

Governments urged to 'do the hard work' to better manage global migration

As world leaders met at the United Nations on Wednesday to discuss the first global agreement designed to better manage international migration, a leading voice on migrants' rights urged them to "do the hard work" of turning words into action.

The [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), set to be formally adopted in December in Marrakech, Morocco, comprises 23 objectives covering all aspects of migration, including enhancing availability of legal pathways, promoting ethical labour standards, combatting trafficking and facilitating dignified returns.

"We all know that for this Compact to have its intended effect, you – each UN Member State – must do the hard work to create the laws and conditions that are safe and equitable for everyone who enters your borders," said Monica Ramirez, founder of the organization known as Justice for Migrant Women, during an event held on the margins of the General Assembly's annual high-level session.

We must all work together to foster a climate that welcomes migrants and celebrates the ways that they make our world better –
activist Monica Ramirez

Ms. Ramirez shared the stories of three women whose stories reflect some of the factors that drive migration globally – safety, opportunity and prosperity.

Dolores is a migrant woman who fled her country after years of suffering gender-based violence at the hands of her husband and who would later experience sexual harassment and abuses in the new country where she ended up living.

Marisol was given the opportunity to travel on a temporary work visa with the promise of good pay and good conditions. But she found herself a victim of human trafficking without the possibility of visa portability in the country where she was working.

Edith travelled as a migrant on a student visa, intent on pursuing the American dream. Fortunately, she became a successful entrepreneur with a very different migration experience than her counterparts because of her education and socio-economic strata.

"Migrants like Dolores, Marisol and Edith offer so much to the cultural and

social fabric of the nations where they've migrated, not to mention their significant contributions to those economies," stated Ms. Ramirez.

She added that without shared goals and norms, there will continue to be a disparity in the treatment of migrants. Individuals will be at risk for violence, human trafficking and exploitation, including the estimated 50 million migrant children who are vulnerable to abuse.

"Their stories drive home so clearly why the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is so important."

There are an estimated 260 million migrants in the world today. Migrants work, pay taxes and spend 85 per cent of their income in the local economy. They send to their home country an average of 15 per cent of their income in the form of what are called "remittances." Last year, these remittances to developing countries amounted to some \$450 billion – 3 times the amount of official development assistance that is given.

The President of the General Assembly, María Fernanda Espinosa, [said](#) the Global Compact would save lives, protecting the most vulnerable and putting an end to the deaths of thousands of women, children and men.

"It would help put an end to trafficking; smuggling networks; the mistreatment of migrants and to the separation of migrant families," she added. "The road to Marrakech is therefore the road of hope."

Migration, [said Secretary-General António Guterres](#), is a historic and multi-faceted phenomenon involving humanitarian, human rights and demographic issues. It has deep economic, environmental and political implications, and generates many different, legitimate and strongly-held opinions.

"Unfortunately, it is also an issue that has often been misrepresented and exploited for political gain," he noted. "Unregulated, unmanaged migration has created false and negative perceptions of migrants that feed into a narrative of xenophobia, intolerance and racism."

"That makes agreement on the text of this first-ever Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration a particularly difficult, but at the same time, extremely important achievement."