

**Official statement by UNICEF to the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**

Thank you *Mister/Mrs President, Excellencies,*

On behalf of UNICEF, I want to welcome the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration as a historic achievement for migrant children and States alike.

For the very first time, children are being recognized as central to migration management. Without creating new obligations, the Compact provides States with a critical tool to better meet their existing legal obligations to protect, integrate and empower all children. It also helps provide millions of children and young people affected by migration the chance to prosper and reach their potential.

One in three international migrants is under 30. While millions migrate safely and regularly, 30 million children have been forced to leave their homes. When migration is poorly managed, child migrants remain invisible and extremely vulnerable. Well-managed migration policies on the other hand, can make children and young people targets of investments and development assistance. Those most likely to migrate globally are young, educated, highly connected individuals moving for better education and opportunities.

By putting in practice the measures proposed in the Compact, States can better address the causes that uproot children from their homes, provide migrant children with better access to education and health services, and offer them stronger protection from exploitation and violence. The Compact also offers States the

means to keep families together at all times and tackle xenophobia and discrimination.

The challenge for the coming years is to accelerate the transition from vulnerability to potential. From marginalization to inclusion. From challenge to opportunity.

Speaking on behalf of 1.8 billion adolescents and young people in the world today, Cheryl Perera made it clear yesterday at the opening plenary: the solutions exist. Indeed, there are many good examples of states and cities who are already doing the right thing. As UNICEF, we are proud to be supporting governments and partners at all levels to make sure that the commitments of the Global Compact translate into actual improvements for the lives of millions of migrant children.

The Compact can help us shift from pilots to scale and move the needle at the global level. There are three areas, in particular, where change is possible:

- We can reduce the number of children detained because of their migration status to zero. Effective alternatives exist that ensure both compliance and protection.
- We can remove the legal and practical barriers and provide access to education or health for all children – including undocumented or stateless children- without discrimination and without fear.
- We can strengthen cross-border cooperation to protect children at every step of their journeys – including when they return- and establish the same standards of care. There are many important lessons we can learn and apply



from countries' experiences in integrating child migrants when designing reintegration assistance.

Excellencies, as UNICEF we are encouraged by the strong expressions of support by Member States. As many speakers have said – the Compact now belongs to us all. But, as Cheryl said in her opening remarks, it does not end here.

The young people meeting here in Marrakech over the weekend were very clear in their ask: children and young people around the world count on states to act now. To engage them and to give them a guaranteed seat at the table. To invest in them and their capacities. To take them seriously.

UNICEF remains ready to help Member States engage and involve children and young people as a partner. When designing and implementing migration policies, when collecting or using data, and throughout the review process of the Compact.

Let me conclude by saying thank you. The Special Representative, Miss Louise Arbour and her team, Ambassadors Gomez Camacho and Lauber have done an incredible job getting us here. Together with other UN agencies, civil society partners and faith based organisations, we are proud to have been part of this long road to Marrakech. And we look forward to continuing the journey together.

Because migration policies that work for youth and children, work for all.

Thank you