

11 January 2018

Secretary-General's remarks at launch of Report "Making Migration Work For All" [as delivered]

I am very pleased to be with all of you to present the report, "Making Migration Work For All".

This serves as my principal input to the zero draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

The adoption of this Compact stands as one of our most important collective priorities for 2018.

As we look forward to the zero draft, I would like to commend your efforts to date under the wise stewardship of Mexico and Switzerland, aided by the President of the General Assembly and my Special Representative, Louise Arbour. Allow me to express a very deep gratitude to Louise Arbour and her team – your extraordinary contribution was absolutely vital for me to be able to present a report that, I hope, you will find both bold and constructive.

We have an opportunity to fashion, for the first time, a truly global response to migration.

It is an opportunity to maximize the contribution that millions of migrants are already making to our societies and to agree a set of actions to ensure that the rights of all migrants are fully respected.

My report describes the reality of migration today.

It outlines what a system of safe, orderly and regular migration could realistically look like.

It identifies key challenges and possible solutions.

And it calls for more concerted collective action to deal with the unbearable limbo in which many migrants find themselves trapped.

Let me emphasize: migration is a positive global phenomenon.

It powers economic growth, reduces inequalities, connects diverse societies and helps us ride the demographic waves of population growth and decline.

It is also a source of political tensions and human tragedies.

But the majority of migrants live and work legally.

Unfortunately, others live in the shadows, unprotected by the law and unable to contribute fully to society.

And a desperate minority put their lives at risk to enter countries where they face suspicion and abuse.

Globally, migration remains poorly managed.

The impact can be seen in the humanitarian crises affecting people on the move; and in the human rights violations suffered by those living in slavery or enduring degrading working conditions.

It can be seen, too, in the political impact of public perception that wrongly sees migration as out of control.

The consequences include increased mistrust and policies aimed more at stopping than facilitating human movement.

In my report, I call for us to focus on the overwhelming positives of migration and to use facts not prejudice as the basis for addressing its challenges.

Above all, I urge a respectful discourse that places our collective humanity at the centre of the debate.

Migrants make a major contribution to international development – both by their work and by sending remittances to their home countries.

Remittances added up to nearly \$600 billion last year, three times all development aid.

The fundamental challenge is to maximize the benefits of this orderly, productive form of migration while stamping out the abuses and prejudice that make life hell for a minority of migrants.

States need to strengthen the rule of law underpinning how they manage and protect migrants – for the benefit of their economies, their societies and migrants themselves.

Authorities that erect major obstacles to migration – or place severe restrictions on migrants' work opportunities – inflict needless economic self-harm, as they impose barriers to having their labour needs met in an orderly and legal fashion.

Worse still, they unintentionally encourage illegal migration.

Aspiring migrants, denied legal pathways to travel, inevitably fall back on irregular methods. This not only puts them in vulnerable positions, but also undermines governments' authority itself.

The best way to end the stigma of illegality and abuse around migrants is, in fact, for governments to put in place more legal pathways for migration.

This will remove incentives for individuals to break the rules, while better meeting the needs of markets for foreign labour.

It will also aid in efforts to clamp down on smugglers and traffickers and to assist their victims.

Simultaneously, development cooperation policies must take human mobility into account.

It is essential to provide more opportunities for people to be able to live in dignity in their own countries and regions.

Migration should be an act of hope, not of despair.

We must also address the drama we witness in mixed flows of refugees and migrants.

What happens all too often with these movements represents a humanitarian tragedy and an abdication of our human rights commitments.

They are reflective of acute policy failures: of emergency response; of conflict prevention; of good governance; of development; and of international solidarity.

I call for greater international cooperation to remove those failures and to protect vulnerable migrants.

In parallel, we must re-establish the integrity of the refugee protection regime in line with international law.

My report addresses a number of elements for consideration in shaping the Global Compact on Migration.

I will highlight three: the need for action, the need for engagement and the need for a UN that is fit for purpose.

First, our focus must be on implementation.

The past decade has seen an enriching development of both our understanding of migration and its grounding in human rights.

It is time now to build on these declarations rather than simply reiterate them.

Second, everyone has a part to play.

On this, let me pay particular credit to the incomparable contribution of Peter Sutherland, whose death last week is such a loss for us all.

Improving the management of migration is pre-eminently a matter of State responsibility.

But it demands, also, the knowledge, capacity and commitment of many others.

The consultation phase of the Global Compact has benefitted hugely from the participation of a wide range of actors.

Municipalities, parliaments, civil society, the private sector, regional organizations, the media, academia and migrants themselves all have vital roles.

Moving forward, I urge you to maximize the space for their contributions.

Third, as the United Nations finally ensures that migration is an issue squarely on its agenda, we have the responsibility to ask ourselves whether we are best organized and equipped to support the Compact's implementation.

For you, the Member States, this will require consideration of how to ensure ongoing review of the impact of the Global Compact.

What we focus on in 2018 may not be what we need to focus on in 10 or 15 years' time.

We will also need to reflect on how best to ensure oversight of migration within the UN system.

There are many fora addressing migration, but none with comprehensive oversight.

This merits consideration.

I am committed to ensuring that the UN system is best organized to ensure that it can support you in following through on the Compact.

In my report, I stress my determination to strengthen how we work on this issue, consistent with my proposed management reforms and strengthening of the UN development system, taking full advantage of the IOM's important and welcome move, in 2016, towards the UN System.

It is a phenomenon that touches on all our collective priorities – from the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals to the promotion and protection of peace and universal human rights.

I urge all Member States to engage openly and actively in the negotiations ahead.

I encourage you to work towards the adoption of a solution-oriented Global Compact on Migration at the International Conference in Morocco later this year.

I stand ready to assist however best I can.

Thank you very much.

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