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BACKGROUND PAPER

Topic: “Managing refugee and migrant flow from Muslim-majority countries into the European Union.”

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UNCHR

Chair and Moderator

Dariana Andrade Tovar & Valeria Cervantes Cervantes

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Committee Background

The UNHCR functions as the UN Refugee Agency to protect refugees who must flee their homes because of persecution and conflict.

We lead international action to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.

Formerly known as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR was established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1950 in the aftermath of the Second World War to help the millions of people who had lost their homes.

Today, UNHCR works in 137 countries. It provides life-saving assistance, including shelter, food, water and medical care for people forced to flee conflict and persecution, many of whom have nobody left to turn to. They defend their right to reach safety and help them find a place to call home so they can rebuild their lives. Long term, they work with countries to improve and monitor refugee and asylum laws and policies, ensuring human rights are upheld.

In everything it does UNHCR, considers refugees and those forced to flee as partners, putting those most affected at the centre of planning and decision-making.

Introduction of the Topic



Over the past two decades, migration and refugee flows from Muslim-majority countries to the European Union have become a key topic in international politics. Driven by conflict, persecution, poverty and chronic instability across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia huge numbers of people have set out for safety and new opportunities, in Europe. The European Union has wrestled with directing these flows in a way trying to meet its duties while coping with security worries, social-cohesion challenges and political pressure, from other member states. These movements have not put the EU's asylum and migration frameworks to the test they have also sparked debates, about identity, integration and the future of European solidarity. Comprehending how the EU orchestrates these migration flows is indispensable, for addressing the needs of migrants and refugees while also safeguarding the stability of societies.



Evolution of the Topic

During 2015 Europe reached its peak refugee and migrant crisis when more than one million people attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea to escape Muslim-majority war zones in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The rapid influx of refugees exposed weaknesses in the EU asylum system which led to demands for unified solutions.

In response, the EU signed the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016. This agreement aimed to reduce irregular crossing through the Aegean Sea by returning new arrivals from Greece to Turkey, while also committing to EU to resettle Syrian refugees directly from Turkey and provide financial assistance. The policy led to a major decrease in migrants reaching Europe through the Eastern Mediterranean but it created new disputes about human rights and international legal frameworks.

By 2017, attention shifted to the Central Mediterranean route from Libya to Italy. The Malta Declaration focuses on working with Libyan authorities to stop smuggling operations while enhancing EU border protection efforts. The EU started with emergency humanitarian aid in 2015 before transitioning to regional agreements in 2016 and then established a full externalization strategy in 2017 which needed non-EU countries to work together on migration management.

External Actions



The European Union has implemented several external actions to manage refugee and migrant flows from Muslim-majority countries. The following steps are part of the process:

1. The EU maintains diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and Iran and Pakistan and Turkey to enhance their cooperation on border security and asylum procedures and migrant rights protection.
2. The EU allocates financial resources to third countries for border control enhancement and asylum system development and displaced population support. The countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan have received funding for these objectives.
3. The partnership between countries for mobility and legal cooperation enables countries to establish legal migration pathways and enhance migrant integration while working together on border security and readmission agreements with Morocco and Tunisia.
4. The EU supports development aid programs and governance reforms and conflict resolution efforts in Syria and Afghanistan to minimize migration triggers.
5. Humanitarian Assistance and Protection: The EU delivers humanitarian assistance to countries that host big refugee populations through emergency relief services and healthcare support and educational programs and shelter construction in the Middle East and North Africa.

The EU implements these measures to unite humanitarian duties with sustainable migration management and human rights protection and international partnership development.





Committee Focus

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) committee focuses on the global management of refugee and migrant flows, particularly those originating from Muslim-majority countries into the European Union. The committee works to create lasting solutions through sustainable policies which defend human rights and enhance integration systems and international partnerships to address migration origins.

The committee requires delegates to analyze security issues alongside cultural integration and international law to develop better migration governance systems that promote EU state burden distribution and non-discrimination and solidarity practices. The discussion aims to build a complete understanding of migration challenges across the world and human rights responsibilities.

KEY FOCUS STATEMENTS TO DISCUSS:

- Root causes of refugee and migrant flows from Muslim-majority countries
- Human rights protection and compliance with international refugee law
- EU asylum policies and the principle of shared responsibility
- Integration challenges: access to employment, education, and financial services
- Countering discrimination, xenophobia, and cultural divisions
- Cooperation between origin, transit, and destination countries

Conclusion

The management of refugee and migrant flows from predominantly Muslim countries into the European Union presents one of the most complex humanitarian and political challenges of our age. The problem does not solely relate to border control but includes providing protection for human rights, fostering international cooperation, and finding the root causes that displace millions from their homes. The European Union must remain committed to its humanitarian obligations in respect of international law, while seeking equitable, effective, and consistent migration policies that balance security with compassion.

To accomplish this, EU countries need to collaborate with countries of origin and transit. Development aid, conflict prevention, and education within broader partnerships could go a long way toward reducing forced displacement in the longer term. The European Union itself should make its asylum systems more transparent, equitable, and accessible to applicants and develop integration programs for refugees that would enable them to make an active contribution to society. This must include initiatives to counteract discrimination and Islamophobia in order to foster inclusive societies and contribute to social cohesion in Europe.

Addressing migration requires a global perspective. The international community must work together in the creation of sustainable solutions through diplomacy, shared responsibility, and respect for human dignity. Tackling poverty, political instability, climate change, and conflict in Muslim-majority regions will greatly reduce the pressures driving migration. Consequently, managing such flows should not only be seen as a European challenge but as a shared global duty that calls for empathy, cooperation, and foresight. Only by setting up a comprehensive and humane approach can the EU and the world move toward stability, peace, and prosperity for both migrants and host nations.



Countries Position

Germany: one of the main destination countries for refugees in Europe. It promotes EU solidarity, human rights protection, and long-term integration policies, while supporting cooperation with countries of origin.

France: supports a balanced EU migration approach that combines border security with humanitarian responsibility. It emphasizes international cooperation and addressing the root causes of displacement.

Italy: is a frontline country in the Central Mediterranean route. It calls for fair burden-sharing among EU states and stronger cooperation to manage arrivals while saving lives at sea.

Greece: serves as a major entry point for refugees arriving from Turkey. It supports EU assistance, humane asylum procedures, and greater solidarity among member states.

Spain: manages migration flows through the Western Mediterranean route. It promotes cooperation with North African countries and supports integration policies based on human rights.

Turkey: plays a crucial role as a host and transit country, hosting millions of refugees. Through cooperation with the EU, it works to reduce irregular migration and calls for shared responsibility.

Malta: faces strong migration pressure due to its location in the Mediterranean. It advocates for EU solidarity, redistribution mechanisms, and respect for humanitarian principles.

Cyprus: experiences increasing migration pressure from nearby conflict regions. It supports stronger EU border management while maintaining refugee protection standards.

Bulgaria: plays a key role along the Balkan route. It supports border control cooperation and EU funding while recognizing humanitarian obligations.



Countries Position

Sweden: has a long tradition of welcoming refugees. It promotes human rights, sustainable integration, and a unified European asylum system.

Austria: emphasizes secure borders and coordinated EU migration policies. It supports fair responsibility-sharing and cooperation with transit countries.

Netherlands: supports a balanced migration policy that combines firm border management with humanitarian protection. It emphasizes fair asylum procedures and integration.

USA: contributes through humanitarian aid, refugee resettlement, and funding for UNHCR. It supports international burden-sharing and conflict resolution.

Russia: influences migration indirectly through its involvement in regional conflicts, particularly in Syria. It emphasizes political solutions and state sovereignty.

China: addresses migration indirectly through economic power and development assistance. It promotes stability and long-term development to reduce forced displacement.

Libya: is a major transit country for migrants crossing the Central Mediterranean. Internal instability and smuggling networks make international cooperation essential.

Lebanon: hosts one of the highest numbers of refugees per capita worldwide. It calls for increased international aid and responsibility-sharing.

Jordan: plays a key humanitarian role by hosting large refugee populations. It cooperates with the EU and UNHCR and emphasizes sustained international support.

Morocco: is a key transit and cooperation partner for the European Union, particularly with Spain. It works with the EU on border control, migration management, and anti-smuggling efforts, while promoting regional cooperation and legal migration pathways.

Participation List



Germany



France



Italy



Greece



Spain



Turkey



Malta



Cyprus



Bulgaria



Sweden



Austria



Netherlands

Participation List



USA



Russia



China



Libya



Lebanon



Jordan



Morocco



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