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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women



MISIÓN PERMANENTE DE MÉXICO
ANTE LOS ORGANISMOS INTERNACIONALES



Permanent Mission of Sweden
to the United Nations, Geneva



“Ensuring Access to Decent Work and Protecting the Rights of Women Migrant Workers”

Side Event to the 6th Thematic Session, Geneva

13 October 2017 | 13:15-14:30pm | Room XXV

Concept Note

Approximately half of the 244 million international migrants worldwide are women and girls with increasing numbers migrating autonomously, to seek better lives and economic opportunities. Labour migration can have positive impact on both countries of origin and destination. Migrants often fill labour gaps in host countries, increasingly in care and domestic sectors; indeed, migrants, especially migrant women, have higher labour force participation rates than non-migrants. Through remittances migrants can help advance development in their countries of origin.

For migrant women, migration can be an empowering experience. They may leave situations in which they have limited options or face discrimination in their countries of origin for ones where they exercise greater autonomy over their own lives in countries of destination. Nevertheless, migrant women find themselves too often concentrated in informal, low-paid, unregulated and precarious work in the latter.

The development of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration presents a unique opportunity to ensure that migrant women’s human and labour rights are promoted and protected at all stages of the migration process. The ILO has been working to promote and protect the rights of both women and men migrant workers, stressing the need to enhance access to decent work and promote coherence between labour migration and employment policies and other socio-economic policies areas including care and gender equality. UN Women and the ILO are both resolved to work with Member States and other actors towards a global compact that is gender-responsive and contributes to achieving gender equality in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To this end, UN Women, together with leading experts from treaty bodies, UN agencies, including ILO, and civil society organizations, developed a set of recommendations for addressing women’s rights in the global compact.

The recommendations serve as a “one-stop shop” for gender-specific considerations in the formulation of human rights-based migration governance. They include steps that need to be taken to ensure that the rights of women migrant workers are protected at all stages of migration, and that they have access to decent work. The recommendations reaffirm the commitments made under international labour standards through ILO conventions, such as the Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97), the Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 (No. 143), the Decent Work for Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and the Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201), with a specific recommendation (1.9) on increasing the number of State ratifications of these conventions.

The intersection between the care, migration and gender regimes often shape the working and living realities of women migrant workers and influence their migration experience. The majority of migrant workers employed in the care economy are women due to gendered assumptions that care is innate



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to women. Women migrants often find themselves concentrated in the most precarious segment of the care sector and in domestic work, sectors often unprotected by labour law, underpaid, subject to exploitative working conditions with poor access to labour rights and social protection. Additionally, they are disproportionately exposed to exploitation, abuse and gender-based violence due to a range of intersecting factors, including inter alia, dependence on recruitment agencies, tied visas and limited freedom to change employers and effective redress mechanisms. It is critical that care work is recognized as having economic and social value, and that public provision of infrastructure and services is enhanced to reduce and redistribute care work between women and men, families and societies.

The implementation of the ILO Global Strategy on Decent Work for Domestic Workers and the promotion of its underpinning Convention 189, are key to address these challenges. In addition, as part of the Centenary Initiative on Women at Work, the ILO will publish in 2018 a global report on the Care Economy, including a focus on migrant women in the care economy.

The 6th thematic session in Geneva presents a timely opportunity for UN Women, ILO and member states to host a side event to highlight measures and good practices on decent work and labour mobility which promote gender equality. In this side event, strategic, innovative and collaborative approaches will be discussed to protect the rights of all migrant workers and for regularising and professionalising undervalued and under-regulated sectors, including domestic and care work.

Objectives

The purpose of the side event is to identify key areas for action to ensure that the rights of all migrant workers are protected at all stages of migration and that the global compact is gender-responsive and ensures access to decent work and social protection. Specific recommendations will be presented which highlight key actions that can be taken to develop a global compact that promotes and protects the rights of all migrant workers, including those in more undervalued and under-regulated sectors.

Specific objectives of the side event are:

1. Discuss strategic methods and collaborative approaches for addressing the drivers of irregular migration whilst working to regularise and professionalise informal sectors, including domestic and care work;
2. Identify actions that can be taken by all stakeholders to promote decent work and adequate regulation and protection for migrant care professionals, while recognising, reducing and redistributing care work;
3. Share and discuss key sections of the Recommendations for addressing women's rights in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and how they can be used to promote access to decent work, and better labour and social protection;
4. Identify actions that can be taken by all stakeholders to ensure that the labour and human rights of all migrants, women and men, are at the heart of the development of the global compact and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



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Organizers

The side event will be co-organised by UN Women and ILO, and co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Switzerland, Mexico, Sweden and Ethiopia. It will take place during the 6th Thematic Session for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in Geneva.

Agenda

13:15-13:35 **Opening remarks** (20 min)

- Ms Loise Arbour, Special Representative for International Migration, video contribution
- H.E. Mr Negash Kibret Botora, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations
- H.E. Mr Jorge Lomonaco, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations
- H.E. Ms Veronika Bard, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

13:35-14:00 **Panel discussion** (25 min)

- Ms Christine Loew, Head of Geneva Liaison Office, UN Women
- Ms Shannon Lederer, Director of Immigration Policy, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
- Ms Genevieve Gencianos, Migration Programme Coordinator, Public Service International
- Ms Michele LeVoy, Director, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants

14:00 -14:30 **Interactive discussion – Q/A** (30 min)

Moderator: Michelle Leighton, Chief of the Labour Migration Branch, ILO