

Reflections on the Global Compact for Migration

Joint Statement Published by Members of the Expert Working Group for Addressing Women's Human Rights in the Global Compact for Migration

The Expert Working Group for addressing women's human rights in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (EWG), is composed of individual experts from UN human rights treaty bodies, special procedure mandate holders, UN agencies, civil society organisations and academic institutions. It was established in 2017 to help ensure that the rights of the estimated 120 million migrant women and girls around the world are fully promoted and protected in the creation and implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. UN-Women serves as the substantive Secretariat of the Expert Working Group.

We welcome the agreement reached by United Nations Member States on the final draft of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) as a major milestone in international migration governance. We are pleased to note that the GCM enshrines gender-responsive, human rights, people-centered and child-sensitive approaches as cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles, and we recognise the hard work and dedication of Member States to achieve this. However, we regret that the text does not include references to certain issues critical for realising the human rights of all migrants, and in particular women and girls. These missing issues include:

- The principle of non-refoulement
- Avoidance of any hierarchy of human rights, including access to public services, labour rights and justice, due to migration status
- Access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Recognizing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by migrant women on the grounds of sex and other relevant characteristics (*inter alia*, income, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location)
- The specific needs and challenges faced by pregnant migrant women and nursing mothers
- Recognizing the various forms of families that exist

- Providing individual documentation for migrant women
- The role of women's organizations/migrant women's organizations
- Affirmation of freedom of association and full labour rights for all women migrant workers, including domestic workers, and not limiting this to 'contractual workers'

Despite this, we recognize that with the text agreed, the real work begins now. Together we can and *must* ensure that the implementation of the GCM works for all migrants, upholding the key principles of non-discrimination and non-regression. While the GCM is gender-responsive on paper, we need to work to ensure that it is also gender-responsive in practice, which means understanding and responding to the realities of all women and girls in migration by addressing their specific needs, challenges, and situations of vulnerability through national policies, programmes and laws. To support these efforts, we would urge the new UN Network on Migration to take on gender equality as a cross cutting concern in the work of the core group and of the working groups. Further, we call for the creation of a gender-responsive GCM multi-stakeholder global taskforce to focus specifically on ensuring gender-responsive policy coherence and communication to collectively support, monitor and evaluate GCM implementation and outcomes going forward.¹

The EWG is committed to providing support to Member States and other key stakeholders in the design and implementation of national migration policies which effectively promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. To this end, we firmly believe that a multi-stakeholder approach, enriched by the participation of migrant women and representatives of their organizations should be prioritised.

Building on our expert [Recommendations for addressing women's human rights in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration](#), we will soon be developing a practical guide entitled 'Policies and Practice: A Guide to Gender-Responsive Implementation of the GCM'. This tool will provide concrete guidance to Member States, UN agencies, civil society organizations, regional bodies, and the private sector on implementing a GCM that contributes to the achievement of SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. With this guide, we will contribute to

¹ See GCM Gender Guidance Note #5 from the Expert Working Group, 'Implementing a Gender-responsive Global Compact for Migration', https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwomen/resources/unwomen_ewg_guidance%20note_issue%205.pdf?la=en

ensuring that the human rights of all women and girls in migration are respected, protected and fulfilled in national, regional and global migration governance.

The implementation of the GCM is an unmissable opportunity to ensure that migration policies advance gender equality and the ability of all women and girls to enjoy their full human rights. There are more than 120 million migrant women and girls around the world, and every one of them should live a life free from all forms of violence, exploitation, and abuse whether in countries of origin, transit or destination. To achieve this, we are ready to work with Member States and other stakeholders to fully implement the GCM and turn commitments into action for all migrant women and girls.

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