

Terms of Reference

European Regional Issue- based coalition on Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience

I. Background

The establishment of an issue-based coalition on large movements of people, displacement and resilience was proposed during the regional UN System meeting for Europe and Central Asia in Geneva on 11-12 May 2016. This decision follows the large inflow of refugees and migrants experienced in 2015 and in the first months of 2016, but also the overall migration patterns, which have multiple effects on many countries in the region. The IBC will operate in close coordination with the existing inter-agency mechanisms, including the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans route (RMRP)¹, jointly led by UNHCR and IOM.

Migration and displacement are not new phenomena in this region that has faced varying population movement dynamics over time; Europe and Central Asia hosts a significant refugee and migrant population whose share in the total population is significantly higher than the world average. This bears significant development implications.

In 2015 the region experienced new and large inflow of refugees and migrants. These population movements dramatically changed the operational context in Europe. Around one million refugees and migrants undertook the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in 2015, with the vast majority having crossed the Aegean Sea by boat from Turkey to Greece. The movements did not subside during the first quarter of 2016, with over 171,000 arrivals by sea from January to March 2016, including 151,000 to Greece in the same period. As of mid-October 2016, some 317,000 have arrived by sea in Europe, including 168,000 in Greece and 145,000 in Italy. Of these, 46 per cent are women and children, compared to 27 per cent in June 2015.

The influx generated pressures on asylum and reception systems, and involved onward movements throughout the region. The surge in arrivals posed an important challenge for the Common European Asylum System and the poor implementation of solidarity mechanisms by EU Member States led to the adoption of increasingly restrictive measures in several countries, notably in the field of family reunification, border controls and detention. With the EU-Turkey statement coming into force on 18 March 2016, additional measures to control irregular movements from Turkey to Greece were set out and have contributed to a substantial reduction of sea arrivals. Yet access to asylum, continuing limited legal pathways to Europe and increasing xenophobic acts remain a serious concern. Additionally, inadequacies in laws, policies and administrative practices also have the potential to increase the risk of statelessness faced by asylum-seekers and refugees, particularly by those fleeing the Syria crisis. The influx of vulnerable people to already under-resourced municipalities in host and transit countries has stressed the capacity of authorities to support efficient public services, to maintain community security and cohesion, and ultimately to create conditions where people can pursue better lives and livelihoods.

The Western Balkans have experienced both forced population movements caused by the conflicts of the 1990s as well as large-scale outflows of citizens seeking employment and better living conditions abroad. Turkey, traditionally a country of emigration to Europe, is now a sending, transit and more importantly a destination country today as one of the largest hosts

¹ Insert link to the document

of refugees globally, with approximately 3 million registered Syrian refugees. Central Asia has witnessed a surge in emigration in the past decade: as of mid-2015, citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan accounted for one third of the 11 million foreigners officially registered in the Russian Federation, and for the vast majority of the foreigners registered in Kazakhstan. Some of the world's largest international labour migration and remittances flows are occurring within this framework. The ratios of remittance inflows to GDP for Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic since 2011 have been the highest in the world – above 40-50% and 30% respectively. Data indicates that these migration and remittance flows play a significant role in reducing poverty in the countries of origin². On the other hand, these benefits are offset by a series of human development costs and risks; among others to family and social cohesion, health, and human capital. Many of these are born disproportionately by women.

Migration - when well managed - can have significant positive impacts for human and economic development, through increased household incomes, improved access to services, and the empowerment of traditionally disadvantaged groups, in particular women. Such an injection of new human capital can be particularly important in aging societies. However, the new and increased flows in Europe have so far had the effect of putting unsustainable pressure on transit and recipient states, municipalities and communities, with even the richest countries in Europe re-imposing border controls and seeking to limit the number of new arrivals.

While movements of refugees and migrants are not a new issue for the region, the question has become particularly acute, as a result of the large influx of refugees in and through the region. Such movements will likely continue over time, and countries' resilience to these pressures is central to sustainable development.

The Coalition builds upon the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which states that no one will be left behind, including refugees and migrants, and commits world leaders to promote safe, orderly and regular migration and mobility. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) fully recognize migration and forced displacement as core development considerations and are a framework within which affected countries can mobilize their efforts to address the key drivers of migration and displacement, and harness the development potential of population flows. It also builds upon the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, whereby the UN General Assembly adopted a set of commitments to enhance international responses to large movements of refugees and migrants³.

The Coalition will also capitalize on ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional and community resilience, helping countries to respond to large displacement in a manner that enhances social cohesion and meets the needs and rights of both migrant and refugee populations, as well as the host and transit communities over the short, medium and long-term.

This reflects a strategic shift towards an innovative approach that harmonizes humanitarian and development interventions for a sustainable, and nationally-led national and local response to this – and other – crises. The goal is to ensure that current strains on affected states do not set back their development trajectories, and hard-won gains are not lost, while support is provided to address human mobility pressures overall by focusing on inclusive economic development and improved governance as longer-term solutions to key drivers within the region of migration and displacement.

II. Main goal and objectives

² The most apparent is the Kyrgyz Republic where data indicate that remittances reduce the national poverty line by some 6-7 percentage points.

³ Insert link to the declaration document

The purpose of the issue-based coalition on large movements of refugees, migrants and resilience is to serve as a platform of UN agencies (and potentially a wider group of stakeholders) that acts as a catalyst to improve the situation of refugees, migrants and host and transit communities in Europe. The Coalition will coordinate with existing initiatives and operational coordination mechanisms, notably the inter-agency regional RMRRP and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in response to the Syria crisis⁴, without prejudice to the mandates of relevant UN agencies⁵.

The following are specific objectives of the issue based coalition:

1. Identify priorities, opportunities and gaps and promote new initiatives in addressing them. Explore areas where critical analysis is needed (especially when it relates to the SDGs and the need for inter-sectoral analyses) as well as prepare and share data and information on large displacement of refugees, migrants and resilience when feasible.
2. Promote joint UN advocacy statements and common messages in relation to dealing with large movement of people, displacement and resilience without prejudice to the mandates of relevant UN agencies. Develop targeted advocacy on key challenges related to one or several countries or the whole region.
3. Support countries in including the refugees, migrants and stateless persons and countries' resilience to related shocks in the development of national action plans, as part of the realization of the 2030 Agenda, as well as into the UN Development Assistance Framework, where appropriate. Advocacy efforts should aim at including, at a minimum, these populations under relevant goals, in particular SDG1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11 and SDG 16.
4. Develop and promote common UN approaches to raise awareness of the rights of refugees and migrants and to counter xenophobia, as well as to improving institutional and community resilience that responds to large movements of people and displacement in a manner that meets the needs and rights of both migrant and refugee populations, as well as host and transit communities over the short, medium and long-term.
5. Provide regional perspective and strengthen regional partnership and involvement of stakeholders at all levels of governance to support Member States in implementation of relevant targets of the SDGs and of the New York Declaration on refugees and migrants.
6. Improve coordination, communication and information sharing on key lessons and good practices considering the focus to leave no one behind due movement of people and displacement.

III. Membership

The issue-based Coalition membership consists of the UN agencies and related entities, as well as relevant NGOs and entities from the private sector with an expertise in migration, displacement and

⁴ Insert link to document

⁵ In refugee situations, UNHCR is mandated to assume the lead coordinating functions, while IOM on migration and UNDP on resilience and work with local communities.

resilience. The coalition will reach out to other partners as required, in complementarity with existing regional coordination structures.

The coalition will be led by Regional Directors (RDs) or an alternate. The Regional Directors will nominate agencies' experts to be part of the IBC. The RDs will provide regular updates on related activities and plans to support the issue based coalition on refugees, migrants and resilience.

IV. Chair and Secretariat

UN agencies will have a leading role in enabling and supporting the issue based coalition. UNHCR and UNDP will co-chair the issue-based coalition and will be responsible for overall coordination and following up on the status of joint work plans.

The two agencies co-chairing the issue based coalition will also be in charge of the secretariat functions, including finalizing joint annual work plan and following up on the status of activities in annual joint work plan.

V. Meetings

The issue - based coalition will normally meet biannually, through face to face and virtual meetings.

VI. Workplan and reporting

The work and progress of the issue based Coalition will be reported to the Regional undg Team and the Regional Coordination Mechanism. It might also be reported to the governing bodies of UN agencies to raise awareness of Member States.