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FEATURED Q&A

Why Is the U.N.'s New Migration Pact So Controversial?



The United Nations General Assembly adopted a new pact on migration last month. Migrants emigrating from Venezuela are pictured above. // File Photo: United Nations.

Q In December, most of the U.N. member states signed an initiative to deal with global mass migration. Chile and the Dominican Republic declined to sign the U.N. migration pact, and incoming Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo announced that Brazil would withdraw from it after President-elect Jair Bolsonaro took office on Jan. 1. The U.S. government has also shunned the pact. What are the pros and cons of the U.N. migration pact for Latin America and the Caribbean? What is the significance of the Latin American countries rejecting the pact? What are the reasons behind their refusal to take part, and how can the pact be improved?

A Guillermo Holzmann, professor at the University of Valparaíso in Chile and CEO of Analytika Consulting: "After several years of the debate, the U.N. General Assembly approved a non-binding resolution to address the migration phenomenon through a 'global pact for safe, ordered and regular migration.' The migration issue has become a challenge over the past decades, whether it be because of the increase in refugees, the ease of displacement to search for new opportunities or because individuals are escaping risky or unstable situations. The resolution suggests and establishes conditions to recognize the human rights of migrants and the needs that recipient countries should address, thereby applying checks against governments adopting restrictive or prohibitive policies regarding free migration. Latin America and several countries lacking full development see in this a problem, as they do not have adequate institutions that define the limits of sovereign exercises in the face of the migrants, especially in those

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

U.S. Vows to Help Colombia Slash Coca Cultivation

During a visit to Colombia, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States was committed to helping the Andean nation cut coca cultivation and production by half between now and 2023.

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POLITICAL

Pelosi Vows No Additional Funds for Border Wall

Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who is set to take over today as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, said that President Donald Trump cannot persuade her to allocate more money for his promised border wall.

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ECONOMIC

Brazil Seeks to Scale Back Pension System

Brazil's new economy minister, Paulo Guedes, said scaling back the country's pension system is needed in order to cut the federal deficit.

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Guedes // File Photo: Agência Brasil.

POLITICAL NEWS

U.S. Vows to Help Colombia Slash Coca Cultivation

During a visit Wednesday to Colombia, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States was committed to helping the South American country slash the amount of coca being cultivated in its territory, Reuters reported. "We will continue to work with you



Duque and Pompeo (L-R) met Wednesday in Cartagena. // Photo: Colombian Government.

Mr. President side-by-side to achieve our joint objectives to cut coca cultivation and coca production by 50 percent between now and 2023," Pompeo told Colombian President Iván Duque during a joint appearance in the coastal city of Cartagena. "The United States remains deeply concerned about the surge in coca cultivation and cocaine production in Colombia since 2013," Pompeo told journalists after meeting with Duque. The amount of land used in Colombia for cultivating coca, the main ingredient of cocaine, has risen to a record high, according to a report released in September by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, or UNDOC, CNN reported. The amount of land being used for growing coca rose 17 percent between 2016 and 2017, the report said. It added that Colombia is the leading country for manufacturing cocaine, while North America is home to the majority of the drug's users. The increase in coca cultivation in Colombia was due to higher levels of productivity and growers cultivating more coca in the hopes of securing more aid in order to switch to crops that are legal, Reuters reported. This year, Duque's government wants

to eradicate 100,000 hectares of coca. Last month, he said eradication efforts in 2018 would destroy in excess of 80,000 hectares of coca crops. On Tuesday, Duque said help from the United States to fight drug trafficking "is of paramount importance," CNN reported. Colombia suspended its aerial fumigation with glyphosate in 2015 after the herbicide was classified as a carcinogen. However, Colombia may begin using it again if it can conform to judicial conditions, Duque has said, Reuters reported. During their meeting on Wednesday, Pompeo and Duque also discussed Venezuela's crises, including economic conditions that have driven some three million people to flee Venezuela in recent years. Approximately one million of those migrants now live in Colombia. Pompeo praised Duque for Colombia's support of the migrants and said he and Duque discussed how to work together, along with international groups, to coordinate aid. "All countries that defend democracy, all countries that share the value of democracy should unite to reject the Venezuelan dictatorship, said Duque. Before traveling to Colombia, Pompeo visited Brazil to attend the inauguration of new President Jair Bolsonaro. While there, Pompeo also discussed Venezuela with Brazil's new foreign minister, Ernesto Araújo, the Associated Press reported. Pompeo said he and Araújo discussed their "deep desire to return democracy" to Venezuela. Venezuela's Foreign Ministry later rebuked Pompeo, accusing him of having an "interventionist attitude." [Editor's note: See [Q&A](#) on Colombia's anti-drug policies in the Oct. 17 issue of the Advisor.]

Pelosi Vows No Additional Funding for Border Wall

Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who is to take over today as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, said today that President Donald Trump cannot persuade her to allocate more money to fund his promised U.S.-Mexico border wall, the Associated Press reported. "There is no amount of persuasion he can use," Pelosi said in an interview this morning on

NEWS BRIEFS

Peru's Attorney General Reappoints Prosecutors in Odebrecht Graft Probe

Facing pressure from street protesters and the nation's president, Peruvian Attorney General Pedro Chávayry on Wednesday reappointed two lead prosecutors he had dismissed earlier this week from a massive corruption investigation implicating high-level government officials in connection with the Odebrecht bribery scandal, Agence France-Presse reported. Chávayry said he removed the team's chief prosecutor, José Domingo Pérez Gómez, because he had exceeded his authority and questioned his election as attorney general. Team coordinator Rafael Vela was also dismissed and then reappointed. President Martín Vizcarra had denounced their dismissal.

Bolivian Publicly Paid Doctors Call Strike

Bolivia's publicly paid doctors have begun a 48-hour strike to bring attention to the need for better budgeting amid government plans to expand free health services to millions of citizens, Agence France-Presse reported Wednesday. Bolivia's health ministry has drawn up plans to provide free health services to 5.8 million people currently without health insurance. Doctors say they will need more supplies, staff and resources to treat that many patients, and that the \$230 million now budgeted is not nearly enough to meet demand.

Venezuela's Oil Exports Drop to 28-Year Low

Oil exports from Venezuela, which has the world's largest reserves of crude, dropped last year to a 28-year low, Bloomberg News reported Wednesday. The country exported 1.245 million barrels per day in 2018, its lowest level of crude exports since 1990. Venezuela's production declined by more than half over the past five years.

NBC. With the new U.S. Congress convening today, President Trump and congressional leaders plan to try again Friday to reach a deal on the budget that would end a partial government shutdown that has stretched from days into weeks. Meanwhile, tensions at the Mexico border continue to fester. Early Tuesday, U.S. authorities fired tear gas into Mexican territory as some 150 migrants tried to breach the border fence in Tijuana, the Associated Press reported. U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement that the tear gas was used to target rock throwers. "No agents witnessed any of the migrants at the fence line, including children, experiencing effects of the chemical agents, which were targeted at the rock throwers further away," the statement said. Reporters at the scene contradicted the statement, however, saying they saw migrants, including women and children, suffering the effects of the chemicals, and that rocks were thrown only after U.S. agents fired the tear gas. An AP journalist also saw plastic pellets fired by U.S. agents. Customs and Border Protection said the incident would be reviewed by its Office of Professional Responsibility.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Brazilian Economy Minister Seeks to Scale Back Pensions

Brazil's newly sworn-in economy minister on Wednesday said he would move quickly to cut the federal deficit in part by scaling back Brazil's entrenched pension system, The Wall Street Journal reported. Paulo Guedes, who takes over a new ministry that combines the former finance, planning and industry ministries, said at his swearing-in ceremony on Wednesday that "pension reform is the first and the biggest challenge" he faces. Previous efforts to reduce Brazil's generous pension spending have met resistance from politicians, judges and powerful unions. Conservative President Jair Bolsonaro, who took office on Tuesday, has pledged his government "won't

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countries with little experience in undesired migration. The pact is the first phase of a process to establish a treaty in the future. For Latin American countries, it means an increase in the financial resources to guarantee a dignified life and the rights of migrants, especially when there is no clear legal or regulatory system that outlines conditions to accept migrants. The approval serves as a platform for a discussion that each country will need to have. Those who have accepted the pact are grounded in multilateralism and cooperation; those who rejected it have a more restrictive position on accepting migrants under imperative conditions, and those who abstained point to the complexity of carrying out real processes that demand a capacity that some states lack. Overall, the discussion raises questions with respect to the viability of multilateralism in the future."

A **Nayla Rush, senior researcher at the Center for Immigration Studies:** "The United Nations General Assembly officially adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration on Dec. 19. Of the 193 U.N. member states, 152 voted in favor, five against, 12 abstained and 24 countries simply did not vote. Chile abstained, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Paraguay, as well as Trinidad & Tobago did not vote. Brazil voted yes, but its future administration made it clear that it would withdraw from the compact upon Jair Bolsonaro taking office as president. Of the 258 million migrants in the world, some 38 million were born in Latin America and the Caribbean. While most want to leave the

spend more than it takes in." Brazil's pension system deficit will reach more than \$57 billion in 2019, according to projections. Guedes also reiterated plans to boost economic growth by expanding international trade and selling some state-owned assets. Early this morning, Bolsonaro followed through on that pledge, using Twitter to announce plans to privatize

region, intraregional migration has increased significantly, with high emigration flows from Venezuela and Haiti. Growing concerns over a global governance of migration are legitimate. The goals of the GCM include establishing official mechanisms to monitor human rights violations and abuse of

“Of the 258 million migrants in the world, some 38 million were born in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

— Nayla Rush

migrants, reviewing policies that criminalize cross-border movements, encouraging family reunification, eliminating child immigration detention, focusing on inclusion of migrants in host societies, providing safe passage to work (including legal avenues) and appropriating protections for migrant workers. Furthermore, the non-binding character of this international agreement is misleading. This U.N. compact will allow for the creation of a new model for international lawmaking, one that will shape state behavior and create new norms that will eventually form the basis for a self-enforcing international human rights law. Civil society, a key actor in the compact's process, will pressure states to uphold this international commitment. With this in mind, many countries decided not to commit to this migration compact."

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12 airports and four sea ports, CNBC reported. Bolsonaro said the move would raise initial investments of seven billion reais, or about \$1.82 billion. More than 250 billion reais worth of state assets potentially could be up for sale under the administration's plans. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Dec. 4 issue of the Advisor.]

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A **João Carlos Jarochinski Silva, adjunct professor at the Federal University of Roraima:** “The main regional gain under the pact is to strengthen a cooperative system for managing migrant flows and guaranteeing the rights of migrants in places marked by intense mobility, both regional and also outside the region. The region already has some instruments that help regulate issues, such as the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, which allowed advances in the refugee system. However, the U.N. pact would allow a double expansion, first for overcoming the mobility resulting from refugee, which is specific and does not encompass other types of flows, and second, for establishing a collaborative dynamic at the global level, which would be fundamental for many of the countries of the region that have significant outward movements to other regions. The meaning of some countries’ refusal to accept the pact is quite broad, but, in general, it reinforces anti-globalist arguments and the resumption of greater state involvement and reinforcement of a supposed sovereignty, which is very forceful in the attempt to regulate movement of people, especially if these people are seen as unwanted. How-

ever, it is rather timid in regulating product flows and money. Another reason countries are refusing to sign on to the pact apart from sentiments against globalization and the reconstruction of an exclusionary nationalism, is the fact that migrants are, within

“Migrants are, within the political order of states, a weak political group.”

— João Carlos Jarochinski Silva

the political order of states, a weak political group. Many of them cannot participate fully in politics, leading politicians to blame them for various social problems, such as violence, unemployment and health issues. This occurs even if, in the vast majority of cases, the links between these problems and migration are not true and even though these migrants offer diverse opportunities to solve these problems and generate development in the locations where they arrive.”

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Advisor Video

The Elusive Consensus on Peace in Colombia: A Conversation with the Colombian Senate's Peace Commission

An Inter-American Dialogue discussion with Paloma Valencia, Senator, Centro Democrático Roy Barreros, Senator, Partido de la Unidad Nacional Iván Cepeda, Senator, Polo Democrático Alternativo Steve Hege, U.S. Institute on Peace

View a webcast of the Dec. 11 event.

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