

First informal thematic session on human rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion, and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia, and intolerance *for the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, Geneva, 8-9 May 2017

PANEL 1: Human rights of all migrants

- Italy welcomes that the first preparatory thematic session of the process towards the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (on the 8th and 9th of May) is devoted to human rights of all migrants. We hope that the session will be an occasion to informally exchange best practices in an interactive and constructive manner, so contributing to convey Geneva expertise into the process towards the GCM.
- During 2016, we have experienced another record in terms of mixed flows of migrants and refugees reaching Italian shores: 181,450 people (24.133 women, 28.223 minors and 25.846 unaccompanied minors). 2017 will be probably worse, considering that for the first four months of the year we have registered an increase of more than 30%, with 36,883 arrivals. Unaccompanied minors continue to represent an important share of these flows, with 3,491 in the first three months of 2017 (about 14%).
- Irregular migration across the Central Mediterranean route still causes victims: more than 1.000 persons have already lost their life during 2017. Italy continues to contribute in Rescue at Sea activities and in fighting against the trafficking of human beings, also in the framework of Operation EUNAVFOR – Sophia and EU coordination mechanisms.
- On the frontline of migrant reception, Italy is strongly committed to the effective protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants. We reiterate that we have a shared responsibility to enhance the protection of vulnerable migrants, irrespectively of their status and with a focus on minors and women victims of trafficking.
- Italy is increasingly becoming a Country of destination for migrants more than a Country of transit, with a sharp and continuous increase in requests for asylum or other forms of protection also in 2016 and early 2017 (2016 presents a 47% increase compared to 2015 and 2017, with 38,900 asylum requests issued in the early three months, shows a 70% increase compared with the same period of 2016). As a best practice of the Italian Government, we want to highlight that Italy has been providing humanitarian protection not only to refugees but also to vulnerable migrants not falling into this category and deemed by our authorities in need of a form of humanitarian protection (35% of the requests in 2016, 33% in early 2017).
- Also, we will maintain a focus on minors as vulnerable categories, also thanks to the new normative framework recently set up for the reception and protection of unaccompanied minors. Italy aims at effectively enhancing the protection of minors through qualified assistance, dedicated structures and access to basic services. Access to health system will be enhanced, granting the enrollment of the minor in the national health system even before the nomination of a legal tutor; access to education will be improved giving the minor the possibility of having educational qualifications recognized before obtaining the legal residency permit. In this context, great attention is given to the right to familiar unity, a fundamental right of the minor. The framework of assisted repatriation has been modified: familiar custody, if in the best interest of minor, has to be preferred.

PANEL 2: Social inclusion and cohesion

- Migrants and refugees find themselves in vulnerable situations in relation to housing and access to essential health services, education, employment and urban community life in all regions of the world.
- We believe that social inclusion is a key aspect of migrants human right protection, being a prerequisite to enjoy them in any society. In order to promote social inclusion of migrants and refugees several projects have been set up throughout the Country. For instance, the Ministry of Work and Social Policies has been developing, together with the Italian National Olympic Committee, a project (Fratelli di Sport) to promote among young people the value of sport as a vehicle of social inclusion.
- Also, we will reiterate the need to promote, in line with SDG 3, the right of migrants to access to universal health coverage and to quality healthcare services. Much is being done in other fora such as WHO in order to promote the health of migrants and refugees. We are therefore surprised to see that health matters are not yet included in the Global Compact. We believe that this topic should instead be included in the process for the Global Compact if we want to comprehensively tackle the issue of migrants' protection.
- Access to education is considered a functional right in order to enhance social and working inclusion. Learning Italian language is encouraged among minor and adult migrants and Intercultural education is promoted, so to improve the acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversities.
- In order to reduce the concentration of migrants in big centres and improving social inclusion, the Italian authorities have been promoting a 'widespread' reception system, that will host asylum seekers in small communities throughout all the country. The protection and inclusion of migrants in vulnerable situations requires improved coordination within and across governments to align humanitarian, migration and sustainable urban development agendas.

PANEL 3: all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance

- At a time when xenophobia and intolerance are alarmingly on the rise and threaten our societies, we reiterate the need to establish an alternative and balanced rhetoric on migration to highlight the positive aspects of human mobility, also from an economic point of view. As far as Italy is concerned, the volume of personal incomes declared by immigrants in 2016 amounts to 6,8 billion euro while 3 billion euro per year should be added to take into consideration other sources of income for the State (such as indirect taxes). Social security contributions by foreign employees amount at 10,9 billion euro per year, allowing for the payment of pensions for 640.000 persons in Italy. On the other side, the Italian expenditure related to immigration in 2016 amounted to 3.3 billion euro.
- Further, Italy has been the first country in setting up a special parliamentary commission on xenophobia, racism and hate speech in 2016, in order to develop further studies and take concrete actions on these topics.
- Finally, Italy will be proud of co-hosting, on the 8th of May 2017, a reception on the role of local authorities in promoting inclusion of refugees and migrants, to be held under the auspices of the UN-led campaign (Together: respect, safety and dignity for all) to counter xenophobia.