

BACKGROUND NOTE 1:

MAKING MIGRATION WORK FOR ALL

AN URGENT CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION ON MIGRATION



Why is the Secretary-General releasing this report now?

UN Member States are beginning negotiations on a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to be adopted by December 2018.

“Making Migration Work For All” is the Secretary-General’s contribution to this process. It offers a vision for constructive international cooperation on migration.

Why is migration important for the United Nations today?

While the UN has a long history of assisting refugees fleeing war and persecution, its approach to the broader phenomenon of international migration is fragmented.

Migration is an expanding reality. There are 258 million international migrants

worldwide – 48% more than in 2000. Migrants are 3.4 % of the global population.

Most migrants travel and work in a regular manner. They contribute, on average, some 85% of their earnings to their host countries; and help address labour shortages in many communities.

Migrants are also major contributors to international development, sending home billions in remittances each year and sharing skills across borders. Approximately \$600 billion was sent in remittances in 2017 – 3 times all official development assistance.

Migration is an accelerator for women’s empowerment and equality. 48% of migrants are women, and two-thirds are in work (as opposed to half of women worldwide).

But amidst anxiety in many places over jobs, identity and security it has become too easy to blame migrants.

Many migrants face abuse, exploitation and life-threatening

“Making Migration Work For All” calls for governments to work together voluntarily to make migration productive, fair and humane for all.

conditions: there are nearly 6 million migrants trapped in forced labour today.

In recent years, large-scale movements involving both migrants and refugees have created major humanitarian crises.

Over 20,000 migrants and refugees died while looking for safety and dignity abroad since 2014, more than 5,000 of them in 2017 alone.

Climate change, environmental degradation and demographic and socio-economic pressures are likely to increase overall levels of migration in the coming decades, with an increased risk of further large-scale movements of people in highly vulnerable situations.

What are the Secretary-General's overall messages in this report?

“Making Migration Work For All” is an urgent call for UN Member States to work together to maximize the benefits of migration and tackle its downsides.

The report warns that “xenophobic political narratives about migration are all too widespread today” and urges governments not to let these distort their agendas.

The Secretary-General emphasizes that there is overwhelming evidence

that migration has economic and social benefits for all countries, as well as for migrants themselves.

The “basic challenge” facing UN Member States is “to broaden the opportunities that migration offers to us all” rather than to place unrealistic restrictions on migrants.

To meet this challenge, states need to strengthen the rule of law at all levels.

Member States should (i) create more robust legal pathways for migrants to work, study and join their families, reducing incentives for irregular migration; and (ii) avoid draconian policies for deterring and detaining migrants that infringe human rights.

If governments open up more legal pathways for migration “there would be fewer irregular border crossings, fewer migrants working outside the law and fewer abuses of irregular migrants”; labour market needs would be more effectively met and cooperation enhanced on returns.

The Secretary-General also recognizes that states have a responsibility to manage who enters into their territory.

The report calls for the Compact to include a special strategy to address large movements of people as an urgent humanitarian and human rights priority.

Is this a call for a new institution or legal regime to govern migration?

No. The Global Compact will not impose legally binding obligations on governments but the international community has a moral commitment to deliver on the Compact in a meaningful way.

It is clear that governments cannot manage all dimensions of migration unilaterally. “Making Migration Work for All” calls for governments to work together voluntarily to make migration productive, fair and humane for all.

Member States recognized this reality in Sustainable Development Goal 10, which emphasizes the importance of well-managed migration to achieving the SDGs.

The UN system can do more to support this cooperation, both internationally and through its field presences.

The Secretary-General commits the UN system to better position itself to support Member States in the implementation of the Global Compact.