



Pulling out of the Migration Compact is an irresponsible step in the wrong direction

10 December 2018: The Council of Global Unions¹ strongly denounces the ill-conceived decision of a number of UN Member States not to sign the historic agreement on 10 December 2018, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). To date, the following countries have confirmed they will not sign the Global Compact: Austria, Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Israel, Poland, Slovakia, and the United States. Multilateralism has to be the cornerstone for cooperation in a globalized world, and migration, which is by nature a cross-border phenomenon, requires such cooperation. The GCM offers a much-needed opportunity for Member States to work with the UN and stakeholders, trade unions and civil society organizations, to tackle the pressing issues posed by international migration.

Migration is not a crisis. It is the governance of migration that has become a crisis. Migration is a human phenomenon, it is not a question of “if” people will migrate, but “how” and when Member States cannot ignore the severity of current realities that require an urgent and concerted response. Around the world, working people, and particularly migrants, face very serious threats to the realization of fundamental human and labour rights, and indeed to peace and democracy. Escalating decent work deficits, proxy wars and climate related displacement are forcing workers to migrate, and the dominant neo-liberal economic models underlying migration policies, favour temporary labour migration resulting in appalling abuses.

Now more than ever, the international community must come together to counter the toxic environment of xenophobia and racism. Member states cannot afford to give in to the racism and heightened xenophobia that is giving rise to right-wing extremism. They must cooperate within a multilateral framework within the UN to shift the negative and false narratives which attribute blame for social and economic ills to migrants.

Governments must take stock of the vital need to address the adverse drivers of mass displacements of persons which lie in failed neo-liberal economic policies that place profit over people and their human rights, as well as the failure of political governance and the lack of access to decent work, social

¹ The Council of Global Unions consists of the Building and Wood Workers’ International (BWI), Education International (EI), IndustriALL Global Union, International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), International Arts and Entertainment Alliance (IAEA), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUF), Public Services International (PSI), Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), and UNI Global Union, representing over 300 million workers.

protection and quality public services. These lie at the root of conflicts, violence, and forced displacements. Failure by governments to tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions and global warming has resulted in unprecedented environmental disasters that have forced people to migrate.

It is only through multilateral cooperation within the UN, that these problems can be addressed, and that migration by choice can be tackled, through upholding States' obligations "to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of migrants, regardless of their migration status". Failure to sign the GCM is an attack on the system of multilateralism and must be countered.

For their part, trade unions have resolved to stay vigilant in ensuring that GCM implementation adheres to international human and labour rights standards. We will take concrete steps to strongly resist and counter the racism and xenophobia that drive negative stereotypes of migrants. We will step up our demands that the Global Compact deliver on its commitments to ensure migrant's full access to public services, including quality public education and health, and to promote decent work for all, which can only be achieved through authentic social dialogue and inclusion of trade unions in all aspects of the implementation of the Global Compact.

The ultimate measure of the success of the Global Compact will be whether it makes real difference on the ground in the lives of all migrant men, women, and children. Through their unions and communities, migrant workers will continue to organize and mobilize to use the Global Compact as a vehicle to promote economic and social justice.

The CGU will mobilize its affiliates in the countries that failed to sign the Global Compact, to hold their governments accountable to their established international obligations to protect the human and labour rights of migrant workers and their families.