

'Comprehensively include migrants' or Sustainable Development won't happen: General Assembly President

Migration and sustainable development are “deeply interconnected” and the [2030 Agenda](#), the UN’s blueprint for a sustainable future for all, will not be achieved if we do not “comprehensively include migrants,” the President of the General Assembly said on Wednesday.

Mariá Fernanda Espinosa, was speaking to delegates at a meeting on migration held at UN headquarters in New York, anchoring her address to the seventh target of Sustainable Development [Goal 10](#) (SDGs), which aims to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”

Investments in sustainable development will reduce migration

In order to reach this target, she said, migrants must be included in policies and activities aimed at expanding access to education, health services, housing and basic services, to ensure the building of peaceful and inclusive societies.

The General Assembly president said that the best way to end forced migration once and for all, was to reach the SDGs, as this will mitigate the “adverse drivers” that make people leave their homes in search of a better life: “no-one decides to leave behind their family, their land and their belongings without a powerful reason for doing so.”

Ms. Espinosa insisted that the needs of migrant women – who make up over half of the migrant population across the world – must be specifically addressed: they face more restrictive labour policies than men, they are more vulnerable to violence and exploitation, and women and girls represent 71 per cent of all human trafficking victims.



UN Photo/Loey Filipe

General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés addresses the high-level debate on international migration and development.

Benefits outweigh challenges

With around 85 per cent of migrant workers' earnings remaining in their host countries, Ms. Espinosa said that the evidence shows that the benefits of migration outweigh the challenges. Hundreds of billions of dollars are also sent to developing countries in the form of remittances, a contribution estimated to be three times the size of all official development aid, budgeted through 2017.

"Thus migrants contribute to progressing towards the specific goals of the 2030 agenda such as the [reduction of poverty](#), [eradication of hunger](#) and the [promotion of health](#)."

Ms Espinosa called for a well-informed debate that would help to overcome the prejudices association with migration, and for joint efforts to eradicate negative and discriminatory language used in relation to migrants.

The UN's landmark [Global Compact for Migration](#), agreed last December, which seeks to ensure that all aspects of international migration are dealt with by countries in a safe and orderly way, "does not affect the sovereignty of any state," she said. "On the contrary, it bolsters it. No state, however powerful it may be, will be able to resolve alone the challenges posed by migration. The Compact fosters cooperation between states as is the best tool to address international migration."

The meeting, a high-level debate on migration and development, was convened by the General Assembly to assess the progress of [Sustainable Development Goals](#) related to migration. The conclusions of the debate will feed into two events that will review the progress of goals and targets relevant to migration.

The first is the [high-level political forum on sustainable development](#) in July 2019, whilst a summit of the political forum, in which issues surrounding migration will be discussed, is to take place during the general debate of the next session of the General Assembly, in September.