

## **Addressing gender dimensions in large-scale movements of refugees and migrants**

**Joint Statement by the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
19 September 2016**

Today, the UN General Assembly will convene a UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants to discuss the development of two global compacts—one on refugees and one for safe, orderly and regular migration. To protect the rights of the women and girls who make up around half of the 244 million migrants and 21.3 million refugees, we, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, UN Women, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, call upon States to ensure that these global compacts align with and reflect the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Convention), the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW), and the other core international human rights instruments and other relevant international human rights standards. We also call on States to reaffirm their commitment to upholding the rights of migrant women and girls at the national, regional and global levels and to recognize their socio-economic contribution to their countries of origin, transit and destination.

Due to work force decline and population ageing, coupled with low birth rates in many industrialized countries, migrants are becoming ever more essential to address labour market needs and the sustainability of development in these countries. But migration is not only due to economic factors—migrants move for a number of reasons, responding to both push and pull factors, and many are forced to move. We urge States to take all necessary measures to prevent conflicts that are a root cause of many migration and refugee movements and to undertake all efforts to end political and social tensions and ensure peace and decent living conditions for their populations. It is essential that women participate in the prevention of conflicts and their peaceful resolution.

We further call on States to recognise that the root causes of the forced movement of migrants and refugees today extend beyond conflict and persecution and also include extreme poverty, discrimination, violence and exploitation, climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, as well as lack of access to the rights to education, decent work and health. We urge States to implement their obligations under international human rights law. In particular, States are urged to implement obligations under the CEDAW Convention as further elaborated in General Recommendations No. 26 (2008) on women migrant workers, and No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women. The formulation of gender-responsive, rights-based policies will respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls migrants, migrant workers and women and girls refugees. We further appeal to States to realize the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families protected under the ICRMW, as further elaborated in General Comments No. 1 (2011) on Migrant Domestic Workers and No. 2 (2013) on the rights of migrant workers in an irregular situation and members of their families. The ICRMW ensures the right to health, including the provision of access to emergency healthcare; protection from arbitrary detention and from collective expulsion; protection of victims of trafficking, including for purposes of sexual exploitation; respect for dignity and equal employment conditions. States should integrate the implementation of these legal obligations with the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As stressed in the UN Secretary-General's report "In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants", "the risk of sexual and gender-based violence is high...", with women and girls also facing other challenges, particularly in transit, of psychosocial stress and trauma, health complications, physical harm, injury and all forms of exploitation, including trafficking in human beings. Migrant women and girls are commonly subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, based on their sex and on additional grounds such as race, religion or ethnicity. Gender-based discrimination limits women's and girls' decision-making and agency in the household and in the labour market, as well as their mobility, within and outside their countries of origin.

Women are proactive actors in the changing dynamics of migration. Women migrants contribute to global economic growth and socio-cultural diversity, as they fill labour demands in transit and destination countries. Women remit larger proportions of their incomes, despite earning less than male counterparts, and are more likely to spend remittances on education,

health and family care often critically offsetting insufficient services in those fields in their country of origin.

Despite their integral and expanding contribution to global value and global care chains— contributions that are critical to ensuring economic growth and social development—women migrant workers' labour is often undervalued, underpaid and de-skilled, due to gender stereotypes and discrimination. Ensuring that rights are protected throughout the migration process (across origin, transit, and destination countries), and addressing root causes of forced movements is essential to empowering migrant women and girls.

We call upon States to ensure that the distinct needs of women and girls are addressed as part of the new global compacts on refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration, and in all national and international policy responses, and that dedicated human and financial resources are made available to address these needs in practice. In order to develop the right measures, we encourage States to ensure the leadership and engagement of women migrant workers in policy formulation and their full and equal participation in decision-making, and to increase research, collection and analysis of sex and age-disaggregated data on migration. We ask that States recognize the contributions of migrant women to fostering more equitable, inclusive and sustainable growth and human development for countries of origin, transit and destination.

In the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the new international framework on migration, States will benefit from hearing the voices of women and girls, and responding to their rights and specific needs to ensure that no one is left behind.

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