

**Coordinator's Opening Remarks**

**ECE Regional Review:  
The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**

Thursday, 12 November 2020  
10 – 10.30h (Virtual)

*As delivered.*

Excellencies, distinguished guests, colleagues,

It is an honour for me to join you today, at this first Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

In December 2018, when Member States adopted and endorsed the Global Compact, they recognized that most international migration takes place within regions. They also set in place a framework for continued collective engagement and cooperation on international migration, including through a process of regular reviews.

This gathering for the ECE region makes you all Global Compact pioneers: this has not been done before. With the other regional reviews scheduled for the first quarter of 2021, I believe we, you, me us, you have the opportunity – through open and inclusive exchanges, focusing on concrete achievements and outstanding challenges today to pave the way in ensuring that the Global Compact delivers on its clear promise and potential.

While technology fortunately permits us to meet remotely, organizing this gathering as you know has been no easy task. Agendas are full, and our year has been testing and exhausting. I salute you all for thus making this a priority and for your contributions to ensuring that this discussion will be successful.

In seeking to support this review, the United Nations Network on Migration, which includes the Economic Commission for Europe, has sought to provide a platform for Member States to discuss regional, sub-regional and national migration, challenges, achievements, dynamics

and trends, against the commitments of the Compact, while also bringing in the expertise of both the UN system and stakeholders.

Indeed, I am particularly pleased that this regional review has been preceded by a multi-stakeholder consultation, the main findings from which will be shared with you shortly. Such consultations not only remain true to the diversity of our stakeholder partners, but are also a recognition that progress on implementing the Global Compact will not be achieved without their active engagement. This is one element in our collective commitment to ensuring that the whole-of-society approach is central to all aspects of Global Compact implementation, follow-up and review.

Excellencies,

The Global Compact marks a significant milestone in multilateralism: the principal text by which to guide Member States' collective efforts to improve international cooperation on migration to benefit governments, communities and primarily migrants themselves. Grounded in international law, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and supported by core guiding principles, the Global Compact not only examines migration in all its dimensions, but also incorporates wide-ranging partnerships both within governments and throughout society.

Throughout the Compact, Member States have stressed that cooperation and dialogue can take place at all levels – local, country, regional and global – recognizing that no State's migration priorities can be achieved in isolation.

It recognizes, too, that going forward we should build on expertise already garnered, and on those institutions and fora, which have been built up in past years dedicated to furthering the pursuit of migration that is safe, orderly and regular.

Indeed, the Compact's true impact is and will be measured by how its 23 objectives and guiding principles are being applied in daily practice for the tangible benefit of migrants and host communities.

As we embark on these regional reviews, we keep in mind their central purpose to, in the words of the Global Compact, ‘effectively inform each edition of the International Migration Review Forum’ that will take place for the first time in 2022 under the auspices of the General Assembly.

This requires us to look at the reviews not as static events but rather ensure that they launch – or contribute to – a multi-layered, ongoing discourse on the implementation of the Global Compact. It is our hope that these reviews stimulate further deliberation – at all levels and in different configurations – building on the submissions sent in and discussions over the next two days to further our understanding as to how best we realize our collective commitments in this field.

I believe we are on the cusp of seeing significant progress in realizing the goals of the Compact. As the Secretary-General of the UN will describe in his first report on the Global Compact’s implementation, to be launched on the 1 December, this framework, despite challenges, we do recognize that – this framework is laying down strong roots.

National implementation plans are being developed; promising actions inspired by the Compact are being put in place; the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund has financed its first six joint programmes; and UN-wide migration coordination structures are being set up at regional and national levels.

While progress might not be linear, I do recognize that, it is there clearly to be discerned.

Particularly promising has been the positive response to our call for Global Compact ‘Champions’. Now representing all regions, these Champions – a group that by the way we hope to expand – supported by the UN Migration Network, are poised to build on the positive examples to date, strengthen our peer-to-peer learning, and build ever increasing momentum behind the Compact.

Excellencies,

We cannot review the implementation of the Global Compact without also reflecting on the impact of COVID-19.

While the pandemic is not a crisis of migration, it nevertheless has fundamentally impacted mobility and migrants' human rights, and raised unexpected policy challenges for governments everywhere: both exacerbating vulnerabilities migrants face – often at the cost of their lives, freedom, livelihood, health and employment – while at the same time opening up space for new, rights-based and gender responsive solutions.

For example, we are seeing states implement alternatives to immigration detention, ensure inclusion of health services to migrants regardless of migration status, and extend residence and work permits during the pandemic. The pandemic is also highlighting the key contributions of migrants to the provision of services such as frontline migrant health workers, upending previous notions of what constitutes essential work.

This regional review thus also offers a first opportunity for Member States and other key stakeholders to come together not only to discuss and evaluate how to strengthen regional cooperation on migration but to do so within this new context, highlighting the adaptability – the relevance – of the Compact to all contexts.

To this end, let us examine how the objectives and actions outlined in the Global Compact can guide regions in developing inclusive COVID-19 preparedness, prevention, response and recovery measures that protect human and labour rights, promote health, keep the world safe and protect the vulnerable and enhance the positive, development effects of human mobility.

Excellencies,

As the Global Compact progresses from birth to infancy, and as we put in place the structures that allow us to discuss its progress, we should not let lose sight of our central goal.

By that I mean that while it is a truism that each region presents its own, unique migration dynamics, this should not obscure the fact that, in essence, we are talking about the welfare of communities and the rights and dignity of individuals: of how we wish to structure ourselves, in line with our legal obligations, for the benefit of all.

The is as true for the ECE region as for all other regions in the world. This region faces many and daunting challenges.

Whether driven by limited capacity; incomplete knowledge; ill-designed policies; or discrimination – whether structural or in the form of virulent prejudice – too many migrants, especially women, men and children, find themselves in precarious situations which are simply not acceptable. This represents a failure that is at once legal, moral and human in nature in which the victims are not only migrants themselves, but the victims are also the societies in which they live.

I say this fully recognizing the positive developments that have taken place in these past two years and look forward to hearing in the coming days more examples of these. But I say this, too, recognizing that human nature can find it easier to dwell on successes rather than recognize and confront our failings. In the course of the next two days, I encourage us to do both.

I look forward to our discussions and assure you of the steadfast support of the United Nations Network on Migration to supporting you all, however best we can, in our collective efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Thank you.