

**Statement by Riia Salsa, Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the UN in Geneva at the first formal 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: Protecting Human Rights of all migrants**

Thank you, Mr. Moderator and all panelists.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Estonia welcomes the dedicated focus on human rights of all migrants of this first preparatory thematic session of the Global Compact on Migration. We are committed to ensure that the protection of human rights is mainstreamed throughout the Global Compact.

While developing the Global Compact on migration, it is the duty of States to fulfil their commitments under the international law and human rights treaties in order to protect the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status. Particular attention has to be devoted to the protection of the specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations, but also to gender mainstreaming including through the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Allow me to focus on undoubtedly one of the most vulnerable group of migrants – the children. Estonia pays special attention to the plight of child migrants and to the effective protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all children, regardless of their status. We are convinced that the best interest of the child must guide all considerations concerning children. Therefore, Estonia is working towards strengthening child protection and integration measures in national legislative frameworks and practices, including in the areas of access to education, health, social and legal services, as well as in promoting measures to combat discrimination and xenophobia.

Migration – a phenomenon that is as old as the mankind – needs to be addressed properly including by reinforcing international cooperation and enhancing shared responsibility among countries of origin, transit and destination, and by tackling the root causes, often linked to human rights violations. When addressing the root causes of irregular migration, the importance of complementarity and coherence of different policies, instruments and tools has to be emphasized.

Allow me to also touch upon accepting the return of nationals, an obligation of all States as enshrined in international law. We see the need for increased cooperation between States to facilitate safe and dignified returns of their nationals, carried out in full compliance with international law. From the national perspective, we recognize the important role of IOM in assisting national authorities with returns of third country nationals without a legal basis to stay in Estonia.

Thank you!