

Statement of The UCL-Lancet Commission on Migration and Health

Honourable President, Distinguished Delegates, Representatives of civil society, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am speaking today on behalf of the University College London-Lancet Commission on Migration and Health, whose first report was published in The Lancet last week, and for which I am Chair. The Commission is the result of a two-year project led by 20 leading experts from all continents. The report and recommendations aspire to move forward the multisectoral action needed to ensure migrant health is included in all policies within a framework of humanity and solidarity.

Migration is the defining issue of our time. How the world addresses human mobility will determine public health and social cohesion for decades ahead. Creating health systems that integrate migrant populations will benefit entire communities with better health access for all and positive gains for local populations. Failing to do so could be more expensive to national economies and global health than the modest investments required to protect migrants' right to health, and ensure migrants can be productive members of society.

Migrants are often met with restrictive access to health services, despite the fact that the right to health is encompassed in numerous human rights instruments. Increasing populism globally has resulted in rising discrimination and racism against migrants. Effective implementation of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which includes all migrants, irrespective of legal status, is essential in order to meet the commitment of the Sustainable Development Goals, "to leave no one behind". With more than one billion people on the move, a quarter of whom international migrants, effectively addressing the health needs of migrants will advance not only the quality of life of migrants, but also ensure progress in sustainable development. Our work concludes that when you look at the facts and evidence not opinion, migrants contribute to better health for migrants, host communities and those in their country of origin.

Migration is a global health priority: **We therefore urge international and regional bodies and Member States to:**

1. Implement universal and equitable access to health services, strengthen rights to health and to all determinants of the highest attainable standard of health within the scope of universal health coverage to migrant populations. We urge all to take a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination.
2. Re-balance policy making in migration, trade and environment, and foreign affairs to give appropriate prominence to health. Foster cross-sector, complementary decision making that integrates health considerations across policies and services that determine the health of migrants.
3. A paradigm shift in research on migration and health, with a deliberate effort to enhance the funding mechanisms and networks supporting this change. Collaborative work is needed that links academia, policy, and front-line health and humanitarian workers.

This Global Compact on Migration is a unique opportunity to contribute towards addressing health as a human right. At the UCL-Lancet Commission on Migration and Health we look forward to the time when all migrants, regardless of legal status, have full and universal access to healthcare and can enjoy the highest possible level of health.

Thank you.