

UNICEF statement during the First Informal Thematic Session on “Human Rights of All Migrants, social inclusion, cohesion, and all forms of discrimination including racism, xenophobia and intolerance’

Closing Session

Palais des Nations, Room XIX, Geneva May 9th

Check Against Delivery

Distinguished Panelists, Ladies and Gentleman

UNICEF would like to thank the co-facilitators and the SRSB for their commitment to providing these thematic sessions as an opportunity for frank, open and constructive dialogue to inform the development of the global compact on migration, and we also wish to thank the panelists for their excellent contributions. All of us recognize the transformational opportunities, challenges and responsibilities of the next two years. The delivery of internationally agreed governance mechanisms to effectively support the safe movement, integration and well-being of significant populations is fundamental to global well-being and stability and the achievement of the SDG's which were universally endorsed.

One in every 70 children today lives outside their country of birth – with many accompanying their families as they move in the search for better opportunities – and thankfully, the large majority do manage to improve their lives, and in doing so they both enrich the communities in which they settle and support those from which they originate.

However, too many boys and girls continue to face enormous threats and vulnerabilities during their journey and upon arrival. Too many boys and girls continue to face detention for immigration purposes, or have unequal access to essential services such as education and health care. A lack of legal and safe ways to migrate or to seek shelter and better opportunities increases children's vulnerability, especially when they travel on their own.

The basic rights of children - whether they are labelled migrant, refugee, internally displaced or stateless – are enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It obliges all of us to look beyond those labels and treat all children first and foremost as children.

Many states – as well as communities and individuals - have shown unprecedented resolve and generosity in assisting children on the move, and these best practices and experiences need to inform these informal thematic discussions and provide guidance to us in ensuring that the compact contains concrete measures to protect the rights of all migrant children.

UNICEF is actively working, through advocacy, technical and programme support, with Member States, so that international obligations are met, recognising that the impacts of lost education, toxic stress, immigration detention and family separation are too frequently permanent, undermining national capital and ruining lives. UNICEF will continue engaging with Member States and partners to facilitate the reflection of the rights and needs of children on the move in the two Global Compacts under development.

Thank you.