

IT'S TIME TO STEP IT UP FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MIGRATION...

AND THAT TIME IS NOW!

Joint Statement for International Women's Day 2018

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The Expert Working Group for addressing women's human rights in the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, is composed of UN human rights treaty bodies, special procedure mandate holders, UN agencies, civil society organisations and academic institutions. It was established in 2017 to help ensure that the rights of the estimated 130 million migrant women and girls around the world are fully promoted and protected in the creation and implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. UN-Women serves as the substantive Secretariat of the Expert Working Group.

Today on International Women's Day, we call on Member States to step up their efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through migration governance that puts women and girls, families and communities, at the heart of human rights-based migration policies.

The creation of the Global Compact for Migration presents a unique opportunity for Member States to reaffirm the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the existing international human rights framework. For too long, migration policies have failed women and girls. They often neglect to recognise the distinct needs, experiences, contributions and situations of vulnerability faced by migrant women and girls, including those who are lesbian and transgender, thereby exacerbating gender-based discrimination and the very real threats of violence and exploitation they may face.

If gender-responsive migration policies, programs and services were in place, migration would be a choice and not a necessity. Gender-responsive migration policies mean that migrant women and girls would have better access to safe and regular migration pathways, safe transit, family unity and regularisation. Too often, gender-based discrimination limits when, how, or where women and girls can migrate, including limitations outlined in migration policies under the pretext of protection.

Gender-responsive migration policies must mainstream an intersectional approach ensuring that *all* women and girls in migration – considering the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination they may face – receive the same treatment and access to economic, social, and cultural rights and opportunities equal to any national.

For women migrant workers, the right to decent work and social protection would be guaranteed and they would be free from the fear and reality of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual harassment, hate crimes, exploitation, human trafficking and discrimination while in another country for work. And this guarantee must include those women migrant workers employed in the most vulnerable occupations such as the domestic work sector.

Gender-responsive migration policies mean that women and girls in migration could enjoy the respect, protection, and realisation of their human rights, including labour rights, in countries of origin, transit and destination, regardless of migratory and civil and marital status. Migrant women and girls would be able to access all their rights which translate into essential services such as education and justice, and the full spectrum of social and health services including for sexual and reproductive health.

And let's not forget: when migration is a choice it can be an expression of women's agency contributing to their economic, personal and social empowerment, with positive impacts not only on their position in their families but also on the communities where they live and work. Women can be leaders and drivers of change, bringing with them skills, innovative ideas, and a diversity of cultural practices that enrich societies and help to challenge prejudices, discriminatory social norms and harmful gender stereotypes.

This International Women's Day we must reaffirm the need for the Global Compact for Migration to deliver for women and girls everywhere! It is time we step it up for migrant women and girls around the world, and that time is now!

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