

[In Geneva, UN Member States and experts discuss demographic, economic dimensions of migration](#)

12 October 2017 – United Nations Member States began Thursday in Geneva the sixth thematic session of discussions on the proposed Global Compact on Migration, during which delegates and experts will examine the issue of labour mobility of migrants.

The talks, focused on the proposed [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) will explore, among others, comprehensive migration policies to address irregular migration and propose more regular pathways including family reunification, regularization, and transition from informal to the formal economy.

“The Global Compact on Migration is in fact the opportunity and the opportunity for States to face the challenges of migration,” said UN Special Representative for Migration, Louise Arbor, at the opening of the meeting.

Recalling the importance of migration as an engine of economic growth, UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák advocated for a global compact, “not just an agreement on paper, but concluded on the basis of a political program.”

According Mr. Lajčák, “whatever the nature of our passports, the citizens of the world have the same rights.”

Three panels are also exchanging ideas on how to reduce the costs of labour migration, promote fair and ethical recruitment and explore labour migration schemes between countries of origin and destination.

“While most migrations are well managed and undertaken through completely legal channels, not all people who wish to migrate find the right channel to do so,” Ms. Arbor pointed out.

A series of side events will complement these discussions by focusing on topics such as health, ethical recruitment and skills recognition.

At the same time, several intergovernmental meetings are also taking place in Geneva, including the Seventh Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretariats of Consultative Processes on Migration, which focused on the regional inputs to the Global Compact.

The International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) has provided support to the GCM consultations, particularly by extending the required technical and policy expertise, including the publication of

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Relief aid is saving lives, but world must tackle root causes of famine: conflict – UN chief

12 October 2017 – Until fighting stops and development takes root, communities and entire regions will continue to face hunger, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres told the Security Council on Thursday, underscoring the link between conflict and famine.

“Conflict in one country creates [demands on its neighbours](#) to provide food and basic services to refugees. This can lead to further instability, affecting the security of an entire region and beyond,” said Mr. Guterres.

Today’s briefing was in response to the [request made by the Council in August](#) for an analysis on country-specific impediments to an effective response to the risk of famine in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-east Nigeria.

“Prevention, as always, must be our watchword,” he said, noting that early famine warning mechanisms have worked well in these places, given that the international community responded quickly to his appeals nine months ago with donors coming forward to provide nearly 70 per cent of funds needed.

“But while we have succeeded in keeping famine at bay, we have not kept suffering at bay,” the UN chief said, adding that while humanitarian aid is saving lives, “we have not dealt with the one major root cause of these food crises: conflict.”

Some 80 per cent of the World Food Programme’s ([WFP](#)) funding is going to areas affected by conflict. Around 60 per cent of the 815 million people suffering from hunger today live in the shadow of conflict. Three-quarters of the stunted children in the world are in countries affected by conflict.

The parties to conflict in the four countries have stated their commitment to humanitarian and human rights law – but most of them have not followed through.

Specifically, Mr. Guterres asked the Council to continue to engage in and support the political process in Somalia, and encourage the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to stabilize their relationship.

Secretary-General António Guterres addresses the Security Council meeting on Maintenance of international peace and security. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

In Nigeria, where aid agencies face obstacles because of ongoing attacks by Boko Haram, he encouraged the Government and its counterparts in the Lake Chad Basin to develop a regional strategy to address the root causes of the crisis.

In Yemen, he said, what is needed most is for the parties to return to the negotiation table and focus on agreement.

As for South Sudan, he urged parties to the conflict to come to terms urgently, to prevent increased food insecurity, refugee movements that threaten to destabilize the region, and continued human suffering and misery.

Calling for a system-wide approach which addresses the humanitarian-development nexus and its link to peace, Mr. Guterres appealed for an urgent commitment to scaling up aid funding and said: "In the long term, we must focus on what communities and countries need to emerge from protracted conflict and instability. We must help people not just to survive, but to thrive."

[Silencing opposition voices threatens Cambodian democracy – UN rights expert](#)

12 October 2017 – Civil and political rights in Cambodia are "under threat" as the main opposition party is being dissolved in the parliament, a United Nations human rights expert warned Thursday, also voicing concern that the dissolution may affect upcoming elections in the country.

"For Cambodians to engage in open and serious political debate, the opposition must be allowed to exist and to function without fear or intimidation," said Rhona Smith, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Cambodia, stressing that "[democracy is about voice and choice](#). These moves risk leaving many Cambodians without either."

The Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) is the only opposition party represented in the National Assembly. To strip its seats of the parliament would affect Cambodians' voice and choice at all levels of Government, said Ms. Smith.

She not only raised serious concerns about the representativeness of government, but was also worried that the Government's moves were "under the guise" of rule of law.

The CNRP's leader, Kem Sokha, remains in pre-trial detention on conspiracy charges, while half of the party members in parliament have left the country.

The human rights expert said these actions against the CNRP have created additional grounds for dissolving the party, and some of which are "broad and vague."

"Modern Cambodia was established as a multi-party liberal democracy, respectful and protective of human rights. Its Constitution sought to prevent a return to a single-party state," said Ms. Smith, adding that "those who drafted the Constitution were all too well aware of the consequences of one-party rule."

INTERVIEW: Few global issues as urgent as tackling climate and disaster risks – UN official

12 October 2017 – Recent devastating natural events – from hurricanes in the Caribbean to floods in South Asia and earthquakes in Mexico – have again shone a spotlight on the importance of efforts to reduce disaster risk, and how impossible it is to achieve global development goals without addressing such hazards.

"If you look into countries that are exposed to hurricanes and cyclones – for example, those hit by recent dreadful cyclones in the Caribbean – you see the entire GDP, or huge percentage of it, being wiped out," said Robert Glasser, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, in an interview with *UN News*.

The UN and its Member States have many priority issues, but "there are very few that are as urgent as addressing climate risk and disaster risk," he added.

Ahead of the [International Day for Disaster Reduction](#), annually observed on 13 October, Mr. Glasser spoke about this year's campaign objectives, and more broadly about how reducing disaster risk can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), and how climate change adaptation and disaster risk management must go hand in hand.

UN News: The International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction is around the corner. Last year, the Day was about reducing mortality, but this year, the focus is on reducing the number of people affected by the disasters – why is that?

Robert Glasser: We have a major campaign to raise awareness of the increasing

costs, including loss of life and economic costs, of disasters. We model our campaign on seven global targets in the Sendai Framework – an international agreement that UN Member States have signed, in which they have committed to reduce disaster risk. Sendai ‘Seven’ Campaign incorporated these seven targets. The first target is about the loss of life. And the second, which we are featuring this year, is about reducing the number of people whose homes and livelihoods are affected.



A family along with their cattle and possessions stranded atop small islands formed due to massive floods, Sindh province, Pakistan. Photo: IFAD/EPA/Nadeem Khawer

UN News: What is the status of implementation of the Sendai Framework?

Robert Glasser: Well, this is a remarkable agreement because in it countries have committed to achieving really remarkable goals – reducing significantly loss of life, reducing number of people affected, and reducing the economic impact of disasters. They are committed to do this because they are seeing huge costs – economic, social and environmental costs – of these disasters that are growing rapidly. Each country is exposed to a different range of hazards. They understand the impacts these hazards have on sustainable development. So, this agreement puts in place these seven global targets, and an accountability framework at the global level, for which we can monitor the progress Member States are making as they reduce disaster risk.

UN News: How important is disaster reduction to the achievement of the [SDGs](#)?

Robert Glasser: Well, it is hugely important. Let me give you a couple of examples. There are some estimates that the annual cost of disasters is something like \$500 billion, and that 26 million people fall into poverty each year as a result of disasters – a lion’s share of the people displaced from natural disasters. If you look into countries that are exposed to hurricanes and cyclones – for example, those hit by recent dreadful cyclones in the Caribbean – you see the entire GDP, or huge percentage of it, being wiped out. The average annual loss from these disasters in some countries equates to something like 60 per cent of their annual social expenditure.



Rescuers at work in Sankhu, a town in north-western Nepal badly affected by the earthquake. Photo: Laxmi Prasad Ngakhusi/UNDP Nepal

So, we put all these costs together and see that they are escalating rapidly, particularly the economic costs. You see that in many, many places, it would be impossible to achieve the SDGs unless we address these disaster risks. And, of course, with climate change, the speed in which these hazards are increasing in severity and frequency is really daunting.

UN News: People still question the validity of a view that climate change is

causing disasters. Does climate change play a crucial role in causing natural disasters?

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Robert Glasser: This is such an important issue. Let's say, the doctor says you have cancer. You go to seek a second opinion, and you were told you have cancer. You go to five, six doctors and they all say you have cancer. At some point, you have to listen to the experts, and this is what has happened with climate change. Those people who doubt that climate change is happening are not doubting it on the basis of any solid scientific consensus. Using multiple ways of demonstrating these lines of evidence, scientists are absolutely convinced that human activity is increasing the average global temperature of the planet. And the connection between rising temperature and natural disasters is very clear and is highlighted also by these scientists.

We would expect changes in the distribution, frequency, and severity of disasters. We have seen sea-level rise and bleaching of coral reefs. That's a disaster – an economic disaster, a tourism disaster – for many countries. If that continues and reefs still do not recover, it affects fisheries. In the hurricanes we have just seen this year in the Caribbean, we saw how sea-level rise can contribute to storm surges that resulted in much more severe damage in cities in Texas and elsewhere. We've seen floods in South Asia. In the Horn of Africa, people say drought only happened every 20 years or so, but now it's every couple of years, or even consecutive years.



A flood control dam in Tianjin Eco-city, Tianjin, China. Photo: World Bank/Yang Aijun

Of course, you can't scientifically attach any one event directly to climate change, but these are exactly the things the science suggests are going to happen, and happening now. You can also increasingly do statistical analyses that say 'well, you can't say that we are 100 per cent certain that this is climate change, but it is 3,000 times more likely to have happened as a result of climate change.' So, you start seeing one-in-500-years events happening every 200 years, or seeing multiple events like this. The evidence is really becoming overwhelming.

UN News: Many people are alarmed by a recent wave of disasters, such as Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Jose and Maria, and earthquakes in Mexico. So, there is probably new awareness about the importance of doing something on disaster risk reduction. What should we do?

A major disaster also serves as a huge opportunity for countries to begin building back better

Robert Glasser: Well, two things. I hope that particularly the climate-related disasters raise people's awareness about the urgency of action to reduce greenhouse gases. Because, if we do not reduce greenhouse gases, so much of everything else we are trying to do to reduce disaster risk will be overwhelmed by rising seas, stronger storms, droughts and alike. So, that is number one. Second thing is that, it's a sad thing to say, but we find that if you look back historically, a major disaster also serves as a huge opportunity for countries to begin building back better from the previous disaster, and to begin thinking, 'okay, we do not want this to happen again.' There is a lot of political energy for legislation to be enacted, for changes to be put in place in government, for disaster management agencies to be given more authority, or even to be moved into the Prime Minister's Office – these are the reflection of the central importance of addressing this. You have seen this actually in Mexico. It was an earlier earthquake decades ago that actually triggered the formulation of the current National Disaster Management Office that is now putting in place a lot of measures – first of all, responding to this disaster, the recent earthquake, but also to prevent future disasters.