



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration

*1ST Informal Thematic Consultation on
“Human Rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion, and all forms of discrimination,
including racism, xenophobia and intolerance”*

*Geneva, May 8th – May 9th 2017
Palais des Nations, Room XIX*

IFRC Statement

PANEL 2: Social inclusion and cohesion

CHAIR: H.E. Mr. Evan P. Garcia, Permanent Representative of the Philippine to the United Nations in Geneva

Mr. Chair,

It is my pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, representing the world's 190 National Societies and their 13 million community-based volunteers.

Our members are extremely concerned that, in many parts of the world, the situation of vulnerable migrants has grown worse, not better, since UN member states adopted their very powerful statements in the New York Declaration. As an exclusively neutral humanitarian organization, we take no position on whether there should be more or less migration. However, we insist that all migrants must be treated with humanity, which requires special attention to their safety, well-being and dignity.

For us, the starting point for integration in the country of destination is seeking alternatives to detention and making sure that migrants, regardless of legal status, are provided full access to services critical to their well-being, including access to housing, sustenance, and especially health care, for however long they reside in a country.

We note that there are important barriers to accessing health and other critical services, in particular for persons with irregular status. Fear of arrest is one of the greatest of these barriers. While states have a right to enforce rules on who may migrate, they must not allow enforcement interests unnecessarily to place people in situations of extreme danger or privation. We therefore call on states to institute or continue “firewalls” between enforcement and the provision of basic services, and would encourage member states to make this intention clear in the Global Compact.

Governments need not act alone in providing such services. Our members operate primarily through volunteers and they have found an incredible wellspring of human compassion and commitment by ordinary people, ready to lend their support to vulnerable migrants. Today, in fact, is world Red Cross and Red Crescent day, created to recognize their commitments and major contributions around the world. In order to provide this assistance, however, we need guarantees that our humanitarian work will not be criminalized (for instance through broadly phrased anti-smuggling rules) and that migrants can safely access our help without fear of arrest.

While I am speaking today on behalf of our entire network, I would like to provide an example from my own National Society, the Italian Red Cross. Safe points set up by the Italian Red Cross provide services and reduce vulnerability of all migrants in need, particularly those who do not have access to the reception system. Services provided include legal information and advice, information on rights, first aid, basic health care and orientation, psychosocial support and restoring family links. Safe Points answer any questions migrants have.

To be able to set up Safe Points, the Italian Red Cross leveraged its reputation and relationship with municipalities to be allowed to provide support for all migrants, regardless of status. There are safe points in many other countries, from Lebanon to Mexico to Switzerland, and we would welcome the opportunity for many more such safe points to be opened. Again, we call on UN member states to lend their support and encouragement and to provide our volunteers with the guarantees that they, and along with other members of civil society, need, in order to provide these critical services, both at the national level and in the text of the Global Compact.

Mr. Chair,

The IFRC – together with its 190 National Societies – stand ready to contribute to this intergovernmental process and seize the opportunity it presents to make effective change on the ground.

Looking forward across the year of this consultative process, we would ask States to ensure that the Global Compact process adds new value to the important commitments already articulated in the New York Declaration.. The safety and dignity of migrants needs to be at the centre of these discussions, not only in this session, but throughout the process. We hope that the Global Compact on Migration will deliver action-oriented deliverables that can be effectively monitored and help us track progress on the ground. We hope and expect that the time and energy that we are investing in this unique process will positively influence national policies, scale up commitments and finally, provide a safe environment to migrants.

Thank you for your attention.