

# Foreword

---

Over the past two years, discussions among decision makers, experts, policymakers, the media and the public have been dominated by the COVID-19 crisis that has severely impacted people across the world. Migrants, refugees and other forcibly displaced individuals were hit particularly hard, in terms of their livelihood opportunities, mobility and health. Two years after the outbreak of COVID-19, there is mounting evidence that the pandemic's disproportionate effect on migrants and refugees is closely linked to pre-existing structural barriers and vulnerabilities.

These findings are particularly relevant in the Arab region, which continues to be a prominent region of international migration and forced displacement. In 2020, Arab countries hosted around 41.4 million migrants and refugees, representing almost 15 per cent of international migrants and refugees worldwide. Although migrant workers make up the largest group, nearly 9.3 million refugees have also sought protection in the region, including 3.6 million refugees under the UNHCR mandate and 5.7 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA. At the same time, migration and forced displacement from Arab countries has continued to increase, reaching an estimated 32.8 million people in 2020, 44 per cent of whom stayed within the region. Refugees are a prominent group, with a staggering 43 per cent of all refugees under the UNHCR mandate (8.9 million people out of a global total of 20.7 million) originating from Arab countries.

The great volume of migration and forced displacement within and from the Arab region masks significant divergences across subregions and countries, and tremendous variation in the individual experience of migrants and refugees. Since its first edition in 2015, the biennial Situation Report on International Migration in the Arab Region has brought nuance to discussions on migration and forced displacement in the region by providing a detailed analysis of the different profiles and movements of migrants, refugees and other forcibly displaced individuals and by contextualising the policies and regulations adopted by Arab countries to manage migration and forced displacement.

The 2021 edition of the report is the result of joint efforts led by ESCWA, IOM and UNHCR, and has been supported by 11 other United Nations agencies and members of the Issue-based Coalition on Migration in the Arab Region. In addition to the periodic analysis of migration and forced displacement patterns, trends and governance, the report has a special focus on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, including its effects on remittances, the specific policies and measures adopted by Arab Governments to respond to the pandemic, and the experiences and coping strategies of migrants and refugees. It also features extensive policy recommendations that build on lessons learned from the pandemic, and provides guidance for policymakers and practitioners to adopt policies and measures that protect migrants and refugees, strengthen their resilience to

face existing and potential future adversity, and empower them to contribute to sustainable development in their home and host communities. In so doing, the report

hopes to help communities build forward better in the aftermath of the pandemic, by including migrants and refugees in the Arab region in this collective effort.



**Rola Dashti**

Under-Secretary-General  
of the United Nations  
Executive Secretary of ESCWA



**António Vitorino**

Director General  
IOM



**Filippo Grandi**

High Commissioner  
UNHCR