

# [New UN-backed action plan promotes hiring of refugees](#)

Launched on Tuesday by the UN refugee agency and the 35-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the plan identifies challenges to integrating refugees into the labour market, but also lists concrete actions to boost their participation.

Volker Türk, the UN agency's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, [said](#) it supports a "new approach" where refugees are included in communities from the very start and ultimately contribute to local economies.

"This Action Plan shows the way forward to ensure that the economic potential of refugees is fully harnessed, contributing to their social integration and offering a win-win situation to refugees, employers and host communities," he said.

Refugees account for 22.5 million of the more than 65 million people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced from their homes.

The [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR) interviews with refugees found employment and housing as their top concerns, with most saying having a job makes them feel integrated into their new communities.

While receiving countries face major challenges with refugee integration, both in the economy and society, the partners behind the plan believe "refugees also represent a significant opportunity for the host country, given the many skills and aptitudes that they bring."

The Action Plan was based on extensive consultations with employers, trade unions, civil society organizations and others.

It lays out 10 recommendations, such as taking stock of refugees' skills, identifying possible gaps and matching "refugee talent" with employers' needs.

Navigating administrative rules and regulations covering refugees is another area, with public authorities and employment services encouraged to streamline procedures for work permits and other necessary documents.

Employers are also encouraged to make the business case for hiring refugees, for example for jobs that have been difficult to fill.

"Harnessing the full potential of refugees in receiving economies and societies requires a whole of government approach in close partnership with the civil society," said Stefano Scarpetta, OECD's Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.

"Employers can and should play a central role in this process, but need to be supported by sound policy and actions from other stakeholders, including at

the local level. Together we can make the most of refugee skills, talent and potentials.”

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## [Armenia: Welcoming peaceful nature of protests, UN chief asks for continued stability](#)

Following the resignation of Armenia’s Prime Minister in the wake of mass protests, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for the continued respect of the rule of law and human rights, as well as for the maintenance of peace and stability in Armenia and the wider region.

The Secretary-General has “taken note” of the resignation of Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan, and “welcomes the peaceful nature of the unfolding events and encourages all relevant actors to [continue to exercise restraint](#) and prioritize dialogue,” Mr. Guterres’ Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said in a statement issued late Monday.

According to media reports, Mr. Sargsyan served as president for a decade before being elected last week as prime minister with sweeping powers.

The co-chairs of a group within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), namely France, Russia and the United States, has issued an appeal urging all sides to intensify efforts toward a peaceful negotiated solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict involving Armenia and Azerbaijan and to prevent any potential escalations along the line of contact.

The Secretary-General “echoes” this appeal, said the Spokesman.

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## [A new bond with nature is goal of UN’s Mother Earth Day celebration](#)

Harmony with Nature – living a better quality of life while minimizing the use of toxic materials and preserving natural resources – was the focus of the International Mother Earth Day celebration Monday at the United Nations.

“Mother Earth is suffering – and it is our doing,” Miroslav Lajčák, President of the General Assembly, told the Eighth [Interactive Dialogue](#) on Harmony with Nature. Climate change, pollution and a [loss of biodiversity](#) “take a toll on human life and health,” he said. “But they affect, first and foremost, the Earth.”

The [sustainable development](#) that is sought by the world community relies upon the three overarching objectives of devising supportable patterns of consumption and production, protecting and managing natural resources and eradicating poverty.

Mr. Lajčák said that the 2018 theme of the annual Mother Earth Day, “Earth Jurisprudence in the implementation of sustainable production and consumption patterns in Harmony with Nature” was timely, since progress toward Sustainable Development [Goal 12](#) – which calls for responsible production and consumption patterns globally – will be reviewed during a [High-Level Political Forum](#) in July.

Earth Jurisprudence is an emerging field of law that seeks to give greater consideration to nature, promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Pointing to droughts and floods, poverty and excess, rising sea levels and dwindling fresh water, the General Assembly President, who is from Slovakia, stressed that humanity has not yet struck a harmonious balance.

“Our Earth is home to these extremes,” he said. “It will only get worse if we do not change the way we produce and consume goods – especially as our population grows.”

“And if our population grows as predicted, by 2050 we will need about three planets to sustain our current lifestyles. But we only have one,” stressed Mr. Lajčák. “And this is why we really need to take care of it. We have neither a Plan B nor a Planet B.”

“To achieve our Sustainable Development Goals, we have to change our bad habits,” he maintained, urging everyone to take action and redouble their efforts for Mother Earth.

“Living in harmony with nature is not just beneficial. It is necessary,” Mr. Lajčák concluded.

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**[Security sector reform ‘core element’ of sustaining peace, say top UN](#)**

# officials

Top United Nations officials have underscored the importance of security sector reform, which they say could mean the difference between peace and conflict, and between life and death.

“Security sector reform is key to sustaining peace,” Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly, said Monday at a high-level roundtable on the subject.

“Security actors have many powerful tools at their disposal. This goes beyond guns and handcuffs. Instead, they hold the tools which can pull societies back from the brink of conflict.”

Mr. Lajčák, however, added that their roles can also be negative. In some cases they can be politicized; widen divisions, stoke fears and tensions; and they can abuse their positions, to target and persecute one group or one community.

He went on to elaborate that with effectiveness, accountability, professionalism as well as proper governance, security sector is more likely to promote sustaining peace.

To make sure that security sectors drive peace, the President of the General Assembly underscored that the security sector reform process needs to have national ownership as well as regional engagement.

Equally important is the participation of women, he added, noting also the importance of sufficient resources, and coherence and coordination among the actors involved.

Today’s event comes on the eve of the two-day [High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#) that the Assembly President will convene on Tuesday and Wednesday to assess efforts undertaken and opportunities to strengthen the UN’s work in this area.

At its heart SSR is about ensuring safety and enabling women, men and children to live their lives free from fear – *Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed*

Speaking alongside Mr. Lajčák, Amina J. Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, also underscored the importance of security sector reform for delivering on the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) as well as other global commitments

Security sector reform figures prominently in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), and in particular [Goal 16](#) on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

Strengthening of the security sector is also part of Goal 2 of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

“In short, [security sector reform is a core element of prevention and sustaining peace agenda](#),” said Ms. Mohammed, noting that in developing countries and countries emerging from conflict, it is both essential as well as a difficult process to manage.

“At its heart SSR is about ensuring safety and enabling women, men and children to live their lives free from fear,” she underscored.

In her remarks, the UN deputy chief also said that addressing challenges related to security sector reform during peace processes contributes to stabilization efforts, as well as highlighted its importance as a preventive measure.

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## [UN chief condemns airstrikes on civilians in Yemen; calls for prompt, transparent investigation](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for a prompt, effective and transparent investigation into recent airstrikes on civilians in Yemen, which claimed at least 50 lives, including children, and injured many others.

In a [statement](#) attributable to his spokesperson, Mr. Guterres reminded all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law concerning the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure during armed conflicts.

One of these airstrikes hit a wedding party in Hajjah, north-western Yemen, late Sunday.

In another tragic incident over the weekend, civilian vehicles were hit in Taizz, located in the south-west.

Ongoing [conflict in Yemen](#) between international coalition forces supporting President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi on one side, and Houthi militias and allied units of the armed forces on the other has taken take an enormous toll on the civilian population, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

Across the war-torn country, more than 22 million people – over three-fourths of the population – remain dependent on humanitarian aid. A staggering 8.4 million among them do not know how they will obtain their next meal.