



The Migration Crises: UN Responses

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February 28, 2018

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The rise in global conflicts has resulted in burgeoning migration crises which requires effective and long lasting solutions and measures to deal with the issue. The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres in his report released in December 2017 has highlighted the most important aspects of the issue of migration. The report titled, *Making Migration Work for All* is a realistic assessment of the challenge of migration and looks at the way forward to deal with the issue of migration over the coming years, so that countries affected can come forward and cooperate in order to deal with the challenges of migration.

The report recognizes the need to address the factors that force people to leave their homes in search of safer, better lives. Strong emphasis is rightly placed on whole of government and whole of society approaches at the local, national, regional and global levels, with genuine partnerships not only between governments, but also with employers, unions, civil society entities and migrants themselves, amongst others, to manage migration. The report also takes note of the fact that most of the world's 258 million international migrants already move through safe, orderly and regular means, and that they bring significant benefits to their destination and origin countries.¹

The report lays emphasis on three main things, which are: (a) options for Member States to help migrants fulfill their economic and social potential; (b) steps to promote regular migration; and (c)

¹ Making Migration Work for All, The Report of the Secretary General, December, 12, 2017. https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_en.pdf

policies to meet the legitimate security considerations of Member States concerning irregular migration.² Since migration governance is an important issue, the International Organization for Migration has welcomed the Secretary General's report and has called on member states to seriously pursue cooperative approaches in order to put in place a mechanism for the compact to ensure continued progress and how the International Organization of Migration (IOM) can best organize itself to support the member states in implementing the compact. The report lays emphasis on preparing the United Nations for a new approach to help in dealing with migration.

A lot of focus in the report is directed towards member states, so that they realize the need to renew a sense of mutual trust regarding the management of migration. Secretary General Antonio Guterres has also stated in this report that at the economic and social levels, states must return to the Sustainable Development Goals in order to provide equal opportunities for their citizens. The main goal of the new approach towards migration is based on preparing the United Nations for a new approach towards migration, as well as increased member state oversight and most importantly, a follow up to the global compact.

Great numbers of refugees and migrants are moving across international borders, fleeing conflict, persecution, poverty and other life-threatening situations, or responding to labor and skill shortages and demographic changes and seeking better opportunities elsewhere. Their journeys can be fraught with peril; atrocious tales of tragedies feature daily in the media. Those migrants that make it to a destination are frequently met with antagonism and intolerance. The host communities making an effort to provide relief are often unprepared and overburdened by the sheer numbers arriving. Responsibilities are not well distributed: a small number of countries and host communities host disproportionate numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Beyond loss of life, the large displacement of populations has broader implications for the social, economic, and political landscape.

The global response migrant crisis needs to be more vigorous and collaborative amongst a variety of stakeholders to address large movements of refugees and migrants. The UN system, NGOs and partners are all working to highlight the issue, to secure commitments for assistance and to reinforce the collective response to the crisis. The UN Secretary General report calls on everyone, especially the world leaders, to work together to define a clear path forward guided by international refugee law, human rights and humanitarian law.

² Ibid.

It can be said that the UN approach towards this issue is the step in the right direction and outlining the problems faced by countries in this regard require closer cooperation and collaboration. The report, *Making Migration Work for All* evidently recognizes that governments maintain the authority to decide the conditions of entry and stay of migrants consistent with international standards, and recognizes countries' legitimate security concerns as well.³ The report stresses that migration is not a threat and lays emphasis on the importance of ensuring helpful approaches to human, state and public security, including on border management and returns. The UN approach is a step in the right direction and lays a framework to deal with the issue of migration, just as it poses numerous challenges at present. It can be said that this report is indeed a step forward as it recognizes the migrant crises as an important issue. But how far the compact for migration is implemented and the required steps taken, as well as the effectiveness of this compact will only be judged with the passage of time. Since this compact for migration is not legally binding on member states, it raises many questions as to its effectiveness, although it has been welcomed by member states. This global compact is in the negotiation process and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees will propose a Global Compact for Refugees in the coming months of 2018. The Global Compact is an important opportunity to improve the governance on migration and to recognize and address the challenges associated with migration.

³ UN Migration Agency Welcomes UN Secretary General's Report – Making Migration Work for All
<https://www.iom.int/news/un-migration-agency-welcomes-un-secretary-generals-report-making-migration-work-all>