

**As prepared for delivery**

**Remarks by IOM Director General, Antonio Vitorino, at the UN Security Council briefing on the maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine**

April 19, 2022 – 3pm NYT

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Madame President,

Excellencies,

Thank you for giving IOM the opportunity to speak to you today.

IOM is committed to staying and delivering in Ukraine lifesaving humanitarian assistance and services to those most in need, guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

More than twelve million Ukrainians and Third Country Nationals have already been forced to leave their homes since the beginning of the war.

More than 4.8 million people have fled the country, according to the UNHCR. Another 7.1 million people are displaced inside Ukraine, according to the latest assessment by IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix.

Through our Displacement Tracking Matrix tool, by the end of this week IOM will update the overall figures concerning new displacements, secondary movements, stranded populations as well as increasing numbers of returns to Ukraine and inside the country returning to regions of origin.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Ukraine as we anticipate the increase in displacements, internal as well as external.

I appeal to parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, their homes, and civilian infrastructure.

When I visited some of the concerned neighbouring countries at the beginning of March, I saw first-hand the price that civilians are paying for this conflict: women and children, the elderly, and people with disabilities have been disproportionately affected as they all represent highly vulnerable groups of people.

Madame President,

From our assessments and work with all UN Agencies and our NGO's partners, we have identified specific risks for internally displaced people, refugees and Third Country Nationals, and I would like to highlight to you just a few:

**First**, in situations of mass displacement and based on our experience, one can expect up to thirty percent of the population to experience some form of negative psychological impact and mental health problems.

However, as the war continues, psychosocial needs will undoubtedly further increase. We are scaling-up our efforts to address them in Ukraine and in neighboring countries through activities ranging from training first line responders in psychological first aid to increasing the capacity of our established hotlines that provide psychosocial support.

**Second**, IOM remains particularly concerned about the situation of women and children who have fled Ukraine or who are internally displaced. Trafficking in persons was a known phenomenon in the region, and as observed in past crises, large-scale displacement, family separation, and disruption of civil protection and community networks render populations vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse.

Gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, has also been reported in increasing numbers.

We know that more than half of the children in Ukraine have been displaced.

Unaccompanied or separated children are also at a heightened risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. Measures to protect them must be strengthened. I urge all neighboring and impacted countries to ensure the immediate identification and registration of unaccompanied and separated children fleeing from Ukraine. Effective international cooperation is required urgently to reunite children with their caregivers and families.

**Third**, we applaud all of Ukraine's neighboring countries for the solidarity and openness they have shown, and the enormous efforts undertaken by their governments, civil society organizations and private individuals to support arriving Ukrainians and Third Country Nationals.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response we have witnessed cases of discrimination, violence and xenophobia against third country nationals fleeing Ukraine. Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality or migration status is not acceptable.

I call on all states to ensure that protection and immediate assistance is provided in a non-discriminatory manner, particularly in border crossing points.

IOM has set up information and support hotlines for affected populations in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Lithuania, and Slovakia, and has established a referral mechanism to facilitate contact between third country nationals and relevant consulates, and to ensure safe, dignified, and non-discriminatory support, information sharing and transportation, including relevant medical and support to return to their countries of origin.

Madame President,

Excellencies,

From our experience and data collection and analysis tools we see now that internally displaced people tend to move to urban areas in search of employment opportunities and social services. There will be an urgent need to scale up the infrastructure and the services to meet the needs of an increased population in these areas.

Since the start of the response to the crisis, we have identified cash-based interventions as one of the most feasible, efficient and effective ways to reach people in need both inside Ukraine and in the neighboring countries.

IOM has already started providing multi-purpose cash assistance in Ukraine and in some of the neighboring countries. An agreement with the Ukrainian postal service was in place prior to the crisis and allowed for a quick roll-out.

Preparations are ongoing to scale up this assistance in close coordination with the government of Ukraine as well as local authorities and the UN agencies and civil society organizations.

Madame President,

Moving forward, it is necessary that we seek to better understand the intentions of those who are fleeing, those forced to leave their homes and those who have been separated from their families due to the ongoing conflict.

IOM, through our teams on the ground in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries, will continue to provide critical life-saving humanitarian assistance such as food, non-food items, shelter and hygiene kits in Ukraine, while we will at the same time continue working with the government and local authorities in Ukraine to support the identification of durable solutions for those internally displaced.

As more people are likely to flee Ukraine, it is crucial to plan ahead and invest in order to ensure that all those fleeing the war have access to adequate support and services, and to facilitate their full inclusion in educational and health systems, into the labor market, provide language opportunities, social housing and other needed support.

IOM welcomes the decision by the European Union to offer temporary protection to those fleeing Ukraine and I reiterate our readiness to support with implementing the directive.

Madame President,

Excellencies,

Let me conclude by reiterating and strongly echoing the Secretary-General's repeated calls for peace: IOM remains committed to support Ukrainians, Third Country Nationals and all others in need, in Ukraine and abroad and to promote the safety and protection of all people affected by the war in Ukraine.

Thank you.