

Intervention of the Migration Youth & Children Platform (MYCP) at the Second UNECE Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I speak to you today as a migrant and on behalf of the Migration Youth and Children Platform (MYCP), the platform by youth, and for youth, to impact the highest levels of international migration policy. Our platform adds our voices to this crucial discussion, recognizing the profound impact of migration on our interconnected world.

Today, I stand before you as a young person, and one of the millions of young migrants and children whose dreams and aspirations shape the future of our world. As young migrants, it is crucial that we are included in national action plans, strategies and policy spaces to ensure a whole-of-society approach to migration governance. While migration is a positive and empowering experience for many of us, it is increasingly clear that a lack of human rights-based migration governance at the global and national levels is leading to the routine violation of migrants' rights in transit, at international borders, and in the countries they migrate to.

Imagine, if you will, the countless obstacles they face in their pursuit of a brighter tomorrow. Picture the language barriers that render them voiceless, the lack of documentation that threatens their very existence, and the discrimination that casts shadows upon their hopes. These are not just barriers; *they are formidable walls that stand between them and their dreams.*

At MYCP, our Europe and North America teams have identified key priorities that are crucial for shaping migration policies across the region in consultation with grassroots youth, and I am here to raise our collective voice, and to call for action on the issues that affect us everyday.

First and foremost, access to education stands as a fundamental pillar in the journey of young migrants. Education equips young migrants with vital skills and knowledge, fostering both their integration into society and their contribution to it, yet they face significant barriers such as language, discrimination, and socioeconomic disparities. It is imperative that migration policies prioritize removing these barriers and **ensuring equal opportunities for all young migrants to thrive.**

Secondly, the issue of trafficking of persons cannot be overlooked. Young migrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by traffickers who prey on their desperation and lack of support networks. **We not only need to strengthen measures and legislation, but actively work with communities to prevent young migrants, especially women and girls, from being subjected to one of the most inhumane practices.** Survivors of trafficking are then faced by exploitative labor practices and working conditions that threaten their lives every day. Enforcement of humane and respectful labor regulations is critical to ensuring young migrants feel safe at work.



We've all seen the images of migrants and refugees drowning in boats in the Mediterranean, or the English Channel. Or stuck in the Rio Grande, struggling to reach safety in North America. The lack of safe and legal routes across Europe and North America force young migrants to take dangerous journeys, risking their lives. This can stop, but it takes effort and international cooperation. **Tackling route-based migration challenges whilst establishing safe and legal pathways for migrants can save lives, create hope, and enrich societies.** We need migrants, so we must do better.

But what happens when migrants find safety? They find themselves put behind bars, and treated like criminals, simply for being who they are. For children and young people, this has an inordinate effect on our mental health, and diminishes our humanity. The young people of Europe and North America have been clear about one thing. **No child should be put in a cage or separated from their family having been forcibly displaced from their home or in search of a better life.** You must end this practice now. And work together to find community-based alternatives to immigration detention - putting humanity back into migration.

Our region is getting older. We're looking at the past on how to inform the present. But young people are already taking the lead to reinvigorate migration across the region. Far too often, young migrants' dreams are met with closed doors and indifferent gazes leaving our communities deprived of their valuable contributions and perspectives. They are denied the fundamental right to education and healthcare, relegated to the margins of society, and the opportunity to thrive. **I am here to make sure that their voices are heard, and the voices of the millions of young migrants across Europe and North America do not go ignored in this process.**

Let us not be blind to the potential that lies within these courageous souls. Let us recognize the richness of their diversity, the depth of their resilience, and the power of their dreams. For it is in empowering them that we empower our collective future.

In conclusion, let us remember the voices of the youth and children who are at the heart of these policies. By **prioritizing youth inclusion** and addressing the identified priorities of access to education, trafficking of persons, regular pathways, alternatives to detention, and labor exploitation, we can create a more just, equitable, and inclusive future for all young migrants across our region. Investing in these ideals is not an act of charity, but a contribution and commitment to our shared humanity. The work is being done today, for tomorrow. But we need your trust, and your support - governments, agencies, and mechanisms alike. **All we ask is that you let us be heard, and work with us in creating a better future for all.**

Thank you.

This intervention was delivered by MYCP Europe Officer, Feblezi Huebi, at the Palais de Nations (Geneva, Switzerland) on 11 March 2024

 migrationyouthchildrenplatform.org  [@mycpofficial](https://twitter.com/mycpofficial)  [@mycp_mgcy](https://www.instagram.com/mycp_mgcy)

 migrationfp@unmgcy.org

