



**SOUTH AFRICA NATIONAL STATEMENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL  
MIGRATION REVIEW FORUM**

**GENERAL DEBATE**

**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**19 – 20 MAY 2022**

**NEW YORK**

Mr President,

South Africa is honoured to be a part of the Inaugural Session of the International Migration Review Forum. This Forum presents a unique opportunity for Member States and all relevant stakeholders to review the ongoing implementation of the Global Compact for safe, orderly, and regular Migration (GCM), allowing for both policy discussion and an opportunity to share and learn best practices. Mr President allow my Government to convey its appreciation to the United Nations Network on Migration and IOM for delivering on effective and coherent support in the follow-up and review of the GCM, leading up to the IMRF, both nationally and regionally.

The Republic of South Africa remains committed to the effective implementation of the GCM towards improved migration governance, addressing challenges, as well as to strengthen the contribution of migration to sustainable development. South Africa is a constitutional democracy where the Bill of Rights is the cornerstone of our democracy. Therefore, our Constitution espouses the values of human dignity and equality for all persons, including migrants. To this end, our Constitution provides a solid basis for the implementation of the GCM and the protection of all migrants. In addition, the cross-cutting principles of the GCM continue to resonate strongly with South Africa in its effective implementation, including the respect for territorial integrity and national sovereignty, international cooperation and sustainable development.

Mr President,

Subsequent to the adoption of the GCM, South Africa has progressively made strides in its implementation and follow-up to the GCM. My Government recognises that a comprehensive approach to international migration is needed to optimize the overall benefits of migration, while addressing irregular migration, the risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. International and regional cooperation remains crucial, in this regard, South Africa continues to engage in bilateral and multilateral agreements, including partnerships, aimed at shared responsibility towards migration governance.

In the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants, migrants continue to have access to basic services. These include access to basic education for migrant children irrespective of their status, and access to emergency healthcare for all. South Africa promotes social cohesion and allows the self-integration of migrants at local levels. In order not to contribute towards the adverse drivers of forced migration of our citizens to other countries, South Africa has adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) to steer national economic development growth, create employment opportunities, provide basic services, address inequality, poverty and unemployment. Through our National Development Plan, South Africa has been positioned to, among others;

- a. Build an inclusive and integrated rural economy;
- b. Improve the quality of education;
- c. Strengthen Social protection; and
- d. Build safer communities

Mr President,

Due to the complexity of international migration in South Africa, evidence-based decision-making as a universally indispensable practice in ensuring efficient management of the population, economic and social affairs remains critical, to this end my government has undertaken initiatives and collaboration efforts in ensuring informed policy decisions based on collecting and analysing disaggregated data.

South Africa fundamentally believes that migration should be a choice rather than a necessity, it is therefore important to address the adverse drivers of migration and forced displacement as a priority. This can only be achieved through strengthening international co-operation and partnerships to address amongst others, structural challenges that lead to poverty, inequality, unemployment, economic exclusion, food insecurity, and conflicts. In this regard, South Africa continues to identify opportunities where cooperation can offer mutual benefits and investment in infrastructure.

Furthermore, as part of our international obligations, South Africa continues to prosecute offences related to the trafficking and smuggling of migrants. South Africa has legal pathways for migrants to enter SA and can provide documentation to her nationals throughout their migration journey utilising its Consular offices across the

world. For the successful implementation of the GCM, we therefore call upon all States to strengthen their civil registration systems and document their citizens throughout the migration cycle. South Africa also continues to develop legislative and policy frameworks towards international migration management, including the White Paper on Citizenship, International Migration and Refugee Protection, and the National Labour Migration Policy.

Mr President,

In implementing the GCM and managing international migration South Africa, like others, continue to experience challenges, including as it relates to the management of mixed migration as well as migrants in irregular situations. In this regard the issue of legal documentation, including identification of nationals remains critical, hence we call upon countries of origin to strengthen the issuance of travel documents to their nationals in countries of destinations. According to the UN DESA Migration Data Portal, in 2020 an estimated 2.9 million migrants resided in South Africa.

Mr President,

We also need to highlight that as a country, although we have challenges with irregular migration, we have since 2010 through the Special Dispensation Permits regularised more than 290 000 irregular migrants. In addition, the impact of the Covid19 pandemic and its lingering effects on economies have not evaded South Africa. This have resulted in inadequate resource availability for the implementation of the GCM as well as other crucial priorities.

Mr President,

South Africa recognises that much still needs to be done to effectively implement the GCM and going forward, South Africa aims to strengthen its national coordination mechanisms towards a “whole of society” approach. In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the co-facilitators for the Progress Declaration as it reflects a balanced text. South Africa looks forward to its successful adoption.

I thank you