

**Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**  
**Under-Secretary-General of United Nations and Executive Secretary of United Nations**  
**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

**Opening remarks**  
**Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation**  
**of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**  
**10 March 2021, Bangkok**

---

Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

I wish to thank the member and associate members of the Commission, the intergovernmental organizations, UN partners and stakeholders for joining this meeting.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the United Nations Regional Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific for supporting the organization of this review.

Today marks the first time that we have gathered to take stock of the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. We will discuss the opportunities, challenges, best practices, and approaches to promote safe, orderly and regular migration in the region.

This meeting is being held in challenging times, during which the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented health and socioeconomic crises. The effects on migrants have been devastating. Given the nature of their work, migrants often face increased risk of infection. They have lost jobs and livelihoods. They have been stranded by closed borders, they have been forcibly returned to countries of origin, and they have faced discrimination, stigma and xenophobia.

Yet, migrants have also played a critical role as essential workers, particularly in the health sector, food supply, and the formal and informal care economy - in the region and beyond. Migrants will be crucial to the long-term recoveries of countries, and their contributions to our societies must be recognized and valued. They must be included in vaccination programmes, because, as the Secretary-General has said, we are only safe when everyone is safe.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

International migration has been a key accelerator of sustainable development for our region and beyond.

There are almost 107 million people from Asia and the Pacific living outside their countries of birth. They make up almost 40 per cent of the world's migrants and contribute to economic and social development both within and beyond the region.

There are 65 million international migrants living in Asia and the Pacific, 70 percent of whom come from within the region. They are mostly of working age, and they contribute to the region's exceptional level of economic growth.

These migrants embody the region's dynamism, adaptability and future, as they seek to better themselves and contribute both to the communities they come from and those to which they migrate.

For example, countries of the region received over \$330 billion in remittances in 2019, nearly half of the global total. These funds support families and communities, and they help reduce poverty.

At the same time, the challenges to migration are varied and complex, as political, economic, social, and environmental factors drive people to leave their homes. In addition, regular and irregular migration often occur side-by-side and smuggling and trafficking in persons are persistent and significant problems.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

The Global Compact is a comprehensive document that addresses the multidimensional nature of international migration. Its 23 objectives and guiding principles are a framework, a roadmap, and a call for action for international and regional cooperation on migration.

As you begin your deliberations today, let me suggest some ways to advance the implementation of the Global Compact:

First, we should recognize that because the Global Compact is firmly rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will further the implementation of the Global Compact objectives. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the region further behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and therefore exacerbating the vulnerabilities of the region's population, in particular its migrants.

So let me now focus on the implementation of the migration-related Goals, in particular the targets related to Goal 8 and Goal 10. In a region dominated by temporary labour migration, it is

important to have full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, and equal pay for work of equal value. Let us implement well-planned and well-managed migration policies. Let us reduce the transaction costs of migrant remittances to less than 3 per cent and let us reduce the cost of sending remittance to below 5 per cent.

Second, international migration must be governed by the rule of law and due process. Countries that have not yet ratified or acceded to international human rights treaties and treaties related to international labour, criminal and humanitarian law standards, and the law of the sea should do so, and they should put them into practice. Countries which adopted the Global Compact have a shared responsibility to respect one another's needs and concerns regarding migration and to protect and fulfil the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their status. Such policies must be gender-responsive and child-sensitive.

Third, since migration is mostly regional in nature, governments must cooperate on setting common policies and norms across all 23 objectives of the Global Compact and the cross-cutting interdependent guiding principles. This must be achieved at the bilateral, subregional, regional, and cross regional levels, and this is particularly important due to the large and growing scale of migration between Asia-Pacific countries and beyond.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last few months, many of you have completed a voluntary survey collecting baseline information on the implementation of the Global Compact. This information is now available online, and it has been summarized in a conference room paper. This provides us with a clear understanding of the progress made, and the challenges faced by you in implementing the GCM, and your priorities for the future.

In addition, ESCAP and the Regional Network have held several rounds of stakeholder consultations to collect additional inputs, views and suggestions. Many of the stakeholders are joining us over the next three days.

We should recognize and appreciate the momentum that this process has created, and we should try to build on it in the future.

The findings of our meeting this week will inform the 2022 International Migration Review Forum. ESCAP is ready to support you in collecting insights and lessons learned from this process and bringing them to the IMRF meeting.

The Asia-Pacific region can lead by example in realizing the commitments made in the Global Compact. By doing so, we will increase our chances of full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and answering the call to leave no one behind.

For the future, let us make migration a priority in our annual review and follow up to the 2030 Agenda. Such a review will take place at the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development later this month. I ask that you continue to focus on the migration-related targets every year, here at ESCAP and the High-level Political Forum in New York, through your voluntary national reviews.

ESCAP is ready to facilitate such reviews and to make migration safe, orderly and regular in Asia and the Pacific and beyond.

I thank you and wish you all a very productive meeting.