



**United Nations
Network on Migration**
Working Better Together

UN Network on Migration Webinar Series

Mobility in the time of COVID-19

Thursday, 28.05.2020, 16h -17h CET

Overview

While much of the impact of COVID-19 remains speculation, this much is true: the pandemic is bringing with it profound changes to all aspects of our global society, including as regards our understanding of international mobility. In a discussion led by the Director-General of IOM, António Vitorino, and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Tendayi Achiume, the latest webinar from the United Nations Network on Migration will explore what the future holds for the ability of people to move across borders in safe, orderly and regular ways.

The health impacts of COVID-19 do not exist in a vacuum, but rather have emerged – in the case of migration – into an already vibrant, sometimes febrile, policy environment. The pandemic has thrown hugely complex elements into an already complex political and popular discourse on what we understand by international mobility and its impact on all communities. Ensuring that this discourse can be inclusive of all – whether as a public health imperative or as part of collective commitments to uphold our shared rights – is emerging as a central challenge.

To date, many COVID-19 response measures have been harmful for migrants – and their communities – violating their human rights, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, and entrenching pre-existing inequities. Over 52,000 mobility restrictions have been implemented by 215 countries, territories and areas since the COVID-19 pandemic began, leading to a patchwork of border rules and regulations. How to ensure that this response remains strictly limited to tackling the pandemic and is not cover for longer-term regressive or discriminatory practices is a policy question the global community will need to get out ahead on.

Amidst these concerns, small shoots of promise are emerging. Discussions over the pursuit of truly universal health care have gathered pace. Likewise, a new discourse has opened as to what constitutes essential labour, inspired by the vital frontline efforts of so many migrants the world over in responding to the virus. And we see some states, spurred on by this new environment, accelerate delivering on their commitments actively to explore alternatives to detention simply on the basis of immigration status. How these can be built on, expanded and replicated, must form part of a coherent, united response to COVID-19.

This webinar will examine the future of mobility in the context of COVID-19, and the various ways that well governed migration can be a transformative pathway to mitigate some of the immediate negative impacts of COVID-19.

Agenda/Programme

The purpose of the webinar is to bring together policy-makers, State representatives, advocates, and frontline actors, to unpack the mobility implications thrown up by COVID-19, ask the tough questions and suggest lines of inquiry to help us, together, find the necessary responses.

The moderated discussion will be led by two or three lead discussants each of whom will suggest two or four main lines of inquiry or reflection. These will then be followed by an open conversation.

- Moderator:

Jonathan Prentice, Head of the UN Network on Migration Secretariat

- Speakers:

António Vitorino, Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration, Director-General of IOM

E. Tendayi Achiume, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Mayor or representative of local authorities