
Uprooted People

A Newsletter of the World Council of Churches in solidarity with people compelled by severe political, economic and social conditions to leave their land and culture.

1. Network News

About 25 representatives of churches and ecumenical organizations from Europe and the Middle East participated in the Amman Process meeting, held in Beirut from 9-10 May. The agenda included an overview of the political, economic and social situation in the Middle East, migration challenges facing the churches in the region, an update on European policies, inter-religious dialogue and an assessment of the Amman process. Participants in the meeting agreed to initiate an exchange programme within the Amman process network whereby a staff person from the Middle East would do an internship with CCME in Brussels and then return to the Middle East to provide concrete follow-up to the Amman process recommendations. Funding is presently being sought for this initiative. Among the other recommendations was a call for advocacy work in Western countries to look at the Middle East with different eyes and for a joint training session for European and Middle East partners on EU proposal writing. The next meeting of the Amman process is tentatively scheduled for 14-16 May in Lisbon.

The Joint MECC/WCC Working Group on Refugees, Displaced and Migrants met in Amman, Jordan from 16-20 June. The meeting included an overview of work at MECC, an overview of the present political and economic situation in the Middle East, and reports on the situation of migrant workers, refugees and internally displaced people. Participants also visited the Ruweished camp. Considerable time was spent on evaluation of the work of MECC's Service to Refugees, Displaced, and Migrants. Participants worked in small working groups to establish a vision for the future to be presented to the 8th MECC General Assembly in December 2003. The Working Group agreed that the MECC/SRDM programme has been important for the churches and the region, should continue, and should strengthen its activities in certain specified areas.

The tenth meeting of the Ecumenical Network for Refugees, Migrants and Displaced in Latin America was held in Montevideo, Uruguay from 2-4 July 2003. Representatives of 8 Latin American organizations attended the meeting, along with representatives of WCC, CLAI and Church World Service. The theme of the meeting was solidarity and cooperation toward refugees, displaced and migrants in Latin America. Participants shared the latest developments in their respective countries,

noting common trends: the growth of xenophobia, the growing impact of migrants' remittances, the feminisation of migration, the exploitation of migrant workers, and the fact that governments do not see migration as a priority. The group met with representatives of the Uruguayan and Peruvian governments. The Network adopted the "Declaration of Montevideo" which expressed satisfaction that 5 governments in the region have ratified the International Migrants' Convention, called on the remaining governments to do so and called on governments to adopt development policies which do not intensify the pressures on people to migrate.

The AACC Continental Committee Meeting on Uprooted People met in Nairobi, Kenya on the 18th to 20th of June. There were fourteen participants that attended the meeting including two regional fellowships such as FOCCISSA and FOCCOCA. The Deputy General Secretary of NCKK and an important AACC Executive Staff was also present in the meeting. The main purpose of the meeting was to rethink and critically analyze the causes of uprootedness in Africa, its linkages to the international community, and strengthening partnerships. There were a few priority issues in each of the regions that were presented before the Continental Committee. These issues included clarifying the role of the AACC Office and enhancing its information sharing structures as well as looking to the possibility of having a round-table discussion for the funding of the Uprooted Ministry. Another issue that was emphasized was combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, in which AACC and WCC could seek funding from UNAIDS for projects to meet these ends. Because uprooted situations have become increasingly multifaceted, AACC is looking for partners such as UNHCR, governments, civil society and other stake holders to become more involved and recommitted to the issue of uprootedness in Africa. Vivi Akakpo has transitioned from an Interim Coordinator of the West African Sub-region to a full Coordinator for West Africa and the AACC Continental Coordinator with the help of Mr Ochilo. Mr Ochilo will become the Coordinator of the East African Sub-region.

The 12th Assembly of the Conference for European Churches (CEC) meeting in Trondheim, Norway on 25 June – 2 July 2003, endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. The CEC also urged European governments to ratify this convention on the basis that it would provide a basic standard for protecting the human rights of both documented and undocumented migrant workers. The CEC also pushed for civil society and the media in Europe to be more respectful and generous towards migrants entering into their borders. The Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) also issued a statement expressing their support for the CEC and its convictions expressed in the 12th Assembly.

2. International Developments

The 27th Standing Committee Meeting was held from 24-26 June focusing on issues of funding, International Protection, resettlement, and statelessness. UNHCR has had to significantly cut programs in 2003 due to the shortfall in expected contributions, the devaluing of the US dollar in the past spring, and increase in salaries of certain professional categories as well as the general staff of the UN. Some ways to deal with the funding issues have been to increase the level of funding by donors as well as widening the donor base as well as the use of the Supplementary Budget. Under the

agenda for international protection, many States called on their neighboring countries to come together for peace and protect refugees. Many other African States emphasized that they had inadequate funding to stop small arms in the refugee camps. There was wide support for the registration of refugees as a tool for protection. Most countries emphasized needs of protection for women and children from gender based violence and sexual abuse, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The Agenda for Protection was widely endorsed by most States and the paper prepared by the working group on resettlement received warm appreciation from the delegates. Countries appreciated the process of Agenda for Protection. Some of the other highlighted priorities included close collaboration with other organizations, mainstreaming the resettlement process, and a continual briefing of UNHCR's code of conduct of their staff and refugees. Countries were encouraged by UNHCR to report on specific steps that they have been taking to implement Agenda for Protection. All the States supported the activities in the field of statelessness. Most States looked forward to the result of the surveys that UNHCR had sent to all the countries regarding statelessness.

There were a number of Consultations on the 2004 Process in June where the main components of the initiative included governance, funding, asylum and migration, and UNHCR's position in the UN family. There was a consensus among all member States in regards to the critical need of UNHCR to have more sustainable and predictable funding and the importance of widening the donor base, by potentially increasing contributions from private donors. However, most member States rejected a voluntary 30% base level increase in contributions for all contributing members (except for LDC States) for two main reasons. One is that the member States feared that a voluntary contribution would lead to an eventual assessed contribution base. Secondly, the 30% base increase did not take into consideration the countries that are hosting and resettling large numbers of refugees. This topic was further debated in a subsequent meeting. The countries acknowledged the importance of the need for multilateral cooperation and understanding forced and voluntary migration and the distinction that lies between them and also the impact of labor in host countries and regions. All the States were positive about upgrading UNHCR's presence in New York through improving its relations with the Security Council in the field of peace and security. The member States overall agreed that UNHCR did not need an aggressive restructuring of their governance structure, and that instead, UNHCR could build upon the existing structure and make adjustments or improvements where needed.

The High Commissioner's Forum on Convention Plus took place on 27th of June and the High Commissioner urged States to do better in burden sharing. He also stressed that in finding durable solutions burden sharing is needed rather than burden shifting. He encouraged States to form special agreements with other States to create a framework of principles for comprehensive solutions for reintegration, multilateral responsibility in durable solutions. Canada made a presentation on the use of resettlement as a possible tool in Convention Plus agreements. Most countries supported Canada's call for the strategic use of resettlement. Many States felt that Convention Plus must address protracted situations through comprehensive solutions, including local integration. Development assistance to refugee affected regions could help in this regard. There were specific calls made to countries to come together to target aid in Africa as two thirds of refugee camps are in this region.

The two thirds of the 5.34 billion dollars needed by the United Nations for life-sustaining operations during crises are still unmet. The United Nations consolidated appeals for countries in crisis have only met a third of their needed costs. The 1.8 billion that has been received so far shows a big disproportion to high profile crises such as Iraq and Afghanistan whereas Liberia and Democratic Republic of Congo have received significantly less than what is needed. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) notes that food aid has the largest funding base exceeding the total funding for all other aid. OCHA is also concerned about the alarming low funding for rehabilitation programs aimed at promoting self-sufficiency for families. The UN Consolidated Appeals aim to deliver food, medical assistance and shelter for the needed population as well as other basic needs. They have assisted an estimated 83 million people in unstable and conflict regions.

UNHCR and other partners around the world planned an array of events to kick off the World Refugee Day on the 20th June. The theme of this year's World Refugee Day was "Refugee Youth: Building the Future". Events ranged from open-air concerts, and numerous events, in schools to special websites, art and photo exhibits and national public awareness campaigns. In Geneva, a special fund-raising concert of classical music was held at the UNHCR headquarters. An estimated 500 people filled the UNHCR's atrium to listen to two philharmonic orchestras, one French, one Swiss, and the Swiss mezzo-soprano Brigitte Baileys, playing music by Mozart, Dvorak, and Gluck.

3. National News in Brief

In the Niela Refugee Camp in Ivory Coast and across West Africa, settlements of people that are escaping war have become the target for recruitment for rebels and government forces. The most susceptible individuals for recruitment are young teenage males who are often bored, hungry, and impressionable. Outside the Liberian capital, Monrovia, a camp for internally displaced people, has also been a recruiting ground for government militias. Recently, the residents have formed a neighborhood watch system that warns the community and sends the young men in their homes to the woods when the militias approach. Although in some cases, there is forced recruitment, other times, the recruitment is voluntary as many lack activities or opportunities for any type of labor, education. The prospect of engagement, guilt or threats can be enough to entice them to join government or rebel groups. The recruitment of refugees is prohibited by the guidelines of the United Nations refugee agency but it is not considered a war crime prosecutable under the Geneva Convention.

The increased fighting in Burundi's northern Kayanza province has uprooted 65,000 people and has left many dead. The government was reported to have contacted humanitarian agencies to bring assistance for thousands of displaced people. The government has accused rebels known as Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD). The army responded by bringing the rebels back to the neighboring commune where the army continues to fight them off. The government has said the UN World Food Program has been responding positively to aid assistance.

On the 4th of July, UNHCR rescue ships arrived into Monrovia and began the emergency evacuation of thousands of distressed Sierra Leonean refugees as many of them fled into the capital during a recent rebel attack on the city and its surroundings areas. There has been continued violence in Liberia, in contravention of the 17 June cease-fire. UN Secretary-General has asked the Security Council to send multinational forces into the country. UNHCR is urging all parties to ensure that relief operations can safely resume in Liberia where hundreds of thousands of people are reportedly uprooted, many of whom are inaccessible to aid workers. Food and other domestic items have been given out to the Sierra Leonean refugees who sought shelter in and around the UNHCR office in Liberia's capital, Monrovia. The UNHCR has not been able to access any of its four refugee camps in Monrovia. These four camps held 15,000 Sierra Leonean refugees but many have since dispersed due to the fighting, seeking shelter in public buildings in and around Monrovia.

UNHCR has closed down the Mole Refugee Camp in northeastern D.R. of Congo's Equateur Province, after the end of the repatriation of around 2,700 Central African refugees. The last group to leave was on 16 June for the 10-minute boat trip across the Oubangui River to Bangui, the capital of Central African Republic. This repatriation process took a record 7-day period. UNHCR had anticipated transporting 350 refugees daily with the repatriation process resuming for 8 days. However, more than expected showed up eager to return home. Many of the people that were repatriating are former civil servants and residents of Bangui. They had fled after an unsuccessful coup in the Central African Republic in May 2001 and are returning now with the recent change of government in CAR in March.

On Friday 6 June, in Bulawayo, a church service was organized to bring people together for Justice and Peace where state repression and violence has been occurring. This service was scheduled in hopes that the church remains the last democratic space in Zimbabwe where people can voice their concerns and fear, and build momentum for change. Bulawayo was a city under siege with police and army patrolling every street and an estimated 60 arrests for strategic leadership took place during the week. The overwhelming oppression in the city prevented people from coming together to form coalitions and for people to express their views. The church service held did not pass without harassment as the police and the army continued to be obstructive before, during, and after the service. However, those who attended were able to share their thoughts and moving stories of their experiences.

A second repatriation transport of Angolan refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo departed on 1 July. The convoy shuttled 160 returning refugees to M'Banza Congo in northern Angola. At the moment UNHCR is focusing on repatriation to areas which are relatively safe from mines and where basic infrastructure and services are available which include the towns of M'Banza Congo in Angola's Zaire province, and Luau in Mexico province. Since the signing of a peace accord between the Government of Angola and UNITA rebel forces in April 2002, close to 130,000 Angolans have returned home according to the government.

Hundreds of Eritrean and Somali refugees made their way home 21 June as UNHCR began the repatriation of Eritrean refugees out of Sudan and Somali refugees from Djibouti. Almost 400 Eritrean refugees were guided home from Sudan almost one year after the voluntary repatriation process came to a halt. This return process was

stalled in July 2002 because of the rainy season but did not resume because of the increased border tensions between Eritrea and Sudan.

The Lebanese government plans to reexamine the citizenship offered in a 1994 decree to thousands of Palestinians within their border. Most of the Palestinians who acquired Lebanese citizenship after 1994 come from just inside Israel. They were able to receive this status because the area was briefly in French-controlled Lebanon before being transferred over to British-mandated Palestine in the early 1920's. If the government decides to recede the citizenship status from these Palestinians, many will be critically affected as they will lose their jobs, homes and access to health care and education. Although this revocation is not imminent, its possibility is another example of the hardship of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. About 400,000 Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon where the United Nations has indicated that their status is among the worst of those outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Almost two-thirds of more than four million Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The current proposed peace settlement calls for the "refugee issue" to be addressed at the end of the negotiations with a "just and realistic solution."

There are continued concerns regarding the Palestinian refugees in Baghdad as Iraqi landlords have evacuated more than 800 families from their homes, since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. UNHCR has found out that at least 200 more families have been given notices to vacate their homes by the end of school year. Therefore by the end of June an estimated number of 1,000 families will be evicted. UNHCR has set up temporary tented camps in Baghdad but with temperatures soaring well above 50 degrees Celsius, they have found vacant government buildings for suitable accommodations for the Palestinians.

After the war, the Iraqi Kurds have been returning spontaneously to their original villages where basic infrastructure had been destroyed. Some of these people had been refugees in Iran and their repatriation came after local officials and authorities helped to resolve property disputes in these villages. However, in many areas in Northern Iraq, property claims remain unresolved. There are efforts underway to put in place arrangements for the peaceful resolution of these disputes in a fair and equitable manner. In the meantime assistance has been provided to the displaced in areas where they are currently located. UNHCR estimates that there are around 500,000 refugees and displaced Iraqis returning to Iraq.

The UNHCR is urging governments to delay the return of rejected asylum seekers as they are currently assessing the situation in Iraq and the feasibility of returns. The large part of the country is still dependent on food aid and other form of assistance and there is still a lack of legal, and judicial systems, and property rights. UNHCR reports that three foundations must be in place before Iraq can take in large-scale movements of return. One is the basic security that can be sustained by the Coalition Authority, the other is the border monitoring system must exist, and lastly, basic services such as water, electricity, and medical care.

The UN relocated 800 Afghan refugees to new sites inside Pakistan and Afghanistan on Monday as it started to close a controversial makeshift camp just inside the Pakistani border where 20,000 refugees had been living since the beginning of 2002. The UNHCR had long desired to close this "waiting area," which has been considered

insecure ever since it was formed by asylum seekers when Pakistan closed its borders to new refugee arrivals in February 2002. The daily convoys of trucks could take up to two months to relocate the estimated 19,000 refugees who registered to move. The decision to close the area, which was not a recognized refugee camp where UNHCR could provide full assistance, was made in May at the Tripartite Commission. This commission is a body set up under an agreement by Afghanistan, Pakistan, and UNHCR, which is to set policy on the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees until 2005.

The Sri Lankan peace process between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) seem to be eroding. The good will that has been built up between the LTTE, the government, and the army is slowly dissipating as the LTTE withdrew from negotiations last April claiming that the peace process was going too slowly and that their interests were not adequately met. One of the main issues has been the control of the north-east area of the country. The LTTE has demanded political and administrative control while the government has been unwilling to accept this. The current peace process originate back to the cease-fire signed on 22 February 2002 following nearly 20 years of civil war. Due to the fighting that had occurred, 720,000 people had become displaced within the country with 330,000 fleeing from the country.

The return process of East Timor Refugees that have been residing in West Timor has resumed again after a peaceful period of four months. At the beginning of June, four families decided to return home and were picked up from the Tuapukan and Noelbak camps and brought to the border by the military district Command of Kupang. The funds for the transportation of returnees were to be provided by the International Organization of Migration (IOM), but there is some confusion as to whether the Indonesian government should work with IOM in West or East Timor. West Timor has requested a clarification of this matter as more refugees are expected to expatriate soon. The local communities around the camps in West Timor have become more outspoken in protest at the presence of the refugees; in several places the refugee crop had been destroyed and permits to tend gardens had been denied.

Hundreds of people have fled their homes after militants burned the villages on Solomon Islands and humanitarian aid workers were expecting more refugees to flee their residence. Armed supporters of warlord Harold Keke destroyed two villages in the remote Marasa district on the main island of Guadalcanal. Keke, wanted for a number of murders, struck the villages because he believed that some the residents were informing police of his activities. The Red Cross coordinator told the press that 1,000 people had been displaced by the recent violence and more refugees were to be expected.

The UNHCR High Commissioner made a visit to South Korea, which ended on 17 June where he met with President Roh Moo-Hyun and other government officials. They discussed South Korea's national asylum policy, the concern about North Koreans escaping their country and moving into China and elsewhere, and South Korea's contribution to the UNHCR. The High Commissioner thanked South Korea for their support for UNHCR, which dates back to the late 1970s during the Indochinese boat people exodus. The High Commissioner encouraged the South

Korean government to increase their contributions to the UNHCR's global work for refugees.

The war in Aceh, Indonesia continues, and there are thousands of new displaced people. The government's war against the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) has been ongoing. The conflict has caused thousands of people to flee their homes for fear of being caught in the crossfire between the two forces. The government has made efforts to evacuate an estimated 200,000 Acehnese into camps across the province as part of the government's aim to combat rebels in the region who are demanding independence. The government's evacuation plan is giving rise to fears of long term IDPs living in camps. The volatile situation has limited international presence in Aceh. The government has banned activities by international organizations and all humanitarian assistance is now being carried out through the Indonesian government. Although there is ongoing tension in conflict areas of Indonesia, many displaced people have returned to their homes since mid-2002 bringing the total number of IDPs down from 1.3 million to 700,000. The return home is still difficult in Maluku province, Central Kalimantan, and Aceh, where positive initiatives of the December 2002 peace agreement between the government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) have eroded.

In Aceh, a conflict-hit region in Indonesia, health officials have treated thousands of refugees for illnesses since they were moved into camps around the province to escape fighting. Health facilities have been created within each of the 16 refugee camps where an estimated 14,000 patients have visited since a military operation aimed at crushing separatist rebels began on May 19. Common conditions suffered by refugees have been respiratory ailments, skin disease, bronchitis and diarrhea. Authorities created the refugee camps after the military announced that it wanted to separate the civilians from the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels. The deputy head of the provincial health agency reported that the camps were equipped with tents, kitchens, clean water and toilets.

Eyewitnesses in Thailand suggest that local government officials were involved in the murder of six Burmese migrant workers in Mae Sot because they had challenged an extortion gang backed by men in uniform, possibly police and military officers. The killing of the six Burmese men signify the prevalent violence against migrant workers in Tak province. Burmese authorities have demanded and inquiry into the death of the six Burmese worker.

The UNHCR is very concerned about the 18 Tibetans that have been in the custody of Nepal authorities since 17 April, while the Chinese government is demanding that they be sent back to China. The 18 Tibetans were part of a group of 21, including three children, and were in the care of UNHCR. The 18 Tibetans have requested UNHCR's involvement and the office feels that there are strong indications that they would be of concern to UNHCR. However, the agency has not been able to access the 18 people to assess their status and concerns and has sent letter to the Nepalese Prime Minister's office asking them to transfer the care of the Tibetans to UNHCR so that they could determine their claim. The UNHCR has a commitment to protect asylum seekers until their status has been determined. Therefore, returning people before the status has been clearly delineated would clearly contradict international law.

International human rights groups denounced the screening of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal to assess their nationality. About 100,000 refugees from Bhutan live in camps set up in Nepal. They stated that the move would render 100,000 refugees stateless. The government of Bhutan and Nepal undertook this verification process of 12,000 refugees at one of the seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal, where less than 3% were recognized as bona-fide refugees and were allowed to return back to their country with full citizenship rights leaving thousands of refugees stateless. This has been part of a joint effort by the two governments to undertake a pilot verification process in one camp, which divides 12,000 refugees into four categories. Within these categories only a few are actually given citizenship. The refugees will have just fifteen days to appeal their categorization in a screening process to the refugee coordination unit.

The UNHCR is opening up a new office in the northern city of Barranquilla to address concerns in the five provinces on Colombia's Atlantic Coast, three, of which are considered the poorest of the regions in the country. The agency presence is aimed at enhancing government and civil society towards the displacement of Colombian citizens escaping from places where their lives are in danger due to internal conflict. Areas of particular concern are Montes de Maria, which lie between the border of Sucre and Bolivar, and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in the area of Magdalena where conflict still exists. UNHCR is particularly concerned about indigenous peoples in Colombia who are affected by the conflict in Sierra Nevada; where nearly 40,000 indigenous people from six different groups live and many have been victims of conflict.

According to a recent study done by the World Food Program, 80% of Colombians displaced by violence are living in extreme poverty and cannot obtain access to adequate nutritional foods. The food that is readily available is low in calories and lacks essential nutrients that are affecting the general health of this displaced population. Their inability to gain stable income and lasting jobs creates barriers for these displaced people to bring themselves out of their poverty. According to a study done by the WFP from December 2002 to April 2003, 63 percent of families live in overcrowded inadequate housing.

UNHCR reported in late April that over a hundred Colombians including 63 children were forced to return to Columbia from Panama. The UNHCR interviewed families that were temporarily housed in a school in Zapzurro, on Caribbean coast after they had been forcibly moved out of Panama. Those that were interviewed reported that Panamanian immigration authorities and the Panamanian National Guard arrived in Punusa and informed them that they were transporting them to a safer place. When some refused to move or tried to escape they were physically forced by the National Guard and taken across to the Colombian side of the border. What is of particular concern is that during the forced transportation some of the families were separated and some mothers had to leave their Panamanian-born children behind. The Colombians reported that Panamanian authorities had forced them to sign an agreement stating that they were volunteering to return back to their country. The UN agency is delivering emergency assistance including food and shelter. UNHCR is concerned that similar cases might be occurring in other isolated regions of the Darien region of Panama. The UNHCR is closely monitoring the situation and is contacting

the authorities in both countries to help rectify the situation and also to pressure the government to adhere to the basic international refugee law.

There have been reports of serious human rights violations among IDPs living in camps and private residences in Ingushetia during ‘mop-up’ operations in a startling escalation of state-controlled abuses. These abuses have been carried out by masked Russian forces and have reportedly subjected Chechen IDPs to forced disappearance, torture, and ill treatment, and looted their property. The raids in Ingushetia reflect the broadening of the four year long Chechnya conflict, and violate international protection standards for IDPs. There is an urgent call for the immediate release of the missing IDPs as well as a deep concern about the whereabouts of the individuals that have “disappeared”.

The IOM offices in Rome and Skopje kicked off this week a project titled, “National Capacity Building and HIV/AIDS Awareness Raising Activities in Macedonia and Kosovo” funded by the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs. This initiative backed by the president of Macedonia, is intended to raise awareness to fight the expansion of HIV/AIDS in the region. IOM research has indicated that the general media coverage on HIV/AIDS has been limited and not accurate and the expressions used can be misinterpreted. The IOM project will continue until the end of the year and there will also be training for media professionals and NGO communications officers. Field research on HIV/AIDS and Mobility will be conducted in Kosovo.

Amnesty International, protested in Sydney, at the home of Prime Minister John Howard to urge the release of child asylum-seekers held on the Pacific Island of Nauru. The heads of 13 Amnesty International offices in Asia led a rally against the Howard government’s police of detaining unwanted refugees of all ages in remote camps in the Pacific. They signed a letter that demanding the release of 112 children detained in the camp on Nauru. Amnesty International claims that they have not been able to reach the camp in Nauru as the country's interests have been firmly tied to Australia and in return they have received millions of dollars in Australian aid.

The British proposal for asylum-seekers would be to send asylum claimants to places outside the European Union for processing. The plan seeks to create “zones of protection” to be set up nearer troubled countries to ensure a firm and fair procedure that encourages genuine asylum seekers to come forward. Amnesty International, along with other human rights groups, has criticized the British plan as “unlawful and unworkable” saying that this would only shift the problem elsewhere and “where responsibility and enforceability, and accountability for refugee protection would be weak and unclear. Amnesty added that the UK plan is trying to “circumvent important domestic and international legal instruments” such as the 1951 UN refugees convention.

The House of the Lords debated amendments to the Sex Offences Bill in the United Kingdom. This bill would eliminate the need to prove that someone had benefited from trafficking if it can be demonstrated that someone organized or facilitated the movement of another person within or out of the UK, for the purpose of sexually exploit them. The government has decided to rule in favor of this amendment and therefore it has been added to the Bill on 6 June 2003.

France and Britain have joined together in an effort to keep Iraqi refugees out of both their countries. Both the governments decided to close the Sangatte refugee camp in north-western France as well as a railway station located a few kilometers from Sangatte in an effort to fight illegal immigration. The camp was until last December, a sanctuary for refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Now they wander about the streets of Calais. In a further attempt to tighten up immigration, France has passed a new law that makes aid to illegal immigrants a crime. Anyone who is found aiding an illegal immigrant could be charged with 10 years in prison and a fine up to US \$43,000.

Asylum seekers from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia will have no chance of being accepted in Switzerland, as they have become new additions to the list of “safe” countries. They now join the other 15 European Union member states to the list of countries considered safe along with the 10 EU accession countries and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members. Individuals from these countries will automatically be denied asylum by the Swiss government. The country brought forth the notion of safe countries, based on the theory that there would be no reason to flee, to simplify the process of asylum requests.

The 33rd General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) was held in Santiago de Chile from 8-10 June where 34 states throughout the Americas adopted, through a general consensus, a resolution on the protection of asylum seekers, refugees, returnees, stateless and internally displaced persons. The resolution called on the few American states that had not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol to do so. The meeting also encouraged states to establish specific standards for receiving in asylum seekers and refugees, and stressed the importance of combating xenophobia and racial discrimination against vulnerable groups.

Colin Powell released the US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report on 11 June 2003 which estimates that around 800-900,000 people are trafficked each year, nearly 20,000 of whom cross borders into the US. The report assesses 116 countries and 15 States as not in line with minimum standards and not making significant efforts to do so. These include Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Greece, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Myanmar, North Korea, Sudan, Suriname, Turkey and Uzbekistan. These countries may face sanctions by the US if no action is taken before 1 October when President Bush will make a decision on this. Concerns have been raised by Human Rights Watch regarding the criteria used in the evaluation method and human rights groups called for transparency in this process.

4. Upcoming Meetings

21-23 September: Global Ecumenical Network on Uprooted People in Geneva. 24-26 September: UNHCR-NGO Consultations 29 September – 3 October: UNHCR Executive Committee

5. Resources

H-Migration is a web site devoted to building scholarly communication about the historical events of migration around the world and the acculturation of immigrants and their descendents into their new society. This list is meant to be global and the time span will cover from Medieval to present day migration. The list is open to suggestions, questions, and announcements from all over the world. The list will be a useful means to exchange locations of primary sources on specific topics, and announcement of books and journals, and new web-sites, jobs, and fellowships as well as calls for papers. To join H-Migration, please send a message from the account where you wish to receive mail, to: listserv@h-net.msu.edu

Although there has been a growing awareness of the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs), it is less clear as to when and how internal displacement ends in any given situation. Further, when decisions are made that the internal displacement has ended, programs addressing IDP's particular needs are terminated and as a result the IDPs disappear from the group of concern. Therefore it is significant to understand the basis on which such decisions are made and the extent to which they match both objective realities on the ground and human rights and humanitarian standards. Researchers and practitioners are developing guidelines on this issue and suggest that safety, the freedom to return to their original country, or elsewhere, reintegration, and equality and non-discrimination should be the core foundation. Discussion papers and reports prepared in connection with this research are posted on www.brook.edu/fp/projects/idp/idp.htm

On 10 June, IOM published World Migration 2003, which discusses the latest trends in international migration and policy and geographic perspectives of different aspects of migration management. The World Migration also provides an in depth look into the complex dynamics of a growing socio-economic, cultural, and political phenomenon. Globalization and trade liberalization are promoting labor mobility and the magnitude of managing migration poses a unique challenge to governments. The goal of the international community, according to World Migration 2003, should be to manage migration to the benefit of migrants and societies they impact. To order your copy of the World Migration Report, go to <http://iom.int> click on World Migration Report.

There will be a training program that will offer critical issues faced by NGO/PVO working in complex health emergencies. The objective of this program is to increase the capacity of humanitarian assistance workers and their organizations to respond to the health needs of refugees and internally displaced persons affected by emergencies. There is a schedule now for the Thailand Public Health in Complex Emergencies training program to be held at the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center in Bangkok, September 22-October 4. They are still accepting applications for the first two courses:

July 21-August 2 – American University of Beirut, Lebanon

August 25-Sept. 6 – Makerere University, Institute of Public Health, Kampala Uganda

If interested, the cost is \$2,300 and the contact email is: shortcourse@theirc.org

UNESCO has an information kit on the United Nations Convention on Migrant Rights which is now available online in English, French, and Spanish. This information kit can be downloaded in a pdf format. The link is: www.unesco.org/migration/convention