

Side Event: Mainstreaming Migrant Health into the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

**Organized by the Governments of Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Philippines, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, WHO and IOM
9 May 2017, 13.15-14.45. Room XII, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

Introduction

Being and staying healthy is a fundamental right of every human being, and is an essential precondition for people, including migrants, to be able to work, to be productive, to contribute to economic and social development in countries of origin, transit and destination and return, and to improve livelihoods, including the affordability of health care for 'left behind' families. Moreover, addressing the health needs of migrants protects global public health and facilitates integration and social inclusion.

The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health has been established in the WHO Constitution since 1948. Other widely ratified international human rights standards exist to protect the rights of migrants, which include their right to health. Nevertheless, many migrants still lack access to health services and financial protection for health. Worldwide, access to health services and the underlying determinants of health for migrants are not consistently addressed. Barriers in access to health services for migrants include the high costs of care and lack of social protection, language and cultural differences, discrimination and lack of information on their health rights and entitlements.

To achieve the vision of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals – to leave no one behind – it is imperative that the health needs of migrants be adequately addressed in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). Access of migrants to quality health services and financial protection for health are central to rights-based health systems and the public efforts aiming to reduce health inequities and achieve the SDGs. We will not achieve the SDGs, in particular 3.8 on universal health coverage, unless the health needs of migrants are properly met.

Despite health being crosscutting and a prerequisite to sustainable development, health is missing from the six thematic sessions of the modalities for development of the GCM as well as from the 24 elements contained in Annex II of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. To address this concern, and to allow WHO to better support the GCM, in January 2017, the WHO Executive Board, in its 140th session, requested WHO to develop a framework of priorities and guiding principles, in close cooperation with IOM and UNHCR, to promote the health of refugees and migrants, to be considered during this upcoming WHA, followed by a global action plan in 2019. States also asked WHO to conduct a situation analysis; and to make every effort, in cooperation with Member States, and based on the guiding principles, to ensure that the health aspects of refugees and migrants are adequately addressed in the Global Compacts. WHO is presently in the process of finalizing the draft framework and it will be presented to WHA in May 2017. It is hoped that this framework will inform the development of the GCM.

But migration and health issues cannot be solved by the health sector alone, since they are so inextricably linked to development, foreign policy, security and the environment, and solutions, therefore, require coordination among a wide constituency. This side event aims to offer a unique multisectoral dialogue to mainstream health and migration, facilitate the sharing of current perspectives and good practices, as well as emphasize the shared responsibility of promoting the health of migrants as a means of improving social cohesion and protecting public health and human rights, guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Proposed format

A 90-minute moderated session will include the keynote speeches of a high-level panel, and a Q&A session as follows:

- I. Opening remarks and introduction by 2 co-sponsoring countries (*15 mins*) – *Ambassadors of Argentina and Thailand*
- II. Video (*5 mins*)
- III. Panel: The health of migrants: leaving no one behind (*6-7 mins each - 45 mins in all*)
 - A. WHO
 - B. IOM
 - C. Dr Raniero Guerra, Ministry of Health Italy
 - D. 2 Representative from sponsoring countries
 - E. Professor Vincent Chetail, Director of the Global Migration Centre
 - F. Mr Patrick Taran, President Global Migration Policy Associates
 - G. One more speaker may be added.
- IV. Q&A and discussion (*25 mins*)
- V. Closing remarks by co-sponsoring countries.

Moderator: Dr Edward Kelley, WHO

The distinguished panel will assist in responding to questions such as:

- What health-related commitments could be included in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to improve the health of migrants at all phases of the migration cycle?
- How can we achieve universal health coverage for all? What have been some good practices by countries of origin, transit and destination in providing equitable health services and social protection to migrants?
- How can Member States with limited resources and consequent challenges in already addressing their own nationals' health needs, meet the health needs of migrants?
- What could a sustainable platform and mechanism for multi-sectoral and international consultation and partnership on migrant health look like?