

# Weekly migration of 1.4m to cities can contribute to 'disasters'

The migration of some 1.4 million people every week to cities around the world "can strain local capacities, contributing to increased risk from natural and human made disasters'" according to the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

In his message for [World Cities Day](#), celebrated annually on 31 October, Mr. Guterres stressed that "hazards do not need to become disasters."

"The answer is to build resilience – to storms, floods, earthquakes, fires, pandemics and economic crises," he said.

Mr. Guterres explained that cities around the world are doing just that, forging new ways to increase resilience and sustainability.

The capital of Thailand, Bangkok has built vast underground water storage facilities to cope with increased flood risk and save water for drier periods.

In Quito, the capital of Ecuador in South America, local government has reclaimed or protected more than 200,000 hectares of land to boost flood protection, reduce erosion and safeguard the city's freshwater supply and biodiversity.

The UN chief also indicated that the city of Johannesburg in South Africa "is involving residents in efforts to improve public spaces so they can be safely used for recreation, sports, community events and services such as free medical care."

## **Risks**

World Cities Day was established by the UN to promote the international community's interest in global urbanization, push forward cooperation among countries in meeting opportunities and addressing challenges of urbanization, and contributing to sustainable urban development around the world.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme ([UN Habitat](#)), [flagged](#) the importance of investing in resilience or face growing "economic, social, political and human" risks.

"It has been estimated that without action on climate change – which accounts for just one facet of resilience – some 77 million urban residents risk falling into poverty," she warned, elaborating that human-made and environmental threats ranged from droughts, floods and fires to economic shocks, disease outbreaks, war and migration.

"Investing in resilience is a wise investment," the UN Habitat chief said.

The theme of this year's commemoration, [Building Sustainable and Resilient Cities](#), focuses on the need to preserve human life and limit damage and destruction while continuing to provide infrastructure and services after a crisis.

A range of UN-backed international agreements, including the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [New Urban Agenda](#) provide "a roadmap for a more sustainable and resilient world," according to the UN Secretary-General.

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## [UN rights chief says 'bar must be set very high' for investigation of murdered Saudi journalist](#)

The United Nations human rights chief pressed on Tuesday for an impartial, investigation into the "[shockingly brazen](#)" murder of Saudi Arabian journalist, Jamal Khashoggi.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and [OHCHR](#) head Michelle Bachelet stressed that a full examination of, and accountability for, human rights violations committed against Mr. Khashoggi be conducted.

The journalist disappeared from the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on 2 October 2018.

According to news reports, Saudi officials now admit that he was killed inside the embassy by a team of agents sent from Riyadh, although his body has yet to be recovered.

Ms. Bachelet welcomed the steps taken by Turkish and Saudi authorities to investigate and prosecute the alleged perpetrators, but added that "given the information that high-level officials in Saudi Arabia were apparently involved, and it took place in the Consulate of Saudi Arabia, the bar must be set very high to ensure meaningful accountability and justice for such a shockingly brazen crime against a journalist and government critic."

"For an investigation to be carried out free of any appearance of political considerations, the involvement of international experts, with full access to evidence and witnesses, would be highly desirable," she stated.

Ms. Bachelet said it is important to determine whether serious human rights violations – such as torture, summary execution or enforced disappearance – were committed and to identify those implicated, "irrespective of their

official capacity.”

She called on Turkish and Saudi authorities to cooperate in ensuring that the truth be revealed.

Noting that forensic examination, including an autopsy on the victim’s body is crucial in any murder investigation, Ms. Bachelet urged the Saudi authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Mr. Khashoggi’s body “without further delay or prevarication.”

Since the murder was discovered, a chorus of UN officials have demanded a probe into Mr. Khashoggi’s case, including [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), who [stressed](#) the need for a “prompt, thorough and transparent [investigation](#) into the circumstances of Mr. Khashoggi’s death and full accountability for those responsible.”

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye said he was “[very disappointed](#)” that Member States have so far failed to back calls for an independent international investigation into the murder.

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## [Ensure safety of responders UN Security Council urges, amid worsening DR Congo Ebola outbreak](#)

The United Nations Security Council has voiced “serious concern” over the impact of deteriorating security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on the response to the deadly Ebola outbreak and fears that the virus could spread further into the country and the wider region.

A large country in central Africa, DRC has been plagued by violence and insecurity for decades. Across the country, local populations and humanitarian workers assisting them have come under attacks by armed groups, necessitating the deployment of a large UN peacekeeping mission.

Unanimously adopting [resolution 2439 \(2018\)](#), the 15-member Council “demanded” that all armed groups in the region respect international law and ensure full, safe, immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian and medical personnel, and their equipment, transport and supplies to the affected areas.

Humanitarian response teams and hospitals providing life-saving assistance and relief to those in need “must be respected and protected, and that they must not be a target,” said the Security Council in the resolution.

The UN body also stressed the need for gender-sensitive response to the Ebola outbreak that addresses the specific needs of both men and women, given that men and women are affected differently by the socio-economic impacts of the outbreak.

The Council also stressed the importance of the “full, active and meaningful engagement” of women in the development of such responses.

According to the UN [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), as of 22 October, over 200 cases have been confirmed and at least 150 people have lost their lives since the outbreak was declared in DRC’s North Kivu and Ituri provinces in August. This is the tenth outbreak in the country in the past 40 years.

In its latest assessment, the UN health agency also warned of the potential for the virus to spread into Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan and Burundi, and called on these countries to step up readiness efforts.

### **Primary Responsibility**

In the resolution, the Council also noted that the Government of the DRC “bears the primary responsibility” to protect civilians subject to its jurisdiction and stressed the need for the international community to “remain engaged” in supporting national health systems, as well as maintaining financial, technical and in-kind support for efforts to control the outbreak.

It also encouraged the Government and countries in the region to “continue efforts to address and resolve the wider political, security, socioeconomic and humanitarian consequences of the Ebola outbreak, as well as to provide sustainable and responsive public health mechanisms.”

The Security Council also expressed its appreciation towards the work of humanitarian and health staff on the ground and as well as the “positive role” of the [UN peacekeeping mission in the country](#) (MONUSCO) in support of the response and in protecting civilians.

It also requested all relevant parts of the UN System to step up their response to the outbreak, within the overall coordination of WHO, including by supporting the development and implementation of preparedness and operational plans, in collaboration with governments of the region and those providing assistance.

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**[FROM THE FIELD: Urban Mexico moves toward better livelihoods, cleaner](#)**

## [cities](#)

Mexico is improving the lives of the 80 percent of its inhabitants residing in cities, by pushing towards less polluted, more eco-friendly environments, thanks to support from the UN.



UNDP Mexico/Andrea Egan

The United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) in Mexico is supporting partnerships and programmes aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and gearing up the use of solar power, as well as promoting ecologically-responsible tourism as part of its commitment to efficient city planning.

[Read more here](#) for details on how the UN agency is supporting Mexico's efforts to ensure that its cities are safe, inclusive, and resilient.

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## [80,000 youngsters at risk in DRC after forcible expulsion from Angola: UNICEF](#)

Tens of thousands of children who have been forcibly returned from Angola to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) need help urgently, UN Children's Fund [UNICEF](#) said on Tuesday.

The warning concerns at least 80,000 youngsters who are part of a more than 300,000-strong wave of people who have mostly arrived in DRC's troubled Kasais region since the start of the month.

"UNICEF estimates that among the returnees more than 80,000 are children, and these children are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance," spokesperson Christophe Boulierac told journalists in Geneva.

The alert follows a [warning](#) by the UN's human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, that the forcible mass expulsion of Congolese migrants from Angola had resulted in "serious human rights violations by security forces on both sides of the border".

Some youngsters described having to leave Angola in a rush, after official efforts to reform the country's diamond mining industry, which reportedly also involved ethnic violence and the destruction of DRC migrant workers' homes.

## **Extortion**

In addition to suffering from hunger and bad weather, those expelled from Angola have also faced extortion at checkpoints along the country's border with DRC, UNICEF said in a statement.

The influx of so many people to the Kasais is particularly concerning because the once relatively peaceful region was gripped by deadly conflict between local and government forces in 2016 and 2017 that destroyed vital public services.

"There was a very, very serious crisis of malnutrition in Kasai and these children are coming in a very bad condition from Angola," Mr Boulhierac said, before adding that dangerously low levels of blood sugar – hypoglycaemia – had been diagnosed in some youngsters. "Some of them are suffering from hypoglycaemia and there might be an increase of malnutrition, acute malnutrition, which makes a child more vulnerable to all kinds of disease."

UNICEF's immediate concerns about a rise in malnutrition levels have been heightened by the rapid increase in food prices. In Kamako, Kasai province, the cost of corn has doubled since the start of the crisis.

## **Non-accompanied Children**

As the UN agency ramps up its humanitarian aid effort – which includes installing safe drinking water points and emergency shelters in 27 settlement sites – it is also concerned about an as-yet unknown number of particularly vulnerable children travelling alone.

"In Kamako, in the province of Kasai, we have listed 162 non-accompanied children, children who are alone," Mr Boulhierac said. "That's only in Kamako, and there are many other places."

Authorities are also wary of a resurgence of epidemics linked to the new arrivals, who are crowded into churches and markets in small border towns, the UNICEF spokesperson said, noting that illnesses including cholera and malaria are already endemic in DRC.

To help the returnee children and their families, UNICEF has appealed for \$3 million to fund its immediate response.

An additional \$6 million will be needed to support the resettlement of

returned populations to their home or host areas, the UN agency said in a statement.