

Informal Thematic Session # 6 – UN Women Intervention, Panel 1

“Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures”

Thank you Chair.

Migration can be an empowering experience, but across the world, women continue to face the impacts of discriminatory migration policies as well as restrictions on their autonomous movement.

Nevertheless, women may decide or be driven to migrate for a number of reasons, and many choose to migrate in response to labour demands in countries of destination. These jobs provide women with the opportunity to earn a living and build a better life for themselves and their families. Too often, however, migrant women find themselves concentrated in the informal economy, in unregulated sectors such as domestic work and care services – where they are unseen, underpaid and unprotected, and exposed to high risks of labour and human rights violations.

For too many women, the decision to migrate stems from the need and desire to escape pervasive gender inequalities and discrimination in their countries of origin. These inequalities manifest themselves in many ways, including women’s lack of access to education, decent work and social protection and sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls. And without access to safe and regular migration pathways, women and girls may have to follow routes which end up being dangerous and potentially fatal journeys.

And let me be clear, women and girls migrating irregularly are at much greater risk of physical and sexual violence. One striking example comes from Libya: interviews carried out with women and girls using irregular migration routes revealed that the risk of rape was so high that ahead of their journey they would purchase emergency contraceptives as a precaution. This is not a dilemma that any woman or girl should have to face when seeking a better life.

UN Women is resolved to ensure that the rights of all migrant women and girls are protected and promoted. UN Women and OHCHR in conjunction with other United Nations entities, treaty bodies and civil society organizations developed a set of expert recommendations, to address women’s human rights in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. These recommendations have been endorsed by the Committee on Migrant Workers, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee against Torture.

The following recommendations are particularly pertinent to this thematic session:

- 1. Eliminate sex-specific bans and discriminatory restrictions on women’s migration**
- 2. Provide access to migration pathways which promote empowerment of women and protect their rights**
- 3. Ensure that the irregular entry, stay and work of migrants is not considered a criminal offence and that any administrative sanctions applied to irregular entry are proportionate and reasonable**

Two years ago, we committed to a transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Now is a chance to strengthen those commitments to guarantee that the human rights of all migrants are fulfilled!

The needs, voices, and rights of migrant women and girls must be fully integrated into the global compact to ensure they are not left-behind. This is our chance, let's make it count!