



Press conference IOM: The Impact of COVID-19 on Global Mobility

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Shotlist

SHOTLIST OF THE EDITED STORY

1. Wide shot: exterior, United Nations Geneva, main entrance with UN flag and building in background.
2. **SOUNDBITE (EN) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM): “There are thousands of stranded migrants all over the world; in South-East Asia, in East Africa, in Latin America, because of the closing of the borders and with the travel restrictions, lots of migrants who were on the move; some of them wanted to return precisely because of the pandemic.”**
3. Medium shot: UN Geneva and UN flag alley behind gates at UN Geneva, filmed from the Place des Nations. A motorcyclist passes from left to right.

4. **SOUNDBITE (EN) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM):** “They have been stranded, they are blocked, some in large groups, some in small groups, in the border areas, in very difficult conditions, without access to minimal care especially health screening and this is a source of tremendous concern for us, and we have been asking the Governments to allow the humanitarian workers and the health workers to have access to these large groups of stranded migrants.”

5. Medium shot: flag alley, UN Geneva.

6. **SOUNDBITE (EN) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM):** “Our concern in Latin America is about all the thousands of Venezuelans that have lost their jobs in countries like Ecuador and Colombia, and are returning back to Venezuela in large crowds without any health screening and being quarantined when they go back to Venezuela.”

7. Medium shot: UN Geneva flag alley, with UN flag in background.

8. **SOUNDBITE (EN) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM):** “There in the camps social distancing is unthinkable and access to water and sanitation is quite a challenge. We have identified 200 cases of contamination in mainland Greece camps, as you know IOM is not in the islands.”

9. Wide shot, UN flag alley, UN Geneva.

10. **SOUNDBITE (EN) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM):** “It is quite clear that health is the new wealth and that health concerns will be introduced in the mobility systems - not just for migration - but as a whole; where travelling for business or professional reasons, health will be the new gamechanger in town.”

11. Medium shot, UN palais building with UN lettering in English and French either side of UN emblem.

12. **SOUNDBITE (FR) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM):** “Dans plusieurs états dans le monde, nous avons déjà un système de ‘screening’ – d’identification – des conditions de santé des migrants, surtout la malaria, la ‘tuberculosis’ ou le ‘AIDS’, le HIV-AIDS; et maintenant j’anticipe qu’il y aura des exigences accrues en matière de contrôles sanitaires pour migration régulière.”

13. Medium shot, UN flag flying in front of palais building.

14. **SOUNDBITE (EN) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM):** “We have requests from a number of countries in the region to help repatriating those migrants to their countries of origin, whether it is Mozambique or Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria. As you know, IOM works very much on the basis of projects, so we do not have the financial capacity to help countries to repatriate their citizens unless there is funding available to do that.

15. Close-up, UN flag alley, UN Geneva.

16. **SOUNDBITE (EN) António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM):** “We are concerned that countries impose health conditions that effectively might leave some countries and some individuals excluded from international mobility. And if the current pandemic leads to a two or even three-tier mobility system, then we will have to try to solve the problem – the problem of the pandemic - but at the same time we have created a new problem of deepening the inequalities.”

17. Wide shot, UN flag alley, UN Geneva.

Story

Migrants stranded 'all over the world' and at risk from COVID-19

Thousands of migrants have been stranded “all over the world” where they face a heightened risk of COVID-19 infection, the head of UN migration agency, IOM, said on Thursday.

Speaking to journalists via videoconference, António Vitorino said that travel restrictions to try to limit the spread of the pandemic had left them more vulnerable than ever and unable to work to support themselves.

Future measures to prevent health emergencies from spreading globally – such as so-called immunity passports and mobile phone tracking software - also threatened equality for migrants, the IOM Director General cautioned.

“There are thousands of stranded migrants all over the world; in South-East Asia, in East Africa, in Latin America, because of the closing of the borders and with the travel restrictions, lots of migrants who were on the move; some of them wanted to return precisely because of the pandemic.”

He added: “They have been stranded, they are blocked, some in large groups, some in small groups, in the border areas, in very difficult conditions, without access to minimal care, especially health screening. And this is a source of tremendous concern for us, and we have been asking the Governments to allow the humanitarian workers and the health workers to have access to these large groups of stranded migrants.”

In a statement IOM noted its concern for migrants who have been stranded in deserts – either having been deported without due process or abandoned by smugglers - across west, central, and eastern Africa.

To help them, agency staff continue to conduct search and rescue in the desert, provide shelter, health assistance and support to hundreds of stranded migrants every week.

Immediate priorities for migrants include ensuring that they have access to health care and other basic social welfare assistance in their host country, Mr. Vitorino insisted.

Among the agency’s other immediate concerns is preventing the spread of new coronavirus infection in the more than 1,100 camps that it manages across the world.

They include the Cox’s Bazar complex in Bangladesh, home to around one million mainly ethnic Rohingya from Myanmar, the majority having fled persecution that was likened to ethnic cleansing by former top UN rights official Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.

So far, no cases of infection have been reported there, the IOM chief said, adding that preventative measures had been communicated to hundreds of thousands of camp residents, while medical capacity has been boosted.

On the situation of migrants in camps on the Greek mainland – IOM does not work on the islands which are home to migrants and refugees crossing the Eastern Mediterranean waters from Turkey - Mr. Vitorino said that some 200 cases of infection had been identified.

He described social distancing measures as “unthinkable” and added that “access to water and sanitation is quite a challenge”.

Turning to Venezuelan migrants, who are believed to number around five million amid a worsening economic crisis in the country, the IOM chief explained that “thousands...have lost their jobs in countries like Ecuador and Colombia and are returning back to Venezuela in large crowds without any health screening and being quarantined when they go back.”

Beyond the immediate health threat of COVID-19 infection, migrants also face growing stigmatization which they need protection from, Mr. Vitorino insisted.

Allowing hate speech and xenophobic narratives to thrive unchallenged also threatens to undermine the public health response to COVID-19, he said, before noting that migrant workers make up a significant percentage of the health sector in many developed countries including the UK, the U.S. and Switzerland.

Populist narratives targeting migrants as carriers of disease could also destabilise national security through social upheaval and countries' post-COVID economic recovery, the IOM chief continued, by removing critical workers in agriculture and service industries.

Remittances have already seen a 30pc drop during the pandemic, Mr Vitorino said, citing World Bank data, meaning that some \$20 billion has not been sent home to families in countries where up to 15 per cent of their gross domestic product comes from pay packets earned abroad.

In a plea for the health of migrants to be given as much attention as that of host populations in all countries, Mr. Vitorino also noted that Governments which did not monitor them, risked having to resume lockdown measures.

He also warned that in future, even more onerous health-related travel restrictions might discriminate disproportionately against migrant workers.

“In lots of countries in the world, we already have a system of screening checks to identify the health of migrants, above all malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS – HIV-AIDS – and now I believe that there will be increased demands in health controls for regular migrants.”

“Dans plusieurs états dans le monde, nous avons déjà un système de ‘screening’ – d’identification – des conditions de santé des migrants, surtout la malaria, la ‘tuberculosis’ ou le ‘AIDS’, le HIV-AIDS; et maintenant j’anticipe qu’il y aura des exigences accrues en matière de contrôles sanitaires pour migration régulière.”

Mr. Vitorino added: “It is quite clear that health is the new wealth and that health concerns will be introduced in the mobility systems - not just for migration - but as a whole; where travelling for business or professional reasons, health will be the new gamechanger in town.”

Such health conditions “might leave some countries and some individuals excluded from international mobility”, he added. “And if the current pandemic leads to a two or even three-tier mobility system, then we will have to try to solve the problem – the problem of the pandemic - but at the same time we have created a new problem of deepening the inequalities.”

Part of IOM's core work is to voluntarily repatriate migrants in difficulty, including those affected by the pandemic. To do so, the agency seeks funding and works in partnership with Governments which ask for assistance.

“We have requests from a number of countries in the region to help repatriating those migrants to their countries of origin, whether it is Mozambique or Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria,” Mr. Vitorino said. “As you know, IOM works very much on the basis of projects, so we do not have the financial capacity to help countries to repatriate their citizens unless there is funding available to do that.”