

# World has 'every interest' in better managed migration – senior UN official

As the world continues to experience unprecedented waves of migration, United Nations experts are highlighting the importance of regional solutions to ensure that people and societies can benefit from this global phenomenon.

“Migration is a reality that crosses walls and barbed wire,” said Mohamed Ali Alhakim, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Speaking at its headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon at the opening of a [two-day meeting](#) on international migration, Mr. Alhakim stressed that to manage this transboundary reality, “regional and international cooperation must also cross borders.”

As one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations, ESCWA serves as a think tank for its 18 Member States; it brings together experts who work at the regional level to tackle global challenges, while still considering different national realities. Helping countries achieve the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development has been at the heart of its focus.

“Is immigration not the oldest poverty reduction plan?” continued Mr Alhakim, noting that remittances in the Arab region amount to more than \$50 billion a year, more than four times the official development assistance (ODA) received by Arab countries.

Alongside its partners such as the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)), ESCWA is facilitating discussions on what should be prioritized for the Arab region in the [Global Compact for Migration](#). This agreement, the first of its kind, is expected to offer solutions to better manage human mobility.

“The Arab region is particularly important because it’s at the centre of much of the conflict, it’s a major labour migration area, and it’s also an area that has sent a lot of people elsewhere in the world particularly to Europe, many of whom encountered difficulties along the way,” explained William Lacy Swing, the Director General of IOM.

In his address to the forum, he recalled that 3.5 per cent of the world population are international migrants who produce 9 per cent of the world’s global domestic product. That’s reportedly 4 per cent more than they would have produced if they had stayed at home.

Meanwhile, Louise Arbour, the UN Special Representative for International Migration, highlighted how much of a challenge it will be for the global compact on migration to be relevant to everyone; in the Arab region alone, countries have very different economic, social and environmental profiles.

“We know there are a lot of differences around the world but when you see

such striking differences even within a region it brings home the idea that the compact is going to have to be very smart to have appeal and to be implementable,” she underlined.

The next regional consultations on the global compact will be held in October in Addis Abba at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and then in November in Bangkok at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)).

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## [Rohingya refugee crisis a ‘human rights nightmare,’ UN chief tells Security Council](#)

28 September 2017 – Noting that the humanitarian crisis that has resulted in displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas from Myanmar not only provides a “breeding ground” for radicalization, but also puts vulnerable people – including young children – at grave risk, United Nations Secretary-General called for “swift action” to prevent further instability and find a durable solution.

“The situation has spiralled into the [world’s fastest developing refugee emergency](#) and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare,” [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said today at a Security Council meeting on the situation in Myanmar.

At least 500,000 civilians have fled their homes in the country’s northern Rakhine state since late August and sought refuge in Bangladesh. According to estimates, some 94 per cent among them are members of the minority Muslim Rohingya community.

There have also been reports of burning of Muslim villages, as well as looting and acts of intimidation. Authorities in Myanmar have indicated that at least 176 of 471 Muslim villages in northern Rakhine have been totally abandoned.

“We have received bone-chilling accounts from those who fled – mainly women, children and the elderly,” added the UN chief, noting that testimonies pointed to serious violations of human rights, including indiscriminate firing of weapons, the presence of landmines and sexual violence.

“This is unacceptable and must end immediately.”



Secretary-General António Guterres briefs the Security Council meeting on the

situation in Rakhine state of Myanmar, which has seen hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing to neighbouring Bangladesh over the last several weeks. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Failure to address the violence could result in a spill-over into central Rakhine – where an additional 250,000 Muslims could potentially face displacement – Mr. Guterres warned, stressing that Government must ensure the safety and security of all communities and uphold rule of law without discrimination. In his briefing, the Secretary-General also underscored that UN agencies and their non-governmental partners must be granted immediate and safe access to all affected communities.

Speaking also on the need to ensure safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of the refugees to their areas of origin, Mr. Guterres noted that the 1993 Joint Statement of the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh and Myanmar could be a useful starting point, but it is not sufficient in the present circumstances, in particular as it does not refer to resolving the root cause of displacement as well as because it requires documents that the refugee Rohingya may not be able to provide.

“Ensuring the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees to Rakhine – in line with international refugee law – will require the restoration of mutual trust among the communities,” he said, noting that improved inter-communal relations forms a critical part of a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Mt. Guterres further noted that the issue of protracted statelessness must be resolved.

“The Muslims of Rakhine state should be granted nationality,” he stated, adding that while the present Myanmar citizenship legislation only allows it partially, an effective verification exercise should be conducted in the interim to allow those entitled be granted citizenship based on the present laws.

“All others must be able to obtain a legal status that allows them to lead a normal life, including freedom of movement and access to labour markets, education and health services,” he added.

In his remarks, the UN chief also spoke of a donor conference to be convened by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) and the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) as well as noted efforts by regional actors to help address the crisis.

“I look forward to effective and credible follow-up to the authorities’ stated commitment to greater access, including for the international community, the media and humanitarian actors,” he said, noting: “The regional cooperation with Myanmar will also be essential, and the United Nations fully stands behind this.”

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## Major new UN report sets course towards 'pollution-free planet'

28 September 2017 – While pollution has considerably negative impacts on human health and ecosystems, it is controllable and avoidable through political leadership, high-level champions and commitments, as well with local level action, says to a new report launched today by the United Nations Environment programme ([UNEP](#)).

The report, *Towards a pollution-free planet*, was launched during the first Conference of Parties for the [Minamata Convention](#), which addresses mercury issues and ahead of the annual UN Environment Assembly, to be held in early December.

["Pollution is a universal challenge](#) [but] the good news is that we already know what we need to do to prevent and reduce it," UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim said, stressing that "now the responsibility is on governments, businesses, cities and local authorities, civil society and individuals around the world to commit to act to beat pollution in all its forms."

Outlining the negative impacts pollution has especially on the poor and the vulnerable and its direct threat to human rights; limited responses by governments, business and citizens to existing pollution; and the challenges of the current actions, the report suggests five overarching actions.

- A global compact on pollution would make pollution prevention a priority for all;
- Environmental governance needs to be strengthened at all levels;
- Sustainable consumption and production, through improved resource efficiency and lifestyle changes, should be promoted; waste reduction and management must be prioritized;
- Investment in cleaner production and consumption will help to counter pollution; and
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations are vital for the innovation, knowledge-sharing and transdisciplinary research needed to develop technological and ecosystems- based solutions.

Also proposed in the report are 50 concrete actions to curb pollution in various forms, with a call for strong high-level political commitment and engagement of local government, civil society and other stakeholders.

The report stresses that although some forms of pollution have been reduced as technologies and management strategies have advanced, approximately 19 million premature deaths are estimated to occur annually as a result of the way societies use natural resources and impact the environment to support production and consumption.

“If consumption and production patterns continue as they are, the linear economic model of ‘take-make-dispose’ will seriously burden an already-polluted planet, affecting current and future generations,” the report’s foreword concludes.

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## **DR Congo: UN mission deploys ‘blue helmets’ to protect civilians and refugees**

28 September 2017 – Responding to the worsening security situation near a major town in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations mission in the country has deployed peacekeepers to deter any attacks on the city and to prevent escalation in clashes.

[According to](#) the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC, known by its French acronym MONUSCO, clashes had occurred in the area of Uvira, in South Kivu province, between presumed armed groups and the Congolese national army (FARDC).

Noting that the response is guided by the Mission’s mandate, Maman Sidikou, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, said: “[We are] strongly committed to the protection of civilians, including vulnerable groups such as refugees and displaced people.”

He called on the armed groups to immediately cease this hostility including all forms of violence against constituted authority and innocent civilians.

“All perpetrators, in particular those who sponsor armed groups as well as those who bear command responsibility, will be held accountable for human rights abuses,” he added.

Uvira is the second largest town in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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## **FEATURE: See what happened when the world came together at the UN**

28 September 2017 – Every year in September, world leaders gather at the United Nations in New York for the General Assembly’s annual high-level

session. The diplomatic confab draws veteran politicians as well as new faces from all corners of the globe in what is always an interesting and intense week for all involved. Also in attendance are representatives from civil society, academia, the private sector, the media, and the arts and entertainment worlds.

At the centre of it all is the General Assembly, one of the six main organs of the UN and the only one in which all Member States have equal representation: one nation, one vote. All 193 Member States are represented in this unique forum to discuss and work together on a wide array of international issues covered by the UN Charter, such as development, peace and security, human rights and international law.

This year all 193 Member States addressed the 72nd annual general debate, on the theme “Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.”

As world leaders began to gather in New York, Secretary-General António Guterres kicked things off by participating in a Facebook Live session moderated by Juju Chang of ABC News. He shared his thoughts on issues such as preventing conflicts, gender equality, what it takes to be a successful diplomat and how individuals can influence the policies that shape the world.

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The Assembly debates pressing issues that affect millions of people around the world, including peace and security, human rights and development. Each year, on the eve of the opening of the Assembly’s annual session, a prayer service is held with religious and ecumenical leaders at the Church of the Holy Family in New York City.



*UN Photo/Ariana Lindquist*

Preparations for the high-level week begin months in advance and involve staff from across the Secretariat, from security and interpretation services to catering and media liaison. Tekila Mitei, left, and Ian Seals, right, who are both with the Department of Safety and Security, help to set up the Delegates Lounge for the official State Luncheon by steaming the flags.

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The view from the podium in the General Assembly Hall where world leaders deliver their statements. At this year’s general debate, the longest statement lasted 43 minutes and was delivered by the President of the Observer State of Palestine, and the shortest statement, which lasted 5 minutes, was delivered by the President of Lithuania.

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The high-level week brought together world leaders from around the globe, including over 100 heads of State and government. Seen here is French President Emmanuel Macron (front, centre left) with Argentinian Vice President Gabriela Michetti (front, centre right) outside the General Assembly Hall on the first day of the general debate.

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Thousands of journalists descended on UN Headquarters to cover the myriad events that take place in addition to the speeches delivered by world leaders, including this group awaiting the arrival of delegations to address the general debate.

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The SDG Media Zone at UN Headquarters served as a platform for editors, bloggers, content creators and influencers to discuss ways to engage on the Sustainable Development Goals, which commit governments to end poverty, reduce inequalities and protect the planet by 2030. Among the participants were Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (left) and Alison Smale, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications.

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Attendees at the high-level session included renowned personalities who serve as advocates for a range of issues at the heart of the UN agenda. Among them is Nobel Laureate and UN Messenger of Peace Malala Yousafzai (right), who focuses on girls' education. She is seen here giving an interview to UN News while her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, looks on.

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The high-level week saw UN officials, governments, civil society and celebrities rally around a number of initiatives, including on financing education for all, advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting maternal and child health. Seen here is actor and UN Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador Nikolaj Coster-Waldau shining a light along with other attendees at the launch of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative for the elimination of violence against women and girls.