



Concept note: Panel discussion

Migration and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for Europe and the MENA region

14 December 2017

Palais des Nations, **Room XII, 10:00 – 12:30**

CONCEPT-NOTE

Introduction

The Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue (hereinafter “*The Geneva Centre*”) will organize a panel debate in collaboration with *the International Catholic Migration Commission* entitled: “*Migration and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for Europe and the MENA region.*” This debate will be held at the United Nations Office in Geneva on **14 December 2017** from **10:00 to 12:30** in room **XII**.

On 11 December 2015, the Geneva Centre held a panel debate at Palais des Nations in Geneva entitled “*The Current Migrant Crisis: an Aftermath of the Arab Spring?*” in which it analysed *inter alia* the insecurity driven migration from the Middle East towards Europe in the aftermath of the so-called “*Arab Spring.*” The debate was also an opportunity to identify good-practice models for the enhancement of migrant rights in host and origin countries. The December 2017 panel debate will provide novel insights into the interplay between the causes and the consequences of insecurity driven migration from the Middle East. It will also offer a more holistic approach of the protracted migrant and refugee crisis affecting the MENA region by addressing the situation of refugees in Arab countries and of climate change migrants from the Sahel region. The combination of these two panels will enable the Centre to offer an inclusive and up-to-date assessment of the implications of the migrant and refugee crisis on the Arab region.

The unprecedented movement of people of all sorts including forced migrants, refugees and others - whose lives are at jeopardy whether internally displaced or fleeing *inter alia* insecurity, climate change, natural disasters, calamities and social instability - are illustrations of the major challenges that confront humanity. It is estimated that **at least 1 billion people -**

of the planet's 7 billion people - are on the move¹. This is equivalent to **1/7 of the Earth's population**. Out of this number, **740 million people** are referred to as internal or as domestic migrants travelling within their countries of origin² encompassing **60 million forced migrants** considered as internally displaced persons (hereinafter IDPs) owing to the adverse impact of conflict and violence and of natural hazards. The other push factors for the **680 million internal migrants** are *inter alia* related to increased urbanization, improved mobility, lack of access to employment and growing inequality within countries owing to the unequal distribution of wealth. According to the United Nations, there are approximately **244 million international migrants** worldwide³ with *inter alia* as hosts: **Europe (76 million), Asia (75 million), North America (54 million), and Africa (21 million)**, these being the main regions of destination for migrants⁴. **South-South migration** has reached its highest number ever with approximately **90 million people** hosted by countries in the Global South, whereas **South-North migration** involves **85 million people**⁵. Thus, the South-South dimension of international migration has become more important than the South-North flow of migrants. Migration has therefore become a global issue affecting every corner of the world.

The figure referring to the number of people on the move across borders – i.e. 244 million international migrants - also includes the **22.5 million refugees** registered worldwide by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees⁶ – of which **5.3 million Palestinian refugees** are listed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East. **Twenty percent of the world's refugee population** is hosted in countries located in the Middle East and North Africa region (hereinafter the MENA region)⁷.

On top of this, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's latest figures confirm that approximately **40 million people** worldwide are living as IDPs fleeing the rise of conflict and

¹ Withol de Wenden, Catherine 2012. "Les dynamiques migratoires dans le monde" in *Revue Humanitaire*. Online. URL: <https://humanitaire.revues.org/1412> (Available on 28.08.2017)

² IOM & UNDESA 2012. "UN System Task Team on the post-2015 UN Development Agenda. Migration and human mobility." Online. URL: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Think%20Pieces/13_migration.pdf (Available on 28.08.2017)

³ United Nations 2016. "244 million international migrants living abroad worldwide, new UN statistics reveal." 12.01.2016. Online. URL: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/01/244-million-international-migrants-living-abroad-worldwide-new-un-statistics-reveal/> (Available on 11.07.2017)

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2016. "International Migration Report 2015. Highlights." Page 1. Online. URL: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf (Available on 23.08.2017)

⁵ IOM 2016. "Global migration trends factsheet." Online. URL: <http://gmdac.iom.int/global-migration-trends-factsheet> (Available on 28.08.2017)

⁶ UNHCR 2017. "Figures at Glance." Online. URL: <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> (Available at 11.07.2017)

⁷ IOM 2016. "Migration to, from and in the Middle East and North Africa." Data snapshot. Online. URL: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/mena/Migration-in-the-Middle-East-and-North-Africa_Data%20Sheet_August2016.pdf (Available at 21.08.2017)

of violence⁸. Out of this figure, **more than 1/3 of conflict related IDPs – 14.6 million people** – worldwide, are from the Middle East. In addition, one needs to also add the **20 million people** also forcibly displaced as IDPs due to the adverse impact of natural and environmental disasters⁹. The world has never witnessed a more complex movement of people since the end of the Second World War.

To address the challenges associated with the rise of people on the move, the December panel debate will address the adverse impact of cross-border movement resulting from war-related insecurity and from economic push factors central to which is the detrimental impact of climate change. Violence and insecurity as well as climate change migration have adversely affected millions of people in the MENA region and have become issues of high importance for the countries in the region as millions of people are on the move. In the pursuit of solutions for a better future, reducing the risks associated with war-related insecurity and climate change migration will enable the MENA region to work towards a more resilient and sustainable future. To contribute to the achievement of this goal, the Geneva Centre will address these issues through a **two-fold analysis**.

On the first issue, the December panel debate will cover forced cross-border movement of people resulting from war-related insecurity affecting countries in the Middle East and triggering an unprecedented movement of refugees undertaking hazardous and perilous journeys towards Europe. Civilians are not being spared from the adverse impacts of wars and conflicts affecting these countries. A spillover effect to other countries in the region is occurring which could further exacerbate the volatile and unpredictable situation in the Middle East causing more people to seek refuge in Europe. Addressing the protracted flow of refugees heading towards Europe requires the international community to promote peacebuilding, self-reliance and to enhance livelihood options rather than apply further unilateral economic financial sanctions undermining the latter in countries affected by war and conflict or criminal, or quasi-sanctions on the refugees themselves.

⁸ IDMC 2017. "Global Report on Internal Displacement." Page 10. Online. URL: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/> (Available on 11.07.2017)

⁹ IDMC 2016. "IDMC Grid 2017. Global report on Internal Displacement." Online. URL: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/> (Available on 28.08.2017). This figure refers to new displacements reported in IDMC's latest 2016 report entitled "Global report on internal displacement." However, there are no reliable sources to confirm the actual number of displaced persons as a result of natural hazards owing to the statistical difficulties measuring people on the move as a result of natural hazards. "Unfortunately such cumulative data is not available for people displaced by disasters, so it is not possible to report a total headcount in the same way." Please consult page 7 in IDMC's global report.

On the second issue, the debate will also explore the triggering factors contributing to the forced cross-border movement of “*climate migrants*” from the Sahel region to Europe via North Africa, and the solutions required to redress this situation. On 21 August 2017, Inter Press Service ran an article arguing that the disruptive and adverse effects of climate change could impact as **many as 1 billion people worldwide**¹⁰. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification estimates in this context that environmental degradation and desertification will affect approximately **135 million people by 2045**. The hotspots to be worstly affected by climate change are the Sahel and the Horn of Africa regions owing to the rise of temperature, lack of access to resources and in particular reduced availability and access to arable land accompanied by lowering crop yields. Civil society groups such as **Refugees International** have called upon the United Nations and the world community to step up their efforts to address climate change-related movement of people in the Sahel region¹¹. The risk of inaction in addressing the adverse impact of climate change has the potential to expose more people to environmental risks associated with global warming.

These two clusters are interrelated: conflict and climate change reinforce one another – particularly – in the Sahel region as was the case also in Darfur (Sudan). The combination of these two clusters will offer therefore an inclusive and holistic assessment of, and response to, the protracted climate migrant and refugee crises affecting the MENA region. Identifying solutions to address cross-border movement of people requires decision makers to recognise the multitude of factors contributing to this phenomenon. **No region in the world produces 100% of migrants or 100% of refugees.** Cross-border movement of people encompassing migrants and refugees are two sides of the same coin. A situation brought about by the process of globalization itself stymied by the pretense to promote the free flow of ideas, images, economic value-systems as well as goods across borders while banning the free flow of people.

While such will be the two themes of the December panel meeting, the Geneva Centre also recognises that the issue of forced displacement of IDPs has entered the agenda of international organizations and decision-makers. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre’s latest figures confirm that approximately **60 million people** are living as IDPs due to

¹⁰ IPS 2017. “*Climate Migrants Might Reach One Billion by 2050.*” 21.08.2017. Online. URL: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/08/climate-migrants-might-reach-one-billion-by-2050/> (Available on 22.08.2017)

¹¹ Thomson Reuters 2013. “*Sahel region set to see rise in ‘climate refugees’ – report.*” -02.08.2013. Online. URL: <http://news.trust.org/item/20130802101500-bk1f3/> (Available on 23.08.2017)

conflict and violence and the adverse impact of natural hazards and climate change¹². Owing to the growing importance of this subject, the Geneva Centre will address this issue in a separate panel debate that will be organized in the first quarter of 2018 with the **Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre**. The outcomes of the December panel debate will be an input into the Centre's panel debate to be held on IDPs during the first quarter of 2018. Both panel debates will also contribute to advancing the agenda of the Geneva Centre's **World Conference** entitled "*Religions and Beliefs and/or Other Value Systems: Joining Forces to Enhance Equal Citizenship Rights*" that will be held during the course of 2018.

Priority issues to be discussed during the panel debate

The unprecedented rise of refugees from the Middle East to Europe

Ongoing armed conflict and indiscriminate terrorist attacks have brought bereavement principally to the Arab region and to parts of Africa. It has given rise to an exacerbation of human rights violations to societies in the MENA region. The source countries of forced and security driven movement of people related to conflict and violence are primarily located in the **MENA region**. In total, approximately **5 million Syrians, 3.3 million Sudanese, 3 million Iraqis** and nearly **2 million Yemenis** have been forced to leave their home societies owing to the lack of security and the surge of violence that have prevailed in these countries. The failure of diplomacy to create peace and to maintain stability, or indeed at times, the pursuit of a geostrategic policy of "*creative chaos*" in countries affected by conflict and violence, have triggered a massive movement of people escaping from insecurity and sectarian violence¹³. Extremist violence now represents a threat to world peace and stability and to human wellbeing at large. Extremist groups such as DAESH while controlling decreasing areas of territories in the Middle East are returning to more traditional/ clandestine forms of terrorism. They are fuelling the rise of extremism worldwide as they move from the battlefield to the cyber front.

Countries in the Middle East have carried the majority of the burden in hosting and in providing assistance and protection to refugees and migrants. More than 1 million people have sought refuge in Lebanon - a country of 4 million inhabitants - that has already welcomed and accommodated a large number of Palestinian refugees¹⁴. Jordan is home to approximately 1.3

¹² IDMC 2017. "*Global Report on Internal Displacement*." Page 10. Online. URL: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/> (Available on 11.07.2017)

¹³ Agier, Michel 2017. "La fabrique des indésirables" in *Le Monde Diplomatique*. May 2017.

¹⁴ UNHCR 2017. "*Syria Regional Refugee Response*." Online. URL: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> (Available on 20.07.2017)

million refugees¹⁵, primarily Syrians and Iraqis who have fled their home societies owing to sectarian tensions and violence. Iraq and Egypt have likewise hosted approximately 240,000¹⁶ and 120,000¹⁷ displaced people respectively despite the volatile security situations and the menace of DAESH threatening the stability of these countries. On top of this, one can also add Turkey that is currently providing refuge to nearly 3 million Syrians and which hosts one of the largest refugee camps in the world¹⁸. Many of these countries are already enduring adverse general conditions impeding economic and social development. Yet, the burden has been put on the very countries in the region to deal with a complex situation that is not of their doing.

Despite these swelling cohorts of people on the move, the international community did not hear the clamour rising from numerous countries in the MENA region - and no backing from the world community was forthcoming - to respond to the protracted refugee and migrant crisis. Receiving States have often been left to their own devices to address the massive influx of refugees from neighbouring countries. In the report of the United Nations Secretary-General addressing large movements of migrants and refugees - submitted in April 2016 to the United Nations General Assembly - he regretted that:

“too often, responsibility for new arrivals lies with the authorities and host communities in the first country of arrival¹⁹.”

Across the Mediterranean Sea, several European countries have expressed readiness to provide assistance and protection to refugees. As signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention, European countries are bound by the provisions set forth in the Convention guaranteeing refugees a minimum set of rights in the country where they seek protection²⁰. Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights likewise stipulates that *“everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution²¹.”* Providing assistance and protection to refugees is therefore in line with States’ obligations under

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid, it is estimated that 600,000 Syrians are registered as refugees registered by UNHCR. However, the total number of displaced people stands currently at 1.3 million http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/09/c_136269096.htm (Available on 20.07.2017)

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ UN 2016. *“In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. Report of the Secretary-General.”* 21.04.2016. Page 10. Online. URL: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/59&=E%20%20 (Available on 14.07.2017)

²⁰ OHCHR. *“Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.”* Online. URL: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/StatusOfRefugees.aspx> (Available on 25.08.2017)

²¹ UN 2017. *“Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”* Online. URL: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (Available on 28.06.2017)

international law and not only their moral duties to respond to the dire situation many people are facing. Several States have taken measures to accommodate the influx of people on the move, but these are being sometimes relocated in what amounts to detention camps in transit countries. Yet it is also in many destination countries' enlightened self-interest to unleash the potential of migrants, mostly productive young and eager, to share the burden of an ageing population.

Some observers have however purported that the “*refugee crisis*” – as presented in the media – is a European crisis owing to the lack of consensus within the EU to address the arrival of displaced people. Yet they only constitute 0.2% of Europe's population,²² as compared to 25%, 20% and 3% respectively of the populations of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Uganda has also welcomed approximately 800,000 refugees from the devastating civil war in South Sudan amounting to 4% of the country's total population.

Walls and fences are being built or advocated in misguided attempts to prevent displaced people from reaching their destination countries and to criminalize migrants and refugees²³ which itself is a violation of international law. The 1990 Dublin Convention and the right to deport migrants and refugees to the first country of arrival – primarily to Greece, Spain and Italy – has contributed to an unfair distribution and relocation system of migrants and refugees in which the buck is being passed on European countries situated on the Mediterranean Sea coast.

“*Selective mercy*” has also emerged as an inadequate solution to address the plight of displaced people. Some European countries have proclaimed that they will only take in displaced people belonging to the Christian faith arguing that Muslims do not belong to their societies. At the same time, concerns have been raised by ethnic and religious minorities in majority Muslim countries that their needs for durable solutions, such as integration in countries of first asylum or resettlement in third countries, have not been adequately addressed. Such forms of discrimination and racism on occasion proclaimed at leadership level in the same

²² Matringe, Jean 2017. “Errements de la politique migratoire de Bruxelles” in *Le Monde Diplomatique*. May 2017. Available in print version.

²³ Matringe, Jean 2017. “Errements de la politique migratoire de Bruxelles” in *Le Monde Diplomatique*. May 2017: UN General Assembly 2017 “*Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration*.” Page 5. Online. URL: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/15/documents/Report%20of%20SRSG%20on%20Migration%20-%20A.71.728_ADVANCE.pdf (Available on 13.07.2017) ; UN 2016. “*In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. Report of the Secretary-General*.” 21.04.2016. Page 10. Online. URL: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/59&=E%20%20 (Available 14.07.2017)

breath as a commitment to “zero-tolerance” to some other form of racism contradicts the principles of equality and non-discrimination - enshrined in numerous international law instruments – guaranteeing full equality to all people irrespective of religious beliefs, denominations and value systems.

Cross-border movement of climate migrants from the Sahel region: An issue of growing concern

With regard to cross-border movement of “*climate migrants*” from the Sahel region to Europe via North Africa, the causes and the consequences of migration have to be analysed from a different perspective. The main cause of migration from the Sahel region is primarily related to the adverse impact of climate change and resulting environmental degradation. Some countries principally located in the Sahel region are considered as some of the world’s poorest countries. They are also situated in some of the areas worst affected by climate change. The United Nations estimates that more than 50% of the populations of countries in the Sahel region - such as in Chad, Niger and Senegal - live below the poverty line²⁴. The economic outlook of the region remains grim due to the persistent economic challenges and high population growth causing population pressure on decreasing natural resources. The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel Mrs. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie²⁵ observed in 2015 that up to 41 million people in the region “*face hopelessness*” owing to the socioeconomic situation in the region.

In addition to the enduring and persistent economic difficulties faced by countries in the Sahel region, the adverse impact of climate change and of environmental degradation have worsened the disturbing situation faced by many countries in the Sahel region as a result of the onslaught of terrorist groups. The desertification and the depletion of natural resources – of which the dramatic situation is illustrated by the shrinking Lake Chad (which lost 90% of its volume since 1963²⁶) which has meant that the land has become unable to feed its 17 million inhabitants. This epitomizes the worsening ecological crisis in the Sahel region which is

²⁴ UNCTAD 2017. “UN list of Least Developed Countries.” Online. URL: <http://unctad.org/en/pages/aldc/Least%20Developed%20Countries/UN-list-of-Least-Developed-Countries.aspx> (Available on 21.08.2017)

²⁵ Associated Press 2015. “UN envoy warns Sahel youths susceptible to radicalization.” 25.11.2015. Online. URL: <https://apnews.com/90d2303a76884c5b857cb6b6fdf50b00/un-envoy-warns-sahel-youths-susceptible-radicalization> (Available on 22.08.2017)

²⁶ Brookings 2017. “Figure of the week: The shrinking Lake Chad.” 09.02.2017. Online. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2017/02/09/figure-of-the-week-the-shrinking-lake-chad/> (Available on 25.08.2017)

disrupting the lives of many people who rely on access to natural resources to meet their basic needs. The adverse impact of climate change and environmental degradation will further exacerbate droughts, famines and food crises in the Sahel region as witnessed previously in 2010²⁷ and in 2012²⁸ which then struck 10 and 18 million people respectively. The lack of access to resources owing to the adverse and disruptive effects of climate change has impeded the ability of countries in the Sahel region to create a sustainable economic model fostering economic growth, development and prosperity. The **European Union** warned in September 2016 that the Sahel region's population boom – expected to increase three-fold to **300 million people by 2050** – will trigger a new wave of migrants from the Sahel region to Europe via North Africa in the near future²⁹. The EU has announced it will step up its efforts “*to combat the poverty and conflicts driving people to migrate to Europe*” and increase development aid for countries in the region³⁰.

The Sahel region is also experiencing uprisings and insurgencies from violent and extremist groups reminiscent of the conflict patterns witnessed in the Middle East. Boko Haram remains active in northern Nigeria, Niger and Chad contributing to a persistent and volatile security situation in the region. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb remains a dominant force within the Sahel region. Porous borders between many of these countries make it difficult for security forces in the region to control and address the inflow of insurgents causing destruction, calamity and instability. The decision of Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mali and Mauritania to create a counterterrorism force in February 2017 came as a result of the need to resort to military means to address the prevailing threat from violent and extremists groups in the region³¹.

Moving ahead: Identifying solutions to the protracted migration and refugee crisis

The first part of the solution to the protracted refugee and migrant crises lies in rebuilding war-torn societies emerging from the ruins of the conflicts in the MENA region and

²⁷ The Guardian 2010. “Severe drought causes hunger for 10 million in west Africa.” 03.06.2010. Online. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/jun/03/drought-hunger-west-africa> (Available on 22.08.2017)

²⁸ Metro 2012. “Sahel drought in West Africa leading to crisis as millions of lives at risk.” 03.08.2012. Online. URL: <http://metro.co.uk/2012/08/03/sahel-drought-in-west-africa-leading-to-crisis-as-millions-of-lives-at-risk-521534/#ixzz4qTRTJsv5> (Available on 22.08.2017)

²⁹ Reuters 2016. “EU must tackle Sahel population boom to curb migration - U.N.” 29.09.2016. Online. URL: <http://af.reuters.com/article/africaTech/idAFL8N1C53LS> (Available on 22.08.2017)

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ New York Times 2017. “U.N. Security Council Welcomes Deployment of New Counterterrorism Force in Africa.” 21.06.2017. Online. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/21/world/africa/security-council-sahel-france-united-states.html> (Available on 22.08.2017)

to respond jointly to the rise of extremist and violent groups in the Middle East and the Sahel regions and in preventing future crises. The cross-border nature of the threats require national policies to merge into a concerted international strategy. It requires that all States commit to the fulfilment of the provisions set forth *inter alia* in the Charter of the United Nations calling for member States “to maintain international peace and security” and to “take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace (...)”. Unilateral interventions and violent regime change should not guide the efforts of States to transform the future of the Middle East. This process should be initiated and led by the peoples concerned through inclusive dialogue, consensus-building and peaceful societal transitions. Investing in programmes enhancing livelihood options and self-reliance will enable societies to stand on their own feet and to be in charge of their own development in line with their wishes and aspirations.

In addition to promoting development and enhancing security in countries of origin for present flows of refugees and migrants, the second part of the solution lies in identifying new approaches to promote equitable burden-and responsibility-sharing mechanisms for hosting, accommodating, and integrating refugees and migrants based on the shared values of social justice and tolerance. Pierre Galand – the President of the Association for the United Nations (APNU) – remarked in his article “*La plus belle déclaration d’amour de l’humanité a 70 ans. Partageons-la*” that the world society must put human dignity, fundamental liberal values as well as the universal values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as guiding principles in its efforts to respond to the plight of refugees and of migrants³². This will enable countries in Europe and in the MENA region to speak with one voice and to build coalitions on a variety of issues related to the safe and orderly movement of people in accordance with international law. The international community needs to recommit to sharing responsibility for hosting people on the move more fairly and proportionately, being guided by the principles of international solidarity and justice. Enhancing international cooperation and coordination among countries in **Europe and in the MENA region** – as well as with international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - is key to identifying a more equitable burden-and responsibility-sharing system in response to the current migrant and refugee crisis. This can be achieved *inter alia* through the allocation of resources earmarked for specific countries, increased

³² APNU 2017. “*La plus belle déclaration d’amour de l’humanité a 70 ans. Partageons-la.*” Page 4. Online. URL: <http://www.ecolesecondaire.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Brochure-DUDH-Final-3.pdf> (Available on 16.08.2017)

development aid in countries affected by poverty and climate change and enhanced capacity-building programmes to raise the preparedness level of countries hosting large numbers of migrants and refugees.

The International Organization for Migration's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme is a good-practice model of return and reintegration practices that can be provided to migrants and refugees returning to their home countries. In 2016, 100,000 migrants and refugees benefited from this option in which return and reintegration assistance was offered to people from 161 countries³³. Enhanced cooperation between States and international organizations is an essential part of the solution to address the current refugee and migrant crisis.

In addition, restrictive and over-securitized migration – as a response to the rise of people on the move – will not end the plight of such individuals and families. This policy will only exacerbate their distress and agony. The crossing by migrants of the Mediterranean Sea has become the symbol of the migrant crisis in Europe. In 2016, the International Organization for Migration reported that more than 5,000 people had perished during their desperate journeys through the Mediterranean Sea³⁴. In the present year up to August 2017, more than 2,000 people have already perished³⁵. Following the adoption of the Italy-EU “*Search and Rescue Code*” in July 2017, the situation in the Mediterranean is unlikely to improve in the near future. On 15 August 2017, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mrs. Agnes Callamard, cautioned against the adoption of the Italy-EU “*Search and Rescue Code*” stating that “*Italy and the European Commission are imposing procedures that could reduce the ability of NGOs to carry out life-saving activities*”³⁶. According to the French political journalist Edwy Plenel, the “*Search and Rescue Code*” amounts to an attempt to criminalize the activities of NGOs coming to the aid of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea³⁷. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al

³³ IOM 2017. “UN Migration Agency Helps Nearly 100,000 Migrants Return and Reintegrate in 2016.” 11.07.2017. Online. URL: <https://www.iom.int/news/un-migration-agency-helps-nearly-100000-migrants-return-and-reintegrate-2016> (Available on 23.08.2017)

³⁴ IOM 2017. “Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Top 363,348 in 2016; Deaths at Sea: 5,079.” 06.01.2017. Online. URL: <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-top-363348-2016-deaths-sea-5079> (Available on 25.08.2017)

³⁵ IOM 2017. “Change in Mediterranean Sea Arrivals to Europe and Recorded Deaths January 1 - August 23, 2016 & 2017.” Online. URL: <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/mediterranean> (Available on 25.08.2017)

³⁶ United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG) 2017. “Italy-EU search and rescue code could increase Mediterranean deaths, UN expert warns.” 15.08.2017. Online. URL: [https://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/8B6C9A9A111E2995C125817D00314122?OpenDocument](https://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/(httpNewsByYear_en)/8B6C9A9A111E2995C125817D00314122?OpenDocument) (Available on 15.08.2017)

³⁷ Plenel, Edwy 2017. “Le devoir d'hospitalité” in *Mediapart*. 15.08.2017. PDF.

Hussein referred to the detention of migrants and refugees in Libya as “*an outrage to humanity*” in a statement issued on 14 November 2017³⁸.

In this context, a revision of the 1990 Dublin Convention is needed to identify a more equitable distribution and relocation scheme enabling member States of the European Union to equally share the burden of hosting and resettling migrants and refugees. Although Germany has taken the lead in assisting and offering protection to refugees and migrants, opposition within the European Union – among certain member States – is hindering the operationalization of an equitable re-distribution quota scheme of migrants and of refugees stranded in detention camps in Europe and tentatively in North Africa. Too often, the notions of national sovereignty and sanctity of borders prevail over the obligation to provide protection to people in need or even to save lives. In Catherine Withol de Wenden’s article “*Les dynamiques migratoires dans le monde*” she considers closed borders as “*a false idea, costly, and ineffective*” and as contradictory to the founding ideas of globalization³⁹.

Lastly, the promotion of equal and inclusive rights for migrants and refugees is likewise needed to promote a model that is conducive to building a harmonious society whose pillars are dialogue, harmony and peaceful co-existence in line with the provisions set forth in the 2009 United Nations Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. It would enable all social components of communities - irrespective of ethnic, religious, geographical and cultural origins - to benefit from the same set of rights and privileges that would be enjoyed increasingly by non-citizens – as well as 3 million stateless people in the world⁴⁰ - and not exclusively by citizens of a given nation. The fortification of Europe will not provide a long-term solution to address the large flows of people heading towards Europe. The solutions lie in addressing the root-causes of fragility and violent conflicts and the factors that trigger migration through a joint dialogue between decision makers to respond with one voice to the challenges associated with the protracted refugee and migrant crisis.

³⁸ UN News Centre 2017. “*Libya’s detention of migrants ‘is an outrage to humanity,’ says UN human rights chief Zeid.*” 14.11.2017. Online. URL: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58084#.Wg2Gr1WnGUk> (Available on 16.11.2017)

³⁹ Withol de Wenden, Catherine 2012. “*Les dynamiques migratoires dans le monde*” in *Revue Humanitaire*. Online. URL : <https://humanitaire.revues.org/1412> (Available on 28.08.2017)

⁴⁰ Schlein, Lisa 2017. “UN: Give Millions of Stateless People Basic Right of Citizenship” in *Voice of America*. 02.11.2017. Online. URL: <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-stateless-people-basic-citizenship/4098128.html> (Available on 06.11.2017)

Objectives

The panellists will present their objective views on the impact of contemporary policies and practices related to providing protection and assistance to migrants and refugees, and why existing arrangements have failed to produce satisfactory results to respond to the plight of these people. **The first part** of the debate will cover the war-related insecurity that has affected countries in the Middle East. **The second part** will explore the triggering factors contributing to cross-border movement of “*climate migrants*” from the Sahel region to Europe via North Africa. **The combination of these two clusters** will offer an inclusive and holistic assessment of, and response to, the protracted migrant and refugee crisis affecting the MENA region. The debate will aim to propose synergies and improvements in the efforts of countries in Europe and in the MENA region to respond to the current migrant and refugee crisis with a unified voice.

The panel debate will also pave the way for Centre’s second panel debate to be held during the first quarter of 2018. The 2018 panel debate will be an opportunity to explore issues related to the causes and consequences of forced displacement of IDPs in the MENA region and offer a more complete and holistic assessment of the causes and the consequences of the protracted refugee and migrant crisis. The observations and conclusions identified during the December panel debate will structure the agenda of this panel debate addressing IDPs.

Outcomes

The primary outcome of the panel debate will be to provide a written report in the format of a publication that reflects the discussions, conclusions and lessons learned from the panel debate. It will seek to broaden the discussion regarding the challenges and the opportunities related to the current movement of people⁴¹ escaping war-related insecurity and/or climate stress. The publication will give further insights on the need for a joint policy framework – between the Global North and the Global South – to address the protracted refugee and migrant crisis. The main points and conclusions evoked during the debate will also serve as an input to define the agenda of the World Conference.

⁴¹ Although displacement of people **related to natural hazards, climate change and environmental degradation** has been identified a major cause of displacement worldwide, the present panel debate will not explore these issues. It will focus on addressing the root-causes of displacement owing to conflict and to the unprecedented rise of violence that has become the norm of many societies in the MENA region.

The secondary outcome of this event will be to issue a joint declaration in the format of a summary of the recommendations for follow-up identified during the deliberation session that calls for *inter alia*; i) concerted efforts by the Global North and the Global South to address the root-causes triggering the unprecedented rise of people on the move; ii) eliminate policies and initiatives seeking to restrict and over-securitize migration, and; iii) increased cooperation between member States of the UN to respond to the plight of displaced people by identifying equitable burden-sharing mechanisms based on the shared values of justice and tolerance.

Altogether, the outcomes of the panel debate will contribute to the preparation of the Global Compact for Migration and Refugees in the pursuit of identifying joint solutions to the protracted refugee and migrant crisis. The Global Compact for Migration has held several thematic sessions - related to the causes and consequences of migration – which are of relevance to the 14 December panel debate. In this regard, the first session addressed issues related to “*social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance*” of migrants in which decision-makers agreed that further efforts are needed by member States of the UN to respond to the rise of xenophobia, bigotry and racism that is gaining ground in many societies around the world.⁴² In an editorial on the 2017 German federal elections, Mr. Roberto Savio – the founder and the former Director-General of Inter Press Service - noted *inter alia* that “*Immigrants are model citizens, pay their taxes, and bring a net benefit to the country who receives them.*” Despite that, media and populist parties turn migrants and refugees into scapegoat for political purposes⁴³. The decision of the Global Compact on Migration to address these issues is therefore a step in the right direction to address the rise of populism and bigotry around the world.

The second session looked into the adverse impact of “*climate change, natural disasters and human-made crises*” in which it was concluded *inter alia* that climate change “*exacerbate socioeconomic vulnerabilities*” forcing people to migrate from regions adversely affected by climate change⁴⁴. During the third session entitled “*International cooperation and governance*

⁴² UN 2017a. “*Issue Brief #1 Human rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance.*” Page 2. 08-09.05.2017. Online. URL: https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/issue_brief_for_first_thematic_session.pdf (Available on 22.09.2017)

⁴³ Savio, Roberto 2017. “Merkel’s Defeat Confirms Dismal Trend for Europe” in *Inter Press Service*. 29.09.2017. Online. URL: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/09/merkels-defeat-confirms-dismal-trend-europe/> (Available on 04.10.2017)

⁴⁴ UN 2017b. “*Second informal thematic session on “Addressing drivers of migration, including the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters and human-made crises, through protection and assistance, sustainable development and poverty*

of migration in all its dimensions, including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration” international decision-makers agreed that a roadmap to enhance “*international cooperation and governance*” is needed so as to “*establish a framework for better governance of migration*”⁴⁵. According to an article published on 3 November 2017 by Le Monde journalist Simon Roger, the 1951 Refugees Convention does not apply to climate change migrants thus requiring the development of new norms to address this issue⁴⁶.

In view of these observations, the December panel debate will provide complementary contributions to the debates that have been organized – as part of the Global Compact framework – and provide further inputs to international decision-makers in promoting safe, orderly and regular migration in line with the provisions set forth in the 2016 New York Declaration⁴⁷. The guiding principles set forth in the Declaration (see pages 19-20 hereunder) – to be adopted after the panel debate – will offer useful guidance to international decision-makers on the challenges and the opportunities related to the current situation of people on the move.

The Global Compact on Refugees will start with formal consultations with member States of the UN, IGOs, NGOs as well as civil society organizations in February 2018. Given that the formal agenda of the Global Compact on Refugees is yet to be defined, the December panel debate will be in a position to make an input into the processes required to enhance international cooperation in providing assistance and protection to refugees.

Format

The panel will consist of a moderator and five panellists, preceded by opening remarks provided by the distinguished representatives of the organizing parties.

Each panellist will be given a 5 to 7-minute time slot for his/her presentation, after a brief introduction by the moderator. Following the panellists’ interventions, the moderator will

eradication, conflict prevention and resolution.” Page 3. 22-23.05.2017. Online. URL: http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/ts2_cofacilitators_summary.pdf (Available on 22.09.2017)

⁴⁵ UN 2017c. “*Third informal thematic session on “International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions, including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration.”* 19-20.06.2017. Online. URL: http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/ts3_co-facilitators_summary.pdf (Available on 22.09.2017)

⁴⁶ Roger, Simon 2017. “Le nombre de déplacés climatiques explose” in *Le Monde Diplomatique*. 03.11.2017. Available in the print version.

⁴⁷ Refugees and Migrants 2017. “*New York Declaration.*” Online. URL: <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration> (Available on 22.09.2017)

ask questions to the panellists to open for a live discussion between the panel members. The guiding questions for the debate will be shared in advance with the panellists.

Following the debate, the moderator will give the floor to the audience who will be allowed to ask questions to the members of the panel or make a statement on the issues addressed during the debate.

Opening remarks

- **(1) H. E. Dr. Hanif Hassan Ali Al Qassim**, *Chairman of the Geneva Centre's Board of Management*
- **(2) Message of the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) H. E. Ambassador William Lacy-Swing** read by Mr. **Hassan Abdel Moneim**, IOM Senior Regional Adviser for North Africa, Middle East and the Gulf States

Moderator

- **(1) H. E. Ambassador Idriss Jazairy**, *Executive Director of the Geneva Centre*

Panelists

- **(1) Monsignor Robert J. Vitillo**, *Secretary General of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)*

Guiding theme: Intensifying dialogue and practical cooperation between Christians and Muslims in Response to Refugee Movements and other Forms of Forced Migration

- **(2) Dr. Roberto Savio**, *Founder and President Emeritus of Inter Press Service (IPS). Director for International Relations of the European Centre for Peace and Development.*

Guiding theme: Migrants, religion and pluralism

- **(3) H. E. Ambassador Marie-Thérèse Pictet-Althann**, *Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta*

Guiding theme: An alternative to the liquid graves of the Mediterranean

- **(4) Mr. Edouard Rodier**, *Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council's Europe Office (NRC)*

Guiding theme: Solutions to enhance international cooperation in providing assistance and protection to refugees

- **(5) Ms. Dina Ionesco**, *Head of Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division at the International Organization for Migration (IOM)*

Guiding theme: IOM's role in responding to the rise of climate change related migration in the Sahel region

- **(6) Ms. Christine Goyer**, *Senior Protection Officer, Mixed Migration, at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*

Guiding theme: UNHCR's activities in the Middle East to address the plight of refugees

Video to be shown during the opening session:

http://mobile.francetvinfo.fr/sports/jo/jo-2024/video-vivre-est-une-victoire-le-clip-de-la-cimade-qui-rapproche-la-course-effrenee-des-refugies-aux-jo_2372459.html#xtor=CS2-765-%5Bemail%5D-&xtref=acc_dir

Languages

Simultaneous interpretation from and into Arabic, English and French will be provided.

Draft Geneva declaration: Mobility and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for Europe and the MENA region

The co-signatories of this declaration adopted during the panel debate entitled “*Migration and human solidarity, a challenge and an opportunity for Europe and the MENA region*” organized on 14 December 2017 at the United Nations Office in Geneva hereby agree to the proclamation of the following declaration:

“We take note of the fact that mobility has become a global issue affecting every corner of the world of which approximately 1 billion people are on the move encompassing international and internal migrants, refugees and other persons in need of international protection as well as internally displaced persons;

“We acknowledge that migration is part of globalization and remains a positive factor to achieving sustainable development in line with the provisions set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

“We recognize that the unprecedented rise and forced displacement of people on the move is a global problem requiring global solutions and should not merely be considered as a ‘neighborhood’ and/or regional problem limited to a given geographical area;

“We welcome the adoption of the 2016 New York Declaration on 19 September 2016 at the United Nations Summit calling for the adoption of a Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration and a Global Compact on Refugees to guide the member States of the United Nations and international decision-makers in their efforts to promote safe, orderly and regular migration and to respond to the plight of displaced people worldwide as set out inter alia in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF);

“Owing to the lack of a unified global response to address the plight of migrants and of refugees, we deplore the rise of migrant and refugee deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and other major international migration corridors in the Balkans and in North Africa;

“We condemn the growing instability witnessed in the MENA region owing to the rise of extremist and violent groups fueling insecurity and instability thus forcing people to flee their home societies;

“We warn against the adverse impact of climate change and environmental degradation in the Sahel region exacerbating the living conditions of millions of people, often causing

conflict and forcing people to flee thus increasing the numbers of people on the move. In this regard, we call upon international decision-makers to put stronger emphasis on addressing the adverse impact of climate change on human mobility in future consultation processes related to migration and displacement;

“We underline that policing and over-securitized migration is not the solution to address the plight of people on the move and are contradictory to the founding principles of globalization, non-discrimination and non-rejection. Concerted efforts must be taken to reduce the use of restrictive and over-securitized migration policies. In a globalized world, absence of response to the situation of refugees creates instability which spreads across borders and does not spare countries restricting or refusing access to refugees;

“We recall that hosting refugees is a legal and moral obligation as they are defined as those who are outside their country of origin who is in need of international protection because of a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom in their country of origin as a result of persecution, armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder against which the authorities in their home country cannot or will not protect them as Recalled in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and other relevant legal instruments;

“We call attention to the campaign of fear against refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, in many parts of the world, aiming at reducing, or rejecting, legal obligations, and at undermining the principles of solidarity and respect of human rights, as enshrined in national constitutions, national legislation, international covenants and in the Charter of the United Nations. This campaign of fear is growing, challenging the legitimacy and mandates of multilateral institutions, and restoring previous nationalistic reactions that constitute direct threats to peace and international cooperation;

“We note that 60% or more of refugees worldwide are currently of Muslim origin and warn against defamatory conflation between terrorism and refugees and asylum-seekers. We deplore all similar attempts to criminalize undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers regardless of religion, ethnicity, culture, nationality and/or geographic origin;

“We call upon international decision-makers to promote the restoration of peace and of stability to the South and to the East of the Mediterranean Sea to promote safe, orderly and regular migration and to increase livelihood options in countries of origin. We acknowledge the need to support poorer countries that bear the brunt of the burden of hosting refugees;

“We deplore the appalling conditions at detention and custody facilities in some transit countries of migration in which undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers are denied the right to asylum and have their human rights violated owing to abuse, extortion and lack of access to food, medicine and sanitation. We echo the views of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights H. E. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein⁴⁸ who stated on 14 November 2017 that conditions at detention and custody facilities in Libya are ‘an outrage to humanity’;

“We urge international decision-makers to provide special priority in funding to countries in the Sahel region that are victims of persistent economic difficulties combined with the adverse effects of climate change on standard of living;

“We call for continued dialogue between countries in Europe and in the MENA region to identify equitable burden - and responsibility-sharing mechanisms guided by the principles of human solidarity, impartiality, non-rejection, non-refoulement, non-discrimination and justice in recognition of the fact that the arrival of displaced people in the European Union constitute about 0.2%⁴⁹ of its population as compared to approximately 25%⁵⁰, 20%⁵¹ and 3%⁵² respectively of the populations of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey to cite but a few telling examples;

“We emphasize the need for intensified global action to identify joint solutions to the unprecedented movement of people and to find common ground in identifying a global framework to respond to the plight of migrants and of refugees in the MENA region;

“We appeal to international decision-makers to meet the funding requirements set forth by the United Nations in the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan and in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan as these response plans remain underfunded. We likewise urge decision-makers to meet all other funding requirements identified by the United Nations in relation to addressing the acute humanitarian needs of refugees worldwide;

⁴⁸ UN News Centre 2017. “Libya’s detention of migrants ‘is an outrage to humanity,’ says UN human rights chief Zeid.” 14.11.2017. Online. URL: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58084#.Wq2Gr1WnGUk> (Available on 23.11.2017)

⁴⁹ Matringe, Jean 2017. “Errements de la politique migratoire de Bruxelles” in *Le Monde Diplomatique*. May 2017.

⁵⁰ Syria Regional Refugee Response 2017. “Lebanon.” 30.06.2017. Online. URL: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122> (Available on 01.11.2017)

⁵¹ Ghazal, Mohammad 2017. “Jordan hosts 657,000 registered Syrian refugees” in *Jordan Times*. 21.03.2017. Online. URL: <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-hosts-657000-registered-syrian-refugees> (Available on 01.11.2017)

⁵² Syria Regional Refugee Response 2017. “Turkey.” 19.10.2017. Online. URL: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> (Available on 01.11.2017)

“In this regard, we warn against the ‘globalisation of indifference’ concerning refugees as highlighted by HH Pope Francis on 08 July 2013”⁵³;

“We call upon host countries to promote the resilience of their societies so as to enhance the integration and inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in line with the provisions set forth in Sustainable Development Goal 16;

“We call for the establishment of a Global Charter to enhance the protection of people on the move including in particular the recommendations identified during the consultation phases of the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees;

“We call upon all member States of the United Nations to contribute to the realization of the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees through dialogue, consensus-building and mutual engagement and to refrain from undertaking any actions that may undermine the joint efforts of the global community to present a framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migrants and human mobility:

“We underline that humanitarian responses to refugee flows call for long term action that must enable people in distress not just to survive but to have access to income generating activities in recognition of their productive function and to education in recognition of the fact that close on half of displaced people are under 18 years of age;

“We also call upon member States of the United Nations to cooperate with the International Organization for Migration, the UNHCR and other organizations to facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of migrants, refugees including asylum-seekers to their countries of origin”;

“We call for the establishment an inter-agency Task Force including the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society organizations as well as think tanks from the MENA and the European regions to coordinate the implementation of the recommendations set forth in the Global Compact for Migration and in the Global Compact on Refugees.”

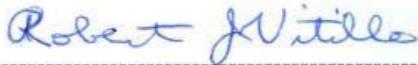
⁵³ Vatican Radio 2013. “Pope on Lampedusa: ‘the globalization of indifference.’” 08.07.2013. Online. URL: <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-on-lampedusa-the-globalization-of-indifferenc> (Available on 23.11.2017)



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