

Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular  
Migration – 10-12 March 2021

Statement of the Republic of Vanuatu

Delivered by

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Thank you, Chair, for giving me the floor,

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished participants,**

I bring you warm greetings from beautiful Vanuatu.

On behalf of the Government of Vanuatu, I thank you for the invitation to participate in this regional review.

Allow me at the outset to thank the ESCAP Secretariat for the tireless effort made putting together document ESCAP/GCM/2021/1 and no doubt for the long hours spent organizing this regional review.

Chair,

Migration and displacement are a way of life for the people of Vanuatu – integral to our history, our present and our future.

Like other nations, Vanuatu is a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants from different parts of the world.

Vanuatu is the largest provider of migrant labour to Australia and New Zealand in the Pacific Region. These programmes generate huge volumes of remittances for our communities every year, but also expose our citizens to risks and vulnerabilities – not only for those who migrate but also for the families and children left behind.

Vanuatu has also been ranked the most at-risk country in the world to disasters by the World Risk Index. Vanuatu is comprised of over 83 islands which experience frequent cyclones, flood, storms, drought as well as volcanic eruptions, and slow-onset processes such as sea-level rise.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has estimated that Vanuatu has a 57% chance of suffering a significant disaster related to natural hazards each year – with losses predicted at almost half of our GDP, if not more.

The impacts of natural hazards can also be exacerbated by human factors – such as through land conflicts and urbanization.

These are all pressures which combine with other factors to motivate people to leave their communities of origin in search of new livelihoods – both within Vanuatu and overseas.

Thus – there are certain objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration that are of the highest priority for Vanuatu, including Objectives 6 and 7 on facilitating the conditions for ethical work and reducing vulnerabilities in migration.

Improving migrant labour conditions for our region is even more important when you consider our history. Many among the Ni-Vanuatu diaspora in Australia can trace their ancestry to the practice of “black-birding” between 1847 and 1901 when thousands of Ni-Vanuatu were taken to Australia as indentured labourers to work on the sugar plantations.

We also want the family members and communities of those who stay behind to benefit from these migratory experiences – not be placed under additional pressure because key household members are not there. This is particularly important for the children of migrant workers.

Objective 2 of the GCM is also important as it seeks to “minimise the adverse and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin”. If our citizens choose to leave Vanuatu or participate in seasonal work overseas, we want it to be because they have a choice, not because they have no option.

These are a selection of the key issues Vanuatu is currently facing in relation to migration. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is an important opportunity for Vanuatu to share its experience with other nations in the region – and to learn from the best practices shared by other member states.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic has had multi-faceted impacts on Vanuatu. The Vanuatu Government has imposed restrictions mostly on international movements. Migrants and their families have been particularly affected, especially through reduced remittances. The Vanuatu Government remains committed to containing risks of contracting the virus for all its citizens and residents, including migrants.

Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to further discussion on these important topics.