

Migration should be act of hope, not despair; UN chief proposes ways to maximize migrants' contributions

11 January 2018 – Laying out his vision for concrete steps the world can take in 2018 to maximize the contribution millions of migrants are already making to our societies and to agree a set of actions to ensure that the rights of all migrants are fully respected, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Thursday said the issue of migration calls for a truly global response.

[Let me emphasize](#): migration is a positive global phenomenon. It powers economic growth, reduces inequalities, connects diverse societies and helps us ride the demographic waves of population growth and decline,” said Mr. Guterres, launching [Making Migration Work for All](#) at UN Headquarters, in New York.

Globally, migrants make a major contribution to international development – both by their work as well as through remittances back to their home countries. Last year, migrants remitted nearly \$600 billion, three times all development aid.

“The majority of migrants live and work legally,” said the UN chief, noting however, that “others live in the shadows, unprotected by the law and unable to contribute fully to society.”

A “desperate minority” even put their very lives at risk to enter countries where they face suspicion and abuse, he noted, underlining that the impact can be seen not only in the humanitarian crises affecting people on the move and horrific violations of their fundamental rights, but also in public perception that wrongly sees migration as out of control leading to increased mistrust and policies that seek to stop rather than facilitate human movement.

Furthermore, authorities that erect obstacles to migration, actually end up, inflicting economic self-harm, as they impose barriers to having their labour needs met in an orderly, legal fashion.

“Worse still, they unintentionally encourage illegal migration,” said Mr. Guterres, noting that aspiring migrants, denied legal pathways to travel, inevitably fall into irregular methods that increase their vulnerability as well as undermine governments' authority.

I call for us to focus on the overwhelming positives of migration and to use facts not prejudice as the basis for addressing its challenges
Secretary-General Guterres

The best way to end the stigma of illegality and abuse around migrants, he added, is for governments to put in place more legal pathways for migration as well as for development cooperation policies to take human mobility into account.

In the report, which also serves as his principal input to the 'zero draft' – a document forming the basis for final negotiations of the proposed [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), Secretary-General Guterres calls for concerted effort to implement the declarations and commitments on migration its grounding in human rights.

The UN chief underscores: “The basic challenge before us is to maximize the benefits of migration rather than obsess about minimizing risks: we have a clear body of evidence revealing that, despite many real problems, migration is beneficial both for migrants and host communities in economic and social terms – our overarching task is to broaden the opportunities that migration offers to us all.”

At the same time, it also highlights the important role of all stakeholders – including municipalities, legislatures, civil society, the private sector, regional organizations, the media, academia and migrants themselves.

The report also notes the need for the UN system to be better placed and equipped to support the implementation of the Global Compact, in particular, its oversight.

“I stress my determination to strengthen how we work on this issue, consistent with my proposed management reforms and strengthening of the UN development system,” said Mr. Guterres.

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