

Yury Fedotov

Executive Director of UNODC

Combating Violence against Migrants, Migrant Workers and their Families

Statement on behalf of the Principals of the Global Migration Group

Mauritius, 21 November 2012

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address you today as the current Chair of the Global Migration Group.

Let me congratulate the Government of Mauritius for their Chairmanship of the 2012 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

I also want to express my gratitude to our hosts for organizing this event and for their tireless commitment to tackling the challenges of international migration.

It is a privilege for me to speak here today on behalf of the Global Migration Group as the international community starts the journey towards the second High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013.

To aid our future work, it is important for the GMG to look back, assess our achievements, and to ensure that our efforts are on the right track.

The GMG was established in 2006.

Its primary objective is to promote the application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration and development.

In doing so, we must also provide the institutional structure and space for a coherent interagency voice on migration.

There have been two important milestones for the GMG:

First, the establishment of an interagency Working Group on Mainstreaming Migration into Development in 2010, and

Second, a Working Group on Data and Research in 2011. This has laid the groundwork for further joint, coordinated action.

The GMG has recently completed an internal review of achievements and challenges since 2006, ahead of the coming second High Level Dialogue.

At our last Principals meeting on 14 November 2012, we took a number of important decisions that build on past work and will allow us to better deliver on our joint work of the future.

All of these decisions will be put into action over the coming months with the goal of improving the interagency response to international migration under the umbrella of the Global Migration Group.

The review recommendations adopted include the development and adoption of a multi-annual work plan, building on prioritised time-bound and task-specific thematic work, and responding to GFMD priorities as appropriate, as well as new chairing arrangements aligned with the establishment of a small administrative Secretariat for the GMG and the possibility of a funding mechanism that would support the joint delivery of results at the country level.

These developments are a sign that the GMG has set a new course for the powerful delivery of its mandate.

The GMG would like to draw attention to one troubling aspect of international migration: this is the violence often experienced by migrants, migrant workers and their families.

While many migrants enjoy positive migration experiences, there are many others, including particularly vulnerable migrant women and children, who are exposed to considerable risks at various stages of the migration cycle.

The problems often start in countries of origin where leaving is the only available option in order to escape wars, violence, gender-based discrimination, persecution or environmental devastation.

Human rights violations often accompany the migration process. Migrants often experience many forms of harm, including violence, blackmail, lack of food and water, rape and even death during their journey.

When migrants reach their final destination, they often remain exposed to serious human rights violations, including violence, discrimination and xenophobia.

Migrant workers also often face dangerous working conditions, workplace harassment, or lack of adequate social protection.

Irregular migrants are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking and forced labour. Traffickers exploit vulnerable individuals by putting them in slave-like conditions. Victims may be physically, psychologically or sexually abused.

We, the GMG, urge all Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the following six action points in order to improve safety for migrants:

First, Member States need to support the universal ratification and effective implementation of all international instruments related to migration.

Second, we call upon Member States to address the root causes of forced migration and ensure safe, humane and dignified migration out of choice rather than out of necessity. More regular migration channels should be made available in order to reduce the threats currently posed by irregular migration.

Third, all countries, as well as civil society, should strengthen their cooperation to protect migrants from violence and assist those whose lives and safety are endangered.

Fourth, we call on countries to safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of migrants and their families through human rights based migration policies and ensure that these are mainstreamed into development planning.

Fifth, Member States should improve their efforts to investigate, prosecute and punish crimes against migrants, including those committed by corrupt state officials.

Sixth, we urge Member States to provide all victims of crime, irrespective of their migration status, with adequate, efficient and gender-sensitive support, assistance and protection.

To emphasize our cohesiveness on this key issue, the topic of violence against migrants will be more extensively tackled in a joint thematic statement by the relevant GMG Heads of Agencies in December.

Further, the GMG will publish in December a thematic paper on the exploitation and abuse of international migrants.

The GMG will also be publishing a joint report on youth and international migration next month.

The report's recommendations highlight policy reforms to bring migration policies into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and advance progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

UNODC's chairmanship of the GMG will finish at the end of December and we will be handing over to the UN Regional Commissions.

The recently completed internal review will ensure continuity in GMG's work and ensure that the progress we have achieved together will be sustained.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The human rights of migrants need to be universally respected. All countries must strengthen their prevention and response efforts in order to protect migrants, irrespective of their status.

Thank you.