

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

OPENING REMARKS AT THE BRIEFING ON THE SG REPORT ON THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION

16 February 2022, 10:00 am

[as delivered]

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,
The commitment by Member States to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration crystalized three core truths.

First, that migration is a fact of life, a defining feature of humanity and our world – and above all, with a positive phenomenon enriching societies and economies.

Second, that if poorly managed, migration generates huge challenges, from tragic loss of life, to rights abuses and social tensions.

And third, that effectively managing migration and protecting the rights of all migrants requires strengthened international cooperation.

The Global Compact reflects the commitment of the international community to make migration work for all – to make it a source of prosperity and solidarity, not a byword for inhumanity.

Three years on, this task remains as urgent as ever.

I commend all who have taken concrete steps to improve the lives of migrants – by helping them integrate into host countries; by facilitating regular pathways; and by advancing collaboration between countries of origin, transit and destination.

However, much more can and should be done.

As we prepare for the first-ever International Migration Review Forum, my report offers several recommendations across four priorities.

The first priority is to promote inclusive societies and include migrants in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Migrants have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

And they play an outsized heroic role on the frontlines of responding to the crisis – often putting themselves at risk to help others.

Their remittances provide a vital lifeline for many families in countries where resources are scarce.

And yet migrants – particularly those with irregular status – are often excluded from recovery measures and denied access to basic services, whether health care or social protection.

Many are experiencing growing stigmatization, racism, and xenophobia.

Women and child migrants are facing higher risks of trafficking and exposure to gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation.

And others continue to be forcibly returned – often with insufficient regard to health risks, due process or procedural safeguards, including the best interest of the child.

Encouragingly, we have seen a number of governments step up:

Working to better protect the human rights of migrants, irrespective of status.

Breaking down barriers to ensure non-discriminatory access to essential services, including vaccines.

Expanding and diversifying migration pathways.

And suspending forced returns.

It is imperative that all such measures become the norm, not the exception.

The second priority is the need to promote safe and regular migration.

Today, over 80 per cent of the world's migrants move between countries in a safe and orderly fashion.

But unregulated migration continues to extract a terrible human cost.

Large migration flows today are essentially managed by smugglers and human traffickers.

And this is totally unacceptable.

These criminals are robbing people of their fundamental rights, stealing their dreams, and causing serious problems in many countries around the world.

Women and girls are targeted again and again.

And the only way to break the stranglehold of smugglers and traffickers is to establish pathways for regular migration in close cooperation between countries of origin and countries of destination.

We must better protect migrants in vulnerable situations, including those affected by disasters and the climate crisis.

And we must expand and diversify rights-based pathways for regular migration to address labor market shortages and advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

We must do more to ensure returns and readmissions are safe, dignified and in full accordance with obligations under international law.

Governments everywhere must work together so that any reintegration into home communities is safe and sustainable.

The third priority is about preventing loss of life and other tragedies during migration.

In the last seven years, nearly 50,000 migrant deaths were recorded across the world.

And the actual numbers are certainly higher.

Behind each number is a human being.

Each perished in pursuit of what we all seek – opportunity, dignity, and a better life.

Their deaths are a source of collective shame.

And preventing the loss of life – including through rescue at sea – is a humanitarian imperative and a moral and legal obligation.

Whether their movement is voluntary or forced, formally authorized or not – all human beings must have their rights respected and their dignity upheld.

We must eliminate smuggling and human trafficking.

We must end the exploitation of vulnerability.

Excellencies,

The fourth priority is about building capacity.

The cornerstones of the Global Compact for Migration are collaboration and cooperation across all states and stakeholders at all levels.

That is why we launched the United Nations Network for Migration.

Today, the Network has established a Capacity Building Mechanism, including a Migration Network Hub and Multi-Partner Trust Fund – the first of its kind focused on migration.

I thank the Member States who have contributed and encourage others to follow suit.

Looking ahead, I count on your support to work with the Network in advancing the full implementation of the Compact.

Excellencies,

With the Review Forum just around the corner, I trust the recommendations in this report will assist you in preparing tangible, ambitious and actionable pledges.

Together, we can secure a strong political outcome.

Together, we can draw on the Global Compact to foster global solidarity towards migrants, recover better from COVID-19, and build more resilient and inclusive societies.

Together – and only together – can we safeguard our common humanity and secure the rights and dignity of all.

Thank you.



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