017 – Senior United Nations officials are urging the international community to come together in support of a 23 October pledging conference to “send a strong message to Rohingya refugees and their generous hosts in Bangladesh that the world is there for them in their greatest time of need.” Since late August, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya trying to escape discrimination and persecution in Myanmar’s Rakhine state have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, sparking the [world’s fastest-growing humanitarian emergency](#), according to the United Nations.

“We call on the international community to intensify efforts to bring a peaceful solution to the [plight of the Rohingya](#), to end the desperate exodus, to support host communities and ensure the conditions that will allow for refugees’ eventual voluntary return in safety and dignity,” the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) said in a joint statement Monday.

“The origins and, thus, the solutions to this crisis lie in Myanmar,” added the UN High Commission for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, the UN aid chief, Mark Lowcock, the Director General, of IOM, William Lacy Swing.

They underscored that Bangladesh has kept its borders open, offering safety and shelter to fleeing families.

“We have been moved by the welcome and generosity shown by the local communities towards the refugees,” the senior officials stated, while noting their respective agencies have been working in overdrive with the Government of Bangladesh, local charities, volunteers and non-governmental organizations to provide assistance. Still much more is urgently needed.

The refugees are fully dependent on humanitarian assistance for food, water, health and other essential needs as basic services are under severe strain and some sites lack access to potable water and sanitation facilities, raising health risks for both the refugees and the hosting communities.

“The efforts must be scaled up and expanded to receive and protect refugees and ensure they are provided with basic shelter and acceptable living conditions. Every day more vulnerable people arrive with very little – if anything – and settle either in overcrowded existing camps or extremely congested makeshift sites,” the statement continued.

It announced that the ministerial-level [pledging conference](#), set to be held in Geneva on 23 October, organized by OCHA, IOM and UNHCR and co-hosted by the European Union and Kuwait, will provide Governments an opportunity to

show their solidarity and share the burden and responsibility.

“Their further generous support for the [Joint Response Plan](#), which was recently launched by the UN and partners, is urgently needed to sustain and scale up the large humanitarian effort already under way. The plan requires \$434 million to meet the life-saving needs of all Rohingya refugees and their host communities – together an estimated 1.2 million people – for the difficult months to come,” added the statement.

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## [Kicking off ‘Africa Week’ at UN, Guterres says women and youths can unleash continent’s potential](#)

16 October 2017 – Africa must focus on young people, empower women and girls, and be innovative in leveraging resources and financing for development, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Monday as the United Nations kicked off Africa Week.

“[Africa Week](#) is to raise awareness and mobilize support. I am convinced that, together, we can meet the challenges,” Mr. Guterres said in his [remarks](#) to the high-level inaugural event at UN Headquarters in New York.

The Secretary-General said the international community must change the way it looks at the African continent.

“Africa is a land of resilience, and above all, it is a land of opportunity,” he emphasized, highlighting the continent’s recent progress in reducing poverty, diversifying its economies, building the middle class and nurturing growth in a variety of sectors.

To further unleash such potential, he said, young people must play a central role as Africa has the fastest growing youth population in the world.

“We can help make the most of this demographic dividend through greater investments in education, especially in science and technology and by ensuring to enable youth participation in economic development. People need skills that match the needs of today and tomorrow,” he said.

Empowering Africa’s women and girls is also crucial, as gender inequality is costing sub-Saharan Africa tens of billions of dollars a year, like everywhere else in the world.

Another key is to be innovative in leveraging resources and financing for development, including tax reform by African countries themselves and international efforts to fight tax evasion, money laundering and the illicit

financial flows that have depleted Africa's resource base, he added.

Also addressing the inaugural event was UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who said that in the past, Africa was expected to listen, and accept the ideas and conditions of others.

"That era is over [...] When it comes to its own development, Africa now has the most powerful voice of all. We need to listen to it, and learn from it," he said.

Among other priorities, he stressed the importance of cooperation between the African Union (AU) and the UN, particularly in the area of sustainable development. The AU's 'Agenda 2063' and the UN's [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development both outline a sustainable future for the planet and the people.

"They must be implemented in complementarity," he said, noting that better and more regular engagement between the two entities is necessary at all stages, including planning, implementation, financing and review.

The events during Africa Week centre around the theme: 'Supporting an Integrated, Prosperous, People-Centred and Peaceful Africa: Towards the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.'

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## [At UN event in Rome, Pope Francis urges action on climate change, conflicts to end global hunger](#)

16 October 2017 – Food security for all requires tackling climate change and ending conflicts, His Holiness, Pope Francis, stressed Monday at an official ceremony for [World Food Day](#) held at the Rome headquarters of the United Nations agriculture agency.

"It is clear that [wars and climatic change are a cause of hunger](#), so let's not present it as if hunger is an incurable disease," the Pontiff said during his key note address marking the Day at headquarters of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)).

Under this year's theme 'addressing migration through investing in food security and rural development,' Pope Francis called for governments worldwide to collaborate to ensure voluntary and safer migration; for a disarmament commitment; and to protect the planet while using its resources – producing and consuming food.

Noting that it was unfortunate that some countries are moving away from the

[Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, Pope Francis underscored “What is at stake is the credibility of the whole international system.”

Referring to the negotiation of a [Global Pact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration](#) – he asserted that managing human mobility “requires coordinated, systematic intergovernmental action in line with existing international norms, and full of love and intelligence.”

This year, World Food Day is being marked as [hunger is on the rise](#) for the first time in over a decade, affecting 815 million people – 11 per cent of the global population. The increase is largely due to the proliferation of violent conflicts and climate-related shocks, which are also major drivers of distress migration.

“It is our intention to [address the root causes of migration](#), such as poverty, food insecurity, inequality, unemployment and lack of social protection,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

“We firmly believe that increasing investments in food security, sustainable rural development and in efforts to adapt agriculture to climate change, will help create the conditions whereby people, especially the youth, will no longer be forced to abandon their lands in order to seek a better life elsewhere,” he added.

Calling today’s biggest problem “man-made conflict,” World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) Executive Director David Beasley revealed that conflicts consume 80 per cent of the agency’s expenditure – over \$6 billion.

“We will never achieve Zero Hunger by 2030 until we end conflict,” he stressed.

“I call on the people in power, the people with guns, to stop the fighting now,” said Mr. Beasley, who has met many people fleeing conflict and violence in Yemen, South Sudan and Bangladesh over the past few months.

“I saw their wounds with my own eyes and I heard their stories with my own ears. They were frightened, hungry and malnourished after enduring a nightmare that most people cannot even imagine. If we are truly going to end hunger, we must stop this kind of inhumanity,” he said.

### ***The future of migration***

In his statement commemorating the day, William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), called climate action “paramount” in mitigating displacement saying: “Climate change is having far-reaching effects on agricultural productivity and food security. It is among the main reasons for the record numbers of people compelled to migrate from rural areas to towns and cities around the world.”

Under the premise that [migration should be a choice](#), not a necessity, IOM is working towards this change with FAO, as 2018 co-chairs of the UN [Global Migration Group](#) – collaborating on projects to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations in rural areas to the impacts of natural hazards,

climate change, food security and displacement.

“It is a cooperation that I think will continue to grow and strengthen as migration continues to be a megatrend in the world, which will become only greater with the worsening effects of climate change,” Mr. Swing said.

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## [UN envoy discusses implementation of intra-Palestinian agreement with Prime Minister Hamdallah](#)

16 October 2017 – Meeting the Palestinian Prime Minister today, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, and discussed the implementation of the intra-Palestinian agreement signed in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, on 12 October.

In particular, the agreement provides for the return of the crossings of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority by 1 November.

“The [timely and effective implementation](#) of this provision and concrete steps to alleviate the humanitarian crisis will be critical for effectively empowering the Palestinian Government in Gaza,” said Mr. Mladenov after his meeting with Prime Minister Hamdallah in Ramallah this afternoon, local time.

“The agreement is also an important step towards achieving the goal of Palestinian unity under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian national authority,” added Mr. Mladenov.

The senior UN official also noted that the Organization will continue to work with the Palestinian leadership, Egypt and the region in support of the process, highlighting its importance for reaching a negotiated two-state solution and sustainable peace.

Following the agreement last week, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres [congratulated](#) by phone, Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the State of Palestine, on the agreement and emphasized the need to urgently address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, particularly with regard to the electricity crisis, and improved access to and from the territory.

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## UN rights experts urge France to provide safe water, sanitation for migrants in 'Calais Jungle'

16 October 2017 – United Nations human rights experts are urging the Government of France to devise long-term measures to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation for migrants in Calais and other areas along the northern French coast.

After the so-called 'Calais Jungle' camps were dismantled in November 2016, migrants continued to return to the area. Many are living without shelter and proper access to drinking water, toilets or washing facilities.

"It is [worrying](#) that approximately 700 migrants in Calais and the greater area of Calais temporarily rely on only 10 portable lavatories and water from 10 taps," said the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation, Léo Heller, in a news release from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)).

Despite the decision by the Conseil d'État, the highest administrative court in France, reaffirming the obligation of the French State to provide access to water and sanitation to the migrants in Calais, the local authorities have refused to implement concrete measures.

"Human rights apply to all, including migrants, regardless of their status. Consequently, the legal recognition by the French court of the human rights obligation to provide access to water and sanitation should be commended, but the authority of those decisions is diminished if they are not implemented in practice," said the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe Gonzalez Morales.

Migrants in camps at Grande-Synthe, Tatinghem, Angres and Dieppe rely on help from volunteers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They are opening their facilities and provide transportation to sports facilities so that migrants can use toilets and take showers as a temporary solution.

The group of UN experts urged the international community to join calls emphasizing the primary obligation of the Government to provide a durable solution to the situation. Earlier this year, the Special Rapporteurs contacted the Government to seek clarification about the situation.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN 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.