

Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe,
Orderly and Regular Migration

**High-level event on Human Rights Day to commemorate the 70th
Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

**Statement by Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human
Rights**

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Marrakesh, Morocco

Excellencies,
Colleagues, Friends

Seventy years ago today, the world's States recognised, for the first time, that all people have universal human rights and they promised to promote and protect those rights.

The right to equal protection of the law. The right to life, liberty and security of person. The right to education, to healthcare, food, shelter and social security. The right to be free from any form of discrimination. The right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The right to due process and fair trial. The right to be free from torture, and from unlawful or arbitrary arrest or detention.

The force of these and other fundamental rights binds us together as human beings, regardless of our sex, race, belief, sexual orientation, nationality, migration status or any other factor. We share a common destiny, on this planet where we live. We share the core values and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration, which are essential to the maintenance of our mutual peace, prosperity, and sustainable development.

This was the lesson that States learned from the horror and devastation of the terrible wars the world had ever known.

To create the conditions for a new and more enduring peace, they recognised these rights as intrinsic to every human being and acknowledged that no authority can legitimately strip them away.

In successive decades, the world's States drafted treaties and conventions to give their commitments the force of law. They set up institutions to help them live up to these commitments. It was not naïve idealism that drove them, but rather the recognition that these form the strong foundation of a more peaceful world.

States have not always upheld the commitments they made 70 years ago: many horrific tragedies have occurred, and should never be forgotten. But overall, a new and unprecedented wave of freedoms has enabled great progress in almost every society, as women and men rose up, inspired by the Universal Declaration, to demand their human rights.

Today, the world is making another, important collective commitment to human dignity and rights. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is a vital human rights document. It demonstrates not only that multilateral cooperation is still possible, but that it leads to better outcomes than isolationism and disdain for others.

At a time of heightened anxiety and the changing realities of a globalized world, when some view migrants as convenient scapegoats for political gain, the Compact reminds us that the human rights of all migrants must be “respected, protected and fulfilled at all times”. The Global Compact inspires us to greater international cooperation and collective efforts to end conflicts, reduce inequalities and ensure greater freedom and opportunity for all.

Hungry, desperate human beings seeking safety and dignity necessary to life are not a hostile invasion or a catastrophic tidal wave. They are victims, not perpetrators; they are people just like us -- tired and in need. And they are moving – many of them – because they have no other realistic choice.

Although no State is bound to accept every person who arrives at its borders, all human beings are bound by the imperative of compassion.

Blood has one colour. Pain is the same, no matter what language we scream in. We are equal, all of us -- regardless of the location of our birth, our gender, our race, ethnicity or belief, our disability status or our possession of specific administrative documents.

This conviction – and the basic respect, which flows from it – is essential to constructing cooperative solutions, in peace.

The principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights -- forged in crisis -- are especially valuable as a guide to the steps, which lead societies away from conflict, inequality and turmoil.

Seventy years ago, the world’s leaders brought their nations back from the brink of total destruction, and they did so by constructing a series of commitments to multilateral cooperation and to universal values.

These are the values, which can safeguard our world today. The Universal Declaration is a living document, just as powerful and valid today as it was in the ashes and rubble of global destruction.

May it guide the world’s nations to greater peace, dignity and justice in the years to come.

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