



*General Secretariat  
Social Affairs Sector  
Refugees, Expatriates  
and Migration Affairs  
Department*

**Statement of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee  
Affairs  
on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Migrants, Refugees and host Countries in  
the Arab Region**

**The Sixth Meeting of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and  
Refugee Affairs  
13/07/2020**

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In light of the unprecedented circumstances the world is currently experiencing due to COVID-19 pandemic and its implications on all aspects of life, amid the continuous aggravation of the crisis of asylum and displacement in the Arab region, the Member States' Representatives of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs value the Statement by the Economic and Social Council of the League of Arab States at the Ministerial Level on 6 May 2020 on refugees, displaced persons and expatriates, and emphasize the following:

- The economic, social and political implications of the spread of the novel Coronavirus will have a great impact on migrants and expatriates, which may alter the characteristics of international migration, including the Arab migration, in the long term, whereas the situation of migrant workers will be affected and their role and contribution to development will be decreased, as a result of employment loss and low levels of wages, increasing global disparity due to its effect on migrants' remittances. In addition, travel restrictions and medical tests for migrants and refugees will be tightened, which will result in irregular migration and its attendant risks of falling into the hands of smugglers and human traffickers making their situation more vulnerable. The crisis has already led to a temporary suspension of the refugees' resettlement, as well as its impact on humanitarian responses to refugees and displaced persons.

- The importance of continued cooperation and coordination with the United Nations agencies, international, regional organizations and Member States to ensure the provision of care and protection for migrants, expatriates, refugees and displaced persons, particularly those living in refugee camps; including the Palestinian refugees who were displaced from their homes in 1948 and are suffering from poverty and absence of the safety net needed to absorb the financial and medical shocks caused by COVID-19 pandemic; calling on the international community to support the Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
- The importance of working to reduce the crisis' impact on migrants, expatriates, refugees and their host communities through cooperation, coordination, dialogue and joint programmes among various relevant parties, primarily the States of origin, transit and destination /host countries, in addition to the effective role performed by the concerned United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations in promoting partnership and coordination among States to raise awareness of the risks faced by migrants, refugees and displaced persons and to ensure their guidance by relevant international conventions, agreements and global agendas and implement their goals and principles for protecting migrants and refugees and preserving their rights, particularly the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the Global Compact for Safe, orderly and regular Migration, and the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees.
- The importance of not overlooking these groups of people who may be more vulnerable due to the circumstances they have been experiencing and which have caused physical and psychological health damage (particularly unaccompanied minors and women), as well as their living conditions in light of the limited available resources and services, in accordance with international instruments and conventions and global agendas.
- The importance of containing the situation and providing the necessary protection to these groups from the most severe effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially with the expectation that the world will witness a second phase of the virus, and providing them with the basic needs, within the available resources, such as food, water, hygiene and health care, and the importance of continuing awareness campaigns on the dangers of the Coronavirus, in addition to the provision of regional

platforms to exchange expertise, information and best practices among countries hosting large numbers of migrants and refugees on the means of containing the crisis and fulfilling their needs.

- The importance of taking into consideration the indirect economic implications of the pandemic, such as the migrants' remittances decline and its negative impact on their families and home countries; and the need to reduce the impact of these repercussions and alleviate their effects, in light of the relation between migration and development, including the call for suspending forced repatriation of migrants in time of the pandemic, in conformity with the Statement issued by the United Nations Migration Network.
- The special situation of Arab countries hosting refugees, which have nearly half of the world's total refugees, including 5.6 million Palestinian refugees, and the double pressures and burdens on health, social, economic, stability and social peace systems in these countries.
- The importance of the principle of international solidarity with refugee-hosting countries, mutual responsibility and burden-sharing by various actors of the international community.
- It is important that reallocation of financial resources by governments, international and non-governmental organizations to address COVID-19 pandemic does not affect the humanitarian responses to refugee and displacement crises and the needs of migrants returning to their countries, refugees and displaced persons.
- The Meeting calls upon the Member States to cooperate with regional and international partners to take the necessary measures to address the reverse impacts of COVID-19, such as working to tighten the food gap by leveraging their resources and preserving the rights of migrant workers by signing bilateral agreements and organizing training programmes for migrants and expatriates.
- The Meeting also call on the relevant parties to be guided by the strategies developed under the umbrella of the League of Arab States and adopted by the specialized councils (i.e. the Arab strategy on Access to Public Health Services in Asylum and Displacement Contexts in the Arab Region, the Arab Strategy for the Protection of Refugee Children in Asylum Context in the Arab Region, and the Arab strategy on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Asylum and Displacement Context especially Sexual Violence against Women).