

At global UN consultation, health leaders underline need for action on migrant health

24 February 2017 – Against the backdrop of health systems struggling to adapt to the growing needs of migrants around the world, health leaders from over forty countries, meeting at a United Nations consultation underscored the call for international collaboration to improve the health and well-being of migrants and their families.

The ‘Colombo Statement,’ adopted yesterday at the second Global Consultation on Migrant Health, aims to address the health challenges of increasingly mobile populations, now numbering about one billion – one in seven people on the planet.

“Protecting the health of mobile populations is a public health and human rights imperative,” said the South-East Asia Regional Director at the UN World Health Organization (WHO), Poonam Khetrpal Singh.

Highlighting the importance of the issue, Davide Mosca, the Director of Migration Health Division at the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), added: “This can only be realized through the implementation of well-managed and coordinated migration policies, which include financial risk protection and equal access to quality health services.”

The Colombo Statement also calls for mainstreaming migrant health into key national, regional and international agendas and promotes international solidarity for equitable migrant health policies, a shared research agenda and the development of global frameworks to ensure migrant health is protected.

Furthermore, ensuring the highest standard of health for all, including for migrants and refugees are also a key component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pledge to leave no one behind.

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This health issue most directly linked to targets 10.7 on facilitating safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people; and 3.8 on achieving universal health coverage under Goals 10 and 3, respectively.

There is also an anticipation that the momentum generated by the Global Consultation will carry into the World Health Assembly – WHO’s governing body – where its member States will deliberate, among other health issues, priority actions to protect migrants’ right to health.

The Global Consultation was organized in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, by IOM, WHO and the Government of Sri Lanka.