



Background Guide

Economic and Social Council

1 | Fostering economic and social integration for
refugees and asylum seekers in the East
Mediterranean zones

SDGs: 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth, 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities; 16.
Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

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Committee Introduction

Established in 1945 by the UN Charter, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is dedicated to advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. ECOSOC is composed of 54 Member States, elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms, thereby allowing for a rotating membership that reflects the diverse representation of the UN's global body (United Nations, 2016). ECOSOC is supported by a multitude of subsidiary bodies: functional commissions, such as the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Statistical Commission; regional commissions, like the Economic Commission for Africa and the Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; and expert bodies (Dagdok, 2025). These subsidiary bodies provide specialized expertise and allow in-depth analysis on specific issues.

ECOSOC addresses a vast array of global challenges, ranging from poverty eradication, climate change, hunger, sustainable energy, and humanitarian assistance. It plays a crucial role in the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits, particularly those related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While ECOSOC's resolutions and recommendations are not legally binding, they hold significant moral authority and serve as a guide for Member States and the wider international community. The Council fosters partnership between governments, civil society, and the private sector, recognizing that multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential for achieving sustainable development outcomes. Through its various forums, including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), ECOSOC facilitates rigorous review of progress towards the SDGs and promotes accountability.

ECOSOC is not an easy committee; it presents a particularly demanding intellectual and diplomatic landscape. Delegates must navigate the complex web of interconnected economic, social, and environmental factors while striving to balance their national development priorities with the overarching goals of global sustainability and well-being.

Agenda Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean has long been a crossroad of political, cultural, and environmental flourishing, yet also been a focal point of escalating international tensions and humanitarian crises. Bordering regions affected by prolonged conflicts, such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Gaza, the Eastern Mediterranean area, both geographically and politically, serves as a key destination for war-torn refugees and asylum-seeking individuals seeking refuge from persecution, violence, and economic instability.

Centered around geopolitical disagreements regarding the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and natural gas exploration, the Eastern Mediterranean area is intertwined with both internal and international interests, ultimately escalating competition among nations such as Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus. The global interference in this zone not only exacerbated regional instability but also humanitarian responses and needs. The influx of refugees in addition to the limited resources and the complex management of asylum, has been straining not only the involved nations but also the migrants themselves, carrying economic and social burdens that are imperative to be mitigated. Refugees and asylum seekers are facing challenges such as unemployment, identity ambiguity, and lack of formal education, hence being unable to integrate into their new communities. Host nations are struggling with fiscal limitations and domestic antipathy towards integration.

Despite international efforts, the help that currently existing frameworks provide for the refugees and asylum seekers is overwhelmed by the humanitarian needs. Moving forward, economic and social integration of these displaced individuals will contribute to regional stability and the continuation of cultural flourishing in the Eastern Mediterranean area.

Therefore, this committee must devise collective and sustained integration policies that work towards the provision of economic opportunities and the ensuring of social cohesion of the forcibly uprooted individuals through inclusive dialogue.

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of GECMUN XII. In ECOSOC, each of you will be representing a distinct member of the United Nations to solve the issues revolving around our agenda of fostering economic and social integration for refugees and asylum seekers in the Eastern Mediterranean zones. And we the chairs, Bryan Lee, Jenny Jin, and Ben Park, are honored to guide you through the conference, ensuring a fruitful debate and an engaging discussion for all.

Although a General Assembly committee like ECOSOC might seem rigid, formal, and competitive, we hope this experience will expand your decision-making, research, and negotiation skills as you debate on a complex modern agenda. From our own experience in MUN, we would like to give a piece of advice to help you make the most out of this conference.

To us, being the “best” is to show genuine effort in every given opportunity, regardless of your skill and prior experience. Try to speak at every opportunity you are given because if not, you will not be able to engage with other delegates thoroughly enough to challenge yourself to get the awards. Another thing worth mentioning is researching thoroughly, not only within your own country’s stance, but also other countries’ stances too. Understanding multiple perspectives will allow you to get a grip of who is on your “side” and even convince your opponent to support your resolution. Knowledge and recognition naturally follow when you approach every given opportunity to speak, negotiate, and research.

As your chairs, we will support you to the best of our ability to foster an environment where everyone can enjoy MUN as much as we do. While the chairs would highly recommend that the delegates be present in formal attire and use formal language, we hope emphasis on awards or sophisticated performance that brings rigidity would not hinder you from making friends. We hope that you will think of this conference as an opportunity to create memories and contribute to a supportive environment. Don’t be afraid or pressured to ask questions. We are sincerely grateful for your determination to join the ECOSOC committee of this year’s GECMUN, and we hope to see fruitful discussions.

Best,

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Key Terms

Refugee

A person who has been forced to leave their country due to “war, natural disaster, persecution, or other circumstances that disturb the public space in a serious manner, which leads to a need for international protection” (UNHCR). While each nation has different criteria for considering the individual as a ‘refugee’, the United Nations’ definition is a widely accepted terminology to define who a refugee is. The term itself was recognized after World War II, during the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Asylum seeker

An asylum seeker (or asylee in North American English) is a person who leaves their country and enters a foreign country, makes a formal application for the right of asylum under Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Each countries have differing rates and criteria for accepting someone as an asylum seeker, which means an asylum seeker may not necessarily be granted the asylum they need and be categorized as an illegal immigrant. Usually, asylum seekers come to a foreign country’s asylum for international protection, for similar reasons as refugees do, but often their status as refugees has not been determined.

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

A person who has been forced to leave their home for other areas within their home country’s border due to circumstances such as conflict, violence, persecution, or disasters. Since they’re still under the legal protection of their own government, they are responsible for ensuring their own legal rights and protection.

The Right of Asylum

The right of asylum is a juridical concept that protects people who were persecuted by their own rulers to be protected under another authority, such as a second country. This juridical concept was recognized from ancient times, from Ancient Egypt to the Hebrew countries. The contemporary concept of the right is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

Eastern Mediterranean

The Eastern Mediterranean is a region that comprises the countries North and South surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The region is commonly divided into two groups. First is the Levant and their neighboring countries that include the Balkans and the islands of Greece. Second is the region of Syria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, and Anatolian Türkiye. For the United Nations, the Eastern Mediterranean region also encompasses the contiguous Afro-Eurasia regions such as West Asia, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia.

Host Community

The host community is a community of the local population that accepts the refugees. Host communities are integral considerations to the policies surrounding the refugees of the host country, as they have existing sociocultural norms that often conflict with those of refugees, causing xenophobia or discrimination.

Humanitarian Corridor

A humanitarian corridor is a designated area or a path that allows for the safe passage of civilians and humanitarian aid during crises. It is a type of temporary demilitarized zone.

Education in Emergencies (EiE)

Education in Emergencies ensures quality education to people of all ages during times of crisis or emergency settings, including conflicts, pandemics, natural hazards, and more.

Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs)

Cash-Based Interventions are cash transfer aid to refugees, which prioritizes and fulfills the refugees' needs and contributes to the local economies. Because many of the refugees leave their essentials behind, these cash-based interventions support the refugees to be able to afford sustenance and reduce financial burdens.

Urban Refugees

Urban refugees are refugees who live in cities instead of refugee camps. More than 60% of refugees are urban refugees, and especially common in East Mediterranean countries like Lebanon, Türkiye, and Jordan.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR is the main UN agency that ensures the right of asylum and protects refugees. It's also the main goal for UNHCR to find safe refuge and make sure refugees return to their homes voluntarily.

Non-refoulement

Non-refoulement is the practice of not forcing refugees or asylum seekers to return to their home countries, where they could be subjected to persecution. Non-refoulement is enshrined in customary international law, which means non-signatory states are also expected to follow this practice.

Historical Background

The refugee crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean zone dates back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the 1967 Six-Day War, which led to millions of Palestinian refugees. The U.S. invasion of Iraq and the Israel-Lebanon conflict started to slowly add fuel to this crisis.

In 2011, chains of pro-democracy protests started to bloom in the Arab regions, later to be known as the Arab Spring. Inspired by this progressive atmosphere, Syrians called for political reforms and an end to Assad's regime. Yet, the Syrian government repressed the peaceful protests with violence, leading to the Syrian Civil War. Not only did this civil war have a devastating impact on the national security and economy, but more than 13 million Syrians were displaced from Syria, the biggest displacement crisis since World War II. These numerous refugees fled to various countries in and beyond the East Mediterranean regions — Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, and Europe via Greece. As many of the host communities expected, the number of refugees and asylum seekers rapidly increased, causing the migrant crisis in Europe, Lebanon, and Jordan.

While the refugee crisis remained, there were multiple efforts made by international organizations. In 2016, the EU and Türkiye made a migration control pact to prevent irregular crossings, highlighting concerns over legality and the treatment of asylum seekers. In 2018, the UN adopted the Global Compact on Refugees, emphasizing self-reliance, inclusion, and burden sharing. This empowered the education, work, and urban infrastructure for refugees to coexist with host communities as compatibly as possible.

The economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other chains of conflicts in the Arab world led to an exponential increase in the number of displaced people. Firstly, Afghanistan's change of power to the Taliban led to internal conflicts and sociopolitical instability, which led to a wave of Afghan asylum seekers to Türkiye and Greece. The UNHCR and its partners have been constantly providing essential aid and psycho-social support in and outside the country, but its mass influx of refugees has been causing serious problems in continental Europe.

Similarly, Sudan's civil war, caused by the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led to new refugees to Egypt, straining the resources within Egypt. By coordinating an interagency response to address the refugees' needs in Egypt, by collaborating with the national government and local organizations, Egypt is seeking an opportunity to stabilize the influx of refugees. However, as same as the continental Europe, the integration of refugees into the host communities became the biggest challenge, both socially and economically.

Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip and Israel, caused by Hamas' attack on Israeli villages and Israeli military forces' genocide, led to millions of refugees and asylum seekers around the Eastern Mediterranean region. Due to the humanitarian catastrophe through the destruction of infrastructure and health services, multiple UN agencies and international NGOs are focused on providing essential needs such as water, food, and medical supplies to the affected population.

These chains of conflicts are mostly in armed measures, which means the host nations are under pressure of responsibility to protect the refugees from the possibility of human rights violations. However, the host nations of refugees and asylum seekers in the Eastern Mediterranean regions mostly have weak regional economies, which means the refugees and asylum seekers' social and economic integration can't be effectively focused on by many of the host communities.

The significant reason for the hardship of economic and social integration also comes from the public, which needs to deal with the mass influx of refugees. Xenophobic opinions could surge upon the public, and the sociocultural differences will naturally cause difficulties over the regions. For instance, Turkiye's anti-immigrant protests developed into anti-Syrian riots from 2021–2024, which developed a dangerous environment for the social integration of the refugees. Therefore, it is crucial for international organizations like the UN to address the issue of integrating East Mediterranean refugees and asylum seekers and how to integrate them into host communities in appropriate measures.

Current State of Affairs

The Eastern Mediterranean region remains a site of one of the world's escalating refugee crises. Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, and Lebanon continue to host a large number of refugees and asylum seekers who primarily come from Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Gaza. Although the first wave of migration was driven by the 2001 Afghan conflict and the Syrian Civil War, more recently, ongoing crises in Gaza, Sudan, and Iraq have resulted in a new influx of refugees.

The nations of the Eastern Mediterranean have established a system of refugee management, which is a patchwork of national policies and bilateral agreements. The nation of Turkey, for instance, offers refuge to the largest number of displaced individuals, approximately 3.2 million individuals, who are protected under the 2013 Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the Temporary Protection Regulation. However, these refugees are classified as temporary protection status and are not subject to full refugee rights, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 has set a standard for asylum application procedures and individual rights in addition to reducing irregular migration. For instance, Greece has continuously been overwhelmed by refugees. As such, the capacity for refugee-hosting nations are still a limiting factor in providing refugees with economic and social opportunities.

Currently existing legal frameworks that sought to address the rights and opportunities of refugees and asylum seekers are insufficient to fulfill both the refugees' and host nations' needs. Refugees lack access to legal employment, healthcare, and education, which directly hinders the integration of refugees into the host countries. In the status quo, asylum seekers are treated as temporary guests, which leads to inefficiencies in national and regional frameworks that are often unaligned. Initiatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), efforts are underfunded and short term. This has been leading to economic strain and misinformation towards refugees who are not under full legal protection, resulting in the rise of Xenophobia and public opposition towards accommodating asylum seekers.

In light of these challenges, it is evident that protection mechanisms exist, however, more efficient frameworks are needed in order to sustain the increasing number of refugees amid escalating tensions in the East Mediterranean region.

Possible Solutions

The refugee crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean requires sustainable solutions to promote economic and social integration. This chair highly recommends crafting solutions that address the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Below are the possible solutions that are corroborated by real-life evidence.

One solution would be to expand Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs) to provide refugees with direct financial support, enabling them to meet basic needs and stimulate local economies. A 2020 UNHCR evaluation found that CBIs in Jordan increased refugee purchasing power, with 80% of recipients reporting improved living conditions and 60% contributing to the economic recovery of local markets through spending. Similarly, the World Bank's 2021 study on Lebanon's refugee programs highlighted that cash transfers led to a 10% increase in economic activity in host communities. To implement and expand CBIs, it is crucial to partner with local financial institutions to distribute cash securely and scale up multi-purpose cash grants.

Another solution would be to strengthen education in emergencies (EiE). Ensuring refugee children and youth have access to quality education would reduce long-term poverty and the refugee crisis. For instance, UNESCO's 2022 report points out that 70% of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon lack access to formal education, increasing risks of child labor and exploitation. In contrast, Türkiye's inclusion of 700,000 Syrian children in public schools by 2023, supported by the EU's Facility for Refugees in Turkey, improved literacy rates by 25% and reduced social tensions. To implement EiE training, the expansion of teacher training is crucial and should be the number one step. It is also necessary to secure funding through multi-stakeholder pledges at the Global Refugee Forum to sustain EiE initiatives. With the right steps, this solution will effectively solve the refugee crisis in the long term.

Lastly, promoting refugee self-reliance through legal access to labor markets is a strategy worth considering for fostering economic integration and reducing vulnerabilities associated with informal employment in the Eastern Mediterranean. By ensuring decent work opportunities, host countries can empower refugees to contribute to local economies while aligning with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and the Global Compact on Refugees' emphasis on self-reliance. Evidence from the International Labour Organization's 2021 report demonstrates the impact of Türkiye's work permit program, which enabled 50,000 Syrian refugees to secure formal jobs, reducing poverty and informal labor exploitation by 15%. Similarly, Jordan's 2016 Compact, which granted 200,000 work permits to Syrians, led to a 20% increase in household incomes, as documented in a 2022 World Bank study, showcasing how legal employment enhances financial stability and social cohesion. To implement this solution effectively,

governments should simplify work permit processes by reducing bureaucratic barriers and offering incentives like tax breaks to employers. Expanding vocational training programs is equally vital, as seen in Egypt, where 10,000 refugees were trained in 2023, boosting employability in sectors like construction and hospitality. Additionally, partnerships with private sectors and international organizations, such as the UNHCR's Made51 initiative, can create market-driven job opportunities, further supporting refugees' economic contributions.

By integrating these measures, host countries can foster sustainable livelihoods, reduce dependency on aid, and mitigate tensions with host communities, creating a win-win scenario for all stakeholders.

Stances of Parties

Australia

Australia has a leading program of resettlement for offshore refugees, the refugees coming from outside Australia, which is managed through the humanitarian organizations. However, Australia has a punitive approach toward the onshore refugees (refugees who have already arrived in Australia without proper visas), which limits the ability of the refugees to access trauma counseling, family tracing, and legal advice. While having a strong legal and moral obligation to protect refugees, including not returning the refugee individuals until the safety has been ensured, their punitive border policies are causing significant human rights concerns.

Austria

Austria has been a major destination for refugees from the East Mediterranean, particularly since 2015. While the government provides language training, education access, and economic integration programs, it has implemented increasingly restrictive asylum and border policies. Limited welfare access and prolonged asylum procedures often delay economic and social integration. Although Austria emphasizes employment-based integration after legal recognition, its approach raises concerns about long-term marginalization and social exclusion of asylum seekers.

Belgium

Belgium is an EU member and signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The country adheres to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Its asylum system provides access to legal aid and personal interviews, but it is hasty to assume that the country fully advocates for the integration of refugees, considering its long processing times (average 17 months) and restrictive employment bans for asylum seekers. Belgium supports the EU's New Migration and Asylum Pact, but faces domestic pressure to tighten asylum policies due to public concerns about migration.

Brazil

Brazil has historically supported a progressive stance on refugee integration, allowing asylum for individuals from a wide range of regions. Although their involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean is limited, Brazil has supported funding from the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) and took part in global compacts on migration and refugees. The nation might advocate for burden-sharing frameworks where non-regional states contribute resources, expertise, and integration opportunities.

Canada

Canada, as a country leading the refugee resettlement, has been contributing to the refugee influx of the East Mediterranean region by supporting the refugees' global rights through partnerships with the international committees, rather than actually engaging in refugee/asylum hostings. Its

actions are primarily diplomatic, which limits Canada from taking direct action to address the issue. However, due to the generally increasing influx of refugees in Canada, the public is concerned about the immigration policy itself—rather than focused on the East Mediterranean refugees—primarily because of the lack of labor market and housing shortages.

China

China is a non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The country has a minimal role in hosting Eastern Mediterranean refugees, focusing on internal stability and border control. Its policies offer limited protection primarily for North Korean defectors, with no formal asylum system for others. China provides some financial assistance to UNHCR and ECOSOC but avoids domestic refugee integration.

Cyprus

Due to its geographical location in the eastern area of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus deals with a heavy amount of refugees and asylum seekers, especially from Syria and Afghanistan. In April 2024, the Cyprus government officially terminated the automatic refugee status for incoming Syrians to Cyprus. Cyprus also made a bilateral agreement with Syria to return refugees intercepted in the sea to directly return to Syria, raising concerns related to non-refoulement and pushback (intercepting the boats that carry asylum seekers) accusations. Furthermore, Cyprus increased border patrols on the sea between Cyprus and Lebanon, where the majority of boats carrying asylum seekers sought to arrive. In accordance with the challenges Cyprus faces amid the continuous influx of refugees, the nation strongly advocates for an increased EU-wide approach to regulating irregular migration and efforts to deport failed asylum seekers.

Egypt

Egypt hosts large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers mainly from Sudan, Syria, and Ethiopia, although many still remain unregistered. The nation has not established formal refugee camps, and thus refugees have limited access to public services. Egypt plays a stabilizing role in the region and frequently urges Eastern Mediterranean nations to address the root causes of individual displacement, including the mitigation of ongoing conflicts.

France

France, due to its colonial history, has been a country with a long history of refugees, especially from the Eastern Mediterranean countries. As a member of the EU, France endorsed the EU's New Migration and Asylum Pact. Nonetheless, France has adopted the updated version of immigration laws in 2023, setting stricter standards for refugees and asylum seekers. France has also been blamed for the burden-sharing of migration responsibilities through the migration pact made with the neighboring nations. Recently, France's proposed pre-appeal deportations sparked a big spark of controversy among the French public.

Germany

Germany is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and has been a leading EU destination for Eastern Mediterranean refugees. Germany has played a prominent role in shaping the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), providing comprehensive rights including healthcare, housing, education, and employment. Though Germany supports humanitarian aid, it faces challenges with integration due to public opposition and bureaucratic delays. Public opposition has been driven by concerns over cultural integration and security, in addition to the lengthy legal process of registering refugees and asylum seekers. As such, Germany seeks for a balance between its humanitarian commitments and domestic social pressures.

Greece

Greece serves as a primary entry point from Türkiye amid the Eastern Mediterranean conflict. Despite the support from the European Union (EU), Greece is challenged with an overwhelming number of refugees and asylum seekers in addition to exacerbating domestic opposition to the introduction of refugees. Recent reforms in frameworks have been aimed at accelerating the asylum and transfer process, however, the progress is still slow and social integration rates are low.

Italy

Italy is heavily affected by major Mediterranean migration routes along North Africa. As an European Union (EU) member state, the nation supports the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and has also advocated for equal distribution of refugees among the Union member states. The nation believes in enhancing integration measures and strengthening borders to prevent irregular migration that could harm both the host communities and the asylum seekers.

Japan

Although Japan is geographically distant from the Eastern Mediterranean, the nation remains an important donor in humanitarian aid programs through their participation in the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other multilateral bodies. Japan has currently established strict asylum policies, while it has provided financial contributions to host countries and vocational training for the refugees. Rather than large-scale refugee resettlement programs within its borders, Japan is highly likely to partner with international organizations to advocate for sustainable development approaches.

Jordan

Compared to its neighbours, Jordan is relatively welcoming to refugees and asylum seekers, despite being a non-signatory nation to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Due to King Hussein's legacy of diplomacy, the country's stability was able to support large numbers of refugees from Palestine and Syria, earning the title of "Heaven for Refugees". Starting from 2016, Jordan Compact has created a partnership between Jordan and the EU, allowing Syrian refugees to get

quality education and career opportunities. While Jordan focuses on the inclusion of refugees, their economic strains are limiting long-term support for refugees and asylum seekers in Jordan.

Lebanon

Lebanon, as a country, displays its stance as pro-voluntary return due to international pressure. While the government launched the Voluntary Return Plan for around 400,000 Syrians with financial incentives in June 2025, many human rights organizations are calling out these return plans as “voluntary forced return”. Lebanon has been linking the return of refugees within their country to economic recovery, launching semi-forced returns of Syrian refugees. Despite being one of the biggest host countries for asylum seekers, its government is reluctant to recognize itself as a country of asylum. Additionally, Lebanon maintains non-signatory status to the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, Lebanon is bound to the principle of non-refoulement, sparking controversy over the humanitarian rights of refugees/asylum-seekers.

Libya

Libya is a key transit country for refugees and migrants aiming for Europe via the Mediterranean. It operates without a formal asylum system and is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Its fragmented governance and ongoing conflict since the 2011 fall of Gaddafi have led to severe human rights abuses. For example, in detention centers, refugees, particularly from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, face torture, exploitation, and trafficking. The lack of centralized authority and reliance on militias also exacerbate the vulnerability of refugees.

Netherlands

The Netherlands is also one of the countries that prefers local integration of refugees and asylum-seekers. The Dutch policy related to the refugees is mostly focused on the asylum-seekers, creating specific procedures to assess whether the individuals are under dangerous circumstances, creating a dual policy of return and integration. The Dutch government also strongly holds the position on the local integration of the refugees with the collaboration of the UNHCR, supporting the early integration programs such as the Dutch language courses and the Practical Labour Market Training (ONA). However, most of the refugees are settled under the “flexible housing” (flexwonen; temporary accommodation), which has left the refugees in a state of uncertainty.

Norway

Norway is also one of the countries that has a long history of refugees and refugees constructing the local societies in contemporary history. Norway is mainly focused on accepting refugees through its own structured integration programs, which focus on integrating refugees as societal members in Norwegian society, such as employment, and educating them in Norwegian culture and language. Norway is constantly collaborating with the UNHCR to support the refugees within its country. However, since 2015, public attitudes toward the refugees have shifted,

creating tensions between the host communities and the refugees. Balancing the national security and humanitarian interests is still challenging for Norway.

Qatar

Qatar is a unique country among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states for having a domestic asylum law. The country is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention but engages with UNHCR through regional offices. It hosts few refugees domestically, focusing instead on financial contributions to humanitarian efforts. Qatar's policies prioritize temporary residency for displaced persons, often tied to labor frameworks. Long-term integration is a homework for Qatar, noted by many critics, due to its limited domestic asylum capacity.

Republic of Korea

South Korea is not only a major refugee host country but has also contributed to relief funds and peacekeeping missions. While refugee acceptance rates and opinions are quite low domestically, South Korea has engaged in capacity-building initiatives including in the Middle East. Through negotiations, South Korea is likely to emphasize multilateral cooperation, economic assistance, and technology-driven solutions to refugee settlements.

Russia

Russia is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its related international policies, creating its own unique and limited integrations for refugees and asylum seekers, according to its 1997 Russian Refugee Law. Russia's internal conflict caused a refugee influx of the Chechen ethnicity, leading to a refugee influx of East Mediterranean Arab nations, including increased hostility toward Russia. Moreover, Russia's major contributions to the Syrian Civil War and the Russo-Ukrainian War caused massive refugees, allegedly using Syrian refugees as military resources in Belarus by exchanging official citizenship status for serving in the Russian army. In recent years, Russia has accepted refugees from Afghanistan, although it is known to be temporary and selective based on political and strategic interests. Russia has been supporting bilateral agreements and often promotes refugees returning to their country when conditions stabilize rather than long-term integration.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a non-signatory country to the 1951 Refugee Convention. They do not formally recognize refugees; instead treat them as "guests" under labor migration frameworks like the kafala system. In other words, individuals hosted in Saudi Arabia lack formal refugee status and the associated rights. Saudi Arabia provides humanitarian aid to host countries like Jordan and Lebanon through organizations like KSRelief, but avoids domestic integration. This means that Saudi Arabia prioritizes temporary residency and financial contributions but avoids full integration. So, its policies are often indirect asylum measures, allowing regularization of status for some but leaving refugees vulnerable to economic exploitation due to limited legal protections.

Serbia

Serbia is one of the countries that is evolving into a major host country for refugees and asylum seekers. Serbia has ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, including the rights of asylum for foreigners included in their constitution. However, there are several reports of pushbacks and difficulties in accessing the registration process, especially those from Bulgaria and North Macedonia. However, Serbia continues to collaborate with UNHCR to strengthen its integration as a host country.

Spain

Spain is an EU member and signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The country is a key entry point for Mediterranean refugees, particularly via the Canary Islands. Spain adheres to the CEAS, but its reception centers face criticism for overcrowding and pushbacks. Spain supports the EU's migration pact and provides humanitarian aid, but domestic economic constraints and public sentiment limit integration efforts for Eastern Mediterranean refugees.

Switzerland

Switzerland is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. It maintains a robust asylum system with a focus on individual screening and integration programs. But its strict asylum criteria and rapid deportation processes for rejected applicants have sparked ethical debate. Switzerland provides humanitarian aid to Eastern Mediterranean host countries and supports the EU's migration framework indirectly through bilateral agreements. In the case of domestic policies, they emphasize integration through language training and employment; however, there exists a public backlash to high asylum numbers, which challenges long-term support.

Sweden

Sweden is taking more drastic measures when it comes to the refugees and asylum seekers. The Swedish government imposed a policy to reduce asylum-related immigration to sustainable levels. However, their focus is also on integrating the refugees into their local societies, providing the Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) courses and support for the refugees to establish their own businesses in Sweden. Despite the recent rise of the anti-immigrant democratic party in Sweden, the Swedish government actively engages with the international committees to address the problem and protect the international refugee population.

Syria

Syria is the epicenter of the world's largest refugee crisis due to the ongoing Syrian Civil War since 2011, displacing over 13 million people, with 6.7 million fleeing as international refugees. As a source country, Syria's government under the Assad regime had not focused on hosting refugees but rather on managing internal displacement and returnee policies. Post-2024, the fall of Assad led to a sharp fall in Syrian asylum applications in the EU, but the country's stance on refugees remains limited to facilitating voluntary returns. Syria hopes for voluntary return of

refugees, managing internal displacement and creating conditions for a better reintegration of refugees into the Syrian society.

Türkiye

Türkiye hosts the largest refugee population in the world, with over 3.2 million Syrian refugees under temporary protection and thousands from Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, the nation plays a crucial role in the Eastern Mediterranean migration route and has used its geographic and political position strategically, notably during the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement. While Türkiye provides access to education and healthcare, tensions or uncertainties in employment and social cohesion still exist.

United Arab Emirates

The UAE is a non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The country does not have a formal asylum system, treating refugees as temporary residents under labor migration frameworks. It hosts a small number of refugees, primarily Syrians, but focuses on humanitarian aid abroad, contributing to UNHCR programs in Jordan and Lebanon to the significant degree. The UAE's policies prioritize economic migrants over refugees, with limited pathways for integration or permanent residency.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is not a major host nation for refugees and asylum seekers from Eastern Mediterranean countries. Despite not being a major host, the United Kingdom has been supporting humanitarian aid to the other host countries for major East Mediterranean refugee/asylum seeker populations. Additionally, the UK's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) successfully resettled over 20,000 Syrian refugees through UNHCR pathways, earned a positive reputation among international communities. Since 2012, the UK has released a series of laws under the Home Office that created a hostile environment for refugees. Furthermore, the Rwanda Asylum Plan (2022), signed by the UK and Rwanda, caused large-scale human rights violations among asylum seekers and refugees, criticized by UNHCR and numerous NGOs.

United States

The United States was historically supportive of UNHCR resettlement and East Mediterranean humanitarian aid, while there were no formal endorsements of the Global Compacts on Refugees. As the Trump administration came to office in 2025, thousands and millions of East Mediterranean-origin refugees were left on thin ice due to the abrupt suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). This action places the U.S. Refugee Act (1980) under threat of being halted, which impacts on global refugee system, as the US is the top destination for refugees. The historical support towards the host nations is also in cut, creating international conflicts related to the large influx of East Mediterranean refugees around the world.

Questions to Consider

1. What challenges do refugees and asylum seekers face?
 - a. What challenges do they face during the evacuation of their homelands?
 - b. What challenges do they face after they arrive in the host community?
2. Why might the host communities hesitate to accept refugees/asylum seekers?
3. How and what types of economic aid can help refugees and asylum seekers?
4. How can ECOSOC utilize UNHCR to ensure the non-refoulement of refugees and asylum seekers?
5. How can existing refugee and asylum frameworks be better adapted to promoting long-term protection and integration?
6. How can urban planning and housing policies support the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into host communities?
7. Should there be a unified agreement for shared responsibility among the Eastern Mediterranean nations?

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