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FEATURED Q&A

Will a U.S. Pullout Hurt the U.N.'s Migration Compact?



Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced in December that the United States would stop participating in the United Nations process to develop a Global Compact on Migration. // File Photo: U.S. State Department.

Q The United States is withdrawing from a U.N.-led process to develop a Global Compact on Migration, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced last month. The United States has been part of the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, which calls for the compact's development, since its formation in 2016. What is behind the U.S. decision? How important is the declaration for Latin America, and what does the United States' withdrawal mean for the process to develop the compact? To what extent does the process undermine the right of the United States to enforce its immigration laws, as Tillerson asserted?

A Arturo Sarukhan, board member of the Inter-American Dialogue and former Mexican ambassador to the United States: "The nativist and xenophobic agenda adopted by President Trump and driven by Attorney General Jeff Sessions and White House advisor Stephen Miller has led to yet another unfortunate rollback in the United States' commitment to a 21st century rules-based international liberal order. The decision to withdraw from the United Nations Global Compact on Migration, on the eve of a preparatory meeting in Mexico, is also another sign—particularly for nations in the Western Hemisphere—that this administration will continue to privilege an enforcement-only driven strategy instead of engaging in holistic solutions regarding the push and pull factors that drive migration in the Americas. Nonetheless, there's also a silver lining here. Cities playing an increasing international role, cooperating globally and solving locally, have become

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Nine Killed in Brazil Prison Riot

The inmates were killed Monday when rival gang members clashed in the prison in the Brazilian state of Goiás. Dozens of prisoners escaped during the mayhem.

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BUSINESS

Cargill Cuts Ties With Guatemalan Palm Oil Supplier

The privately held agricultural services company has cut its business ties to Reforestadora de Palmas del Petén, or REPSA, which has been accused of environmental degradation and human rights violations.

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ECONOMIC

Venezuela to Hike Minimum Wage

President Nicolás Maduro announced a 40 percent increase to Venezuela's minimum wage, a move that economists expect to worsen the country's soaring inflation. The International Monetary Fund has said it expects Venezuela's inflation rate to surpass 2,300 percent this year.

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Maduro // File Photo: Venezuelan Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Nine Killed in Brazil Prison Riot

Nine inmates were killed on Monday during a prison riot in the Brazilian state of Goiás, Reuters reported, citing the country's national news media. During the mayhem, dozens of inmates escaped from the prison, which is located in the state capital, Goiânia. In all, 106 prisoners escaped, and authorities recaptured 27 of them, with the rest remaining at large, daily newspaper O Estado de São Paulo reported. The riot happened a year after a series of deadly prison riots in Brazil, in which 130 inmates were killed during the first 20 days of 2017. Prisons in the South American country are often severely overcrowded and suffer from frequent violence. Jorimar Bastos, the head of Brazil's prison guard union, told daily newspaper Folha de São Paulo on Monday that the prison in Goiânia lacked adequate resources, with only five guards assigned to monitor more than 900 inmates. In 2016, judicial authorities released a report on the prison, describing its conditions as "bad," BBC News reported. Monday's riot began when armed gang members in the prison invaded a wing housing rival gang

members, firing weapons and setting mattresses on fire. The inmates who escaped fled after breaking down part of the prison's perimeter wall. Worried relatives of inmates gathered outside the facility, looking for information about their loved ones. "My brother is inside, and I don't have any information about him," Luana Cristina told newspaper O Popular. "No one tells us anything. No one tells us who is dead, who is alive, who was shot."

ECONOMIC NEWS

Venezuela's Maduro Announces Minimum Wage Increase

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Sunday announced a 40 percent increase to the country's minimum wage, a move economists expect to exacerbate skyrocketing inflation in the Andean nation, Reuters reported. "Good news!" Maduro exclaimed in a televised end-of-year address, saying the wage hike would protect workers against what he called an "economic war" by the United States to sabotage socialism in Venezuela. Venezuelans will now earn at least 797,510 bolívars, or about

NEWS BRIEFS

Thousands March in Lima to Protest Kuczynski's Pardon of Fujimori

Thousands of protesters filled streets in Lima last Thursday in objection to President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski's pardon of former President Alberto Fujimori on medical grounds, The Guardian reported. Kuczynski granted the pardon to Fujimori on Christmas Eve, lifting his 25-year sentence for corruption and authorizing death squad killings.

Two U.S. Families Among Dead in Costa Rica Plane Crash

A charter plane crashed in northwest Costa Rica on Sunday, killing 10 U.S. passengers and two Costa Rican pilots, the Costa Rican government said, ABC News reported. The plane crashed in Guanacaste province soon after takeoff from the Punta Islita Airport. The U.S. State Department confirmed that "multiple U.S. citizens" had died in the crash. Two families were among those killed.

Cargill Cuts Ties With Guatemalan Palm Oil Supplier

Minnesota-based agriculture giant Cargill has cut ties with a major Guatemalan palm oil supplier that has been accused of environmental degradation and human rights violations, the Star Tribune reported Sunday. The palm oil industry has seen increasing complaints of environmental and human rights abuses, prodding the company and other palm oil traders to implement "sustainability" codes for their suppliers. Cargill decided in late November to suspend business with Reforestadora de Palmas del Petén, or REPSA, and said it would not enter any new contracts with the supplier until it met the requirements of the company's sustainable palm oil policy. REPSA could not be reached for comment.

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a salient and welcome feature of the current international system. More than a dozen U.S. cities (led by New York and including Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington and Atlanta) joined more than 130 cities around the world formally requesting a role in talks on the global compacts on migration and refugees, due to be adopted by the end of 2018. While local and state governments evidently have no impact on federal immigration policy, they do play a unique role in how to successfully integrate migrants and refugees into the social and economic fabric of metropolis. Trump's decision to pull out of the Global Compact on Migration will certainly galvanize city-level engagement and leadership in moving beyond ad hoc and short-term

responses to migration and displacement. A lot can be said as to what happens to power vacuums, including that they tend to get filled by others."

A Manuel Orozco, director of the Migration, Remittances and Development Program at the Inter-American Dialogue:

"The withdrawal is fundamentally a political statement of the Trump administration about consistency in its anti-immigration stance that follows a reactionary nativist rhetoric. The consequences are many. First, it undermined the political and diplomatic process that has been building strength and support from states and civil society (and the private

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\$7 a day on the black market index, factoring in food tickets. The minimum wage will still leave many Venezuelans unable to afford three meals a day, Reuters reported. Between January and November of last year, prices increased 1,369 percent in Venezuela, according to the country's opposition-led National Assembly. The assembly estimated that the inflation rate in 2018 would surpass 2,000 percent. The International Monetary Fund estimated in October that Venezuela's inflation rate would rise past 2,300 percent this year.

BUSINESS NEWS

Boeing-Embraer Talks Don't Include Change of Control

Talks of a potential combination between Chicago-based aerospace giant Boeing and Embraer have not included a change of control of the Brazilian aircraft manufacturer, a move that negotiators believe will help make the Brazilian government amenable to the acquisition, Reuters reported today, citing Brazilian newspa-

The companies are reportedly focusing on joint ventures and business agreements.

per Valor Econômico. Instead, the two companies are focusing on joint ventures and joint business agreements that would allow them to divide income and costs in certain areas. An arrangement in which there would be no change in control of Embraer may ease regulatory issues surrounding the deal. The Brazilian government throughout the negotiations has voiced concerns over Boeing having control of Embraer, citing Embraer's role in Brazil's defense sector. Boeing has cited other defense deals it has made in countries including Australia as evidence of successful joint ventures or joint business agreements that it says have

THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

How Much Are Poor Health Habits Costing Latin America?

Q Every year in the Americas, non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory diseases and diabetes, cause four out of every five deaths, with that figure only expected to grow in the coming decades, according to the Pan American Health Organization. Moreover, the organization points out that such diseases are increasingly not just affecting the elderly, as a third of the deaths caused by non-communicable diseases are in working-age people younger than 70, putting new strains on employers. What effect are poor health habits having on the economies and productivity of Latin American and Caribbean countries? Are governments in the region focusing enough on preventing and treating lifestyle diseases, and how can they pay for those efforts? Which policies in the region are successfully helping citizens prevent illness and can be replicated on a broader scale?

A Andrew I. Rudman, managing director at Monarch Global Strategies: "The rise in noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) has a significant impact on worker productivity and on economic growth. It is well understood that workers are less productive when they are not feeling well due to personal illness or when they are distracted by illness among family members for whom they must care. Our recent study, commissioned by the Mexican Association of the Investigative Pharmaceutical Industry (AMIIF), on the impact of inadequate and inefficient health

not hindered other countries' defense sectors. The potential acquisition by Boeing would help expand Embraer's aircraft portfolio, as well as contributing to expanding sales platforms and developing new products. The talks come less

care services on the productivity of the auto industry of the Mexican state of Guanajuato, measured the loss due to absenteeism and 'presenteeism' (when an employee is 'present' but unable to perform at full capacity) at roughly 7 percent of GDP. Of that, more than two-thirds was attributable to presenteeism. A similar study conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on a national level for 18 countries (including Mexico) showed similar figures. Both government and industry have a role to play. Prevention (ideally) or management of NCDs is far less expensive than the treatment of acute conditions. Workers with NCDs such as diabetes and hypertension can, with appropriate treatment, continue to perform at full capacity. But focusing solely on workers will not alone lead to productivity gains. Public health systems must focus on prevention and treatment for family members, especially for children. Encouraging healthy lifestyles from an early age is far easier than changing behavior of adults. Private sector companies should consider providing on-site health care services to reduce the amount of time lost in transit and while waiting for attention at public healthcare facilities. While one might argue that this is not the role of the private sector, studies demonstrate that keeping workers healthy and on-site has a positive impact on productivity."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The comment above is a continuation of the Q&A published in the Dec. 15 issue of the Advisor.

than three months after Boeing's European competitor Airbus agreed to acquire a majority stake in Canada's Bombardier, putting pressure on Boeing to seek out a similar partnership with a regional aircraft manufacturer.

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sector) practically since 2003. The United States has been a party to discussions about enhancing the relevance of international migration at a global scale. Its withdrawal goes against the fruitful debate that had unfolded until 2017. The debate has come to recognize the significance of labor mobility on a global scale. Second, the U.S. withdrawal will have repercussions for Latin America. This region is host to mass migration and refugee flows from Central Americans, Cubans, Haitians and Venezuelans in particular. Central American mass migration alone constitutes the second- or third-largest flow of people running from state fragility. The political crisis in Venezuela has deepened emigration dramatically, from 4 percent of its population in 2014 to 13 percent in 2017. Nearly three million Venezuelans have left, and many come to the United States. The denial of refuge and political migration to this population is untenable under the current circumstances. By blocking entrance or restricting refugee rights to Latin Americans, the consequences will be devastating.”

A **Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) in Washington:** “National sovereignty has been the cornerstone of international relations since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Nevertheless, it appears that the United Nations wants to erase national sovereignty in favor of open borders—or, at least, porous borders regulated by the United Nations. The proposed U.N. Global Compact on Migration seeks to turn the entire world into an extended version of the European Union’s Schengen Area. It holds that immigration is a matter of international law and should be guided by a set of common

principles, agreed upon by the community of nations. But, unlike truly international issues such as war or piracy, immigration affects different nations in dissimilar ways. Accordingly, immigration decisions are mat-

“**Since the founding of the republic, the United States has cautiously guarded its sovereignty. It should not stop doing so now.**”

— Dan Stein

ters of domestic law, to be made internally. Independent nation-states should be free to control their borders without interference from unelected multi-national bureaucracies. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Horace Gray expressed the notion much more eloquently in *Nishimura Ekiu v. United States*, decided in 1892. He stated, “It is an accepted maxim of international law that every sovereign nation has the power, as inherent in sovereignty and essential to self-preservation, to forbid the entrance of foreigners within its dominions or to admit them only in such cases and upon such conditions as it may see fit to prescribe.” Since the founding of the republic, the United States has cautiously guarded its sovereignty. It should not stop doing so now. And the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw from the Global Compact on Migration negotiations is the right one.”

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