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**Catherine M. Russell, UNICEF Executive Director
High-Level Briefing on the Secretary-General's Report
on the Global Compact for Migration
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Thank you, Secretary-General, and thank you all for welcoming me here today.

Excellencies, colleagues,

I am honored to represent UNICEF in this important discussion on the Global Compact for Migration -- and the critical recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report.

The report makes clear that the Compact is working -- thanks in large part to the sustained commitment of Member States, our partners in every sector, and the support of the UN Network for Migration, which UNICEF is proud to help lead.

Together, we are mobilizing global, national, and local action. More governments are adopting a cooperative approach, coordinating across borders. More member states are embracing the Compact's guiding principles. And we are all working towards the Compact's vision of a world where migration is safe for all -- and all migrants can contribute fully wherever they are.

We are also working towards a world where no migrant child is left behind.

As a founding member of the Network and throughout our programme work, UNICEF is seeing firsthand the impact of this sustained effort.

Our work together is making a difference: From expanding the access of girl migrants to school and other services that can help them reach their full potential ... to protecting young, unaccompanied children so they can migrate safely ... to helping migrant families stay together after crossing an international border.

For example, the report shows that there has been a significant decrease in child immigration detention -- a key focus of our work to protect children on the move.

Many Member States are also leveraging the moment to expand access to health care, including COVID-19 vaccines and treatment, regardless of a person's migration status.

The report also shows that young migrants themselves are increasingly involved as our partners -- whether they're participating in plans to implement the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration, or making their voices heard at the Regional Reviews of the Global Compact for Migration.

We will be hearing more from young migrants at this year's International Migration Review Forum. Their voices, their needs, and their futures should be central to the pledges we make in the coming months.

As the Secretary-General and others have made clear, our work is by no means over. Around the world, far too many children are still being stranded and pushed back at borders. They are still being separated from their families – exposing them to greater risk of exploitation and harm. And they are still missing out on the services and support they need to make the most of their lives, wherever their journeys take them.

As the Secretary-General has said, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly exacerbated risks for all migrants – and especially child migrants. We need to keep *all* children at the center of the response and recovery, regardless of their immigration status.

We also need to recognize the contributions made by migrants themselves to the effort – often at great personal risk.

In many communities, migrants are among the most heroic frontline workers -- providing health and senior care, education and other essential services during the pandemic. Migrant youth serve as local leaders, raising awareness about the disease and countering misinformation. They are helping to lead us out of the crisis in a way that leaves no one behind.

Child migrants have the same rights as every other child -- rights that travel with them everywhere they go. They have the same hopes and dreams as children everywhere – and they have so much to offer, if only we meet their needs and invest in their futures.

They are counting on us to do that – and they will measure our success by the real change they see in their lives: Whether they can be with their parents and loved ones ... whether they and their families can get vaccinated ... whether they are safe from violence at borders ... and whether they can go back to school.

That is why the Global Compact continues to be so important – and why the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General’s report should encourage and guide us as we redouble our efforts.

I look forward to working with all of you to realize the vision of the Global Compact for Migration – and to build brighter futures for migrant children and a better world for every child.

Thank you.