



Correspondents regarding the United Nations'
Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular
Migration

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The UK Government is supportive of the United Nations' Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, both as a step forward in international co-operation to tackle irregular migration and as a framework to help us deliver our commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals. The Secretary of State announced the UK's support for the Migration Compact at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018 and I attended the intergovernmental launch event in Marrakesh this month.

Well-managed migration is in everyone's interests. But uncontrolled migration erodes public confidence, damages economies, and places people on the move in situations of great vulnerability. The UK is taking significant steps to tackle uncontrolled migration both in our domestic policy work and in our ODA-funded programmes by:

- Addressing factors that may force people to migrate irregularly, through our targeted assistance for livelihoods, healthcare, and education and driving economic development;
- Tackling modern slavery and organised immigration crime;
- Supporting enhanced border management;
- Providing critical humanitarian support and protection for vulnerable migrants, as well as offering voluntary return and vital reintegration support to those wishing to return home; and
- Supporting refugees to stay in a first safe country through our humanitarian and development work in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

The Global Compact for Migration embeds these efforts within the international system and enhances cooperation between states without affecting the sovereignty of all countries to control their own borders. It marks a major milestone for the international community, by setting out a framework to allow countries to work together to make global migration more beneficial for everyone. No country can address the challenges presented by irregular migration on its own and an agreement on this scale, with the overwhelming support of the international community including over 160 other UN Member States including France, Germany, Canada and Japan, highlights the need for global co-operation.

The Compact will not in any way create legal obligations for States, nor does it seek to establish international customary law or further interpret existing treaties or national obligations. It will not affect our ability to determine and implement our own migration policies, including in areas such as asylum, border controls and returns of illegal migrants. The Migration Compact will not affect our mission to reduce net migration. It also means that we, as a signatory to the Migration Compact, will maintain sovereignty over our borders.

It does not establish a 'human right to migrate' or create any new legal categories of migrant. The GCM emphasises that migrants are entitled to the same universal human rights as any human being and does not create any new 'rights' for migrants. As a result, the UK does not interpret the Compact as being in conflict with its current domestic policies. Too many people, including vulnerable women and girls, are taking risky journeys to migrate through dangerous channels. The Compact will help us take important steps to keep migrants around the world safer and to protect the most vulnerable, by supporting international cooperation on the protection of migrants, in line with our obligations under international law. It outlines ways of preventing exploitation, and of combating the heinous crime of modern slavery.

The Compact commits to protecting freedom of expression for the press and public. The freedom of the media to debate all issues of importance to society, including the issue of migration in all its aspects, is fundamental to a liberal society and the UK Government attaches the highest importance to this.

It also includes proposals which will help the UK make a strong contribution to the delivery of the global Sustainable Development Goals. This includes those relating to orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people; and those intended to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, and child labour.

I believe the end result serves the UK's national interest. The Prime Minister set out the UK's priorities for global migration reform in 2016 and, taken together, the Refugee Compact and the Migration Compact help embed these priorities into global migration governance. In practice, that means a Refugee Compact that helps ensure refugees can claim asylum in the first safe country they reach. And a Migration Compact which makes a clear distinction between refugees and migrants, and which sets out a well-managed global migration system confirming the sovereign right of States to control their borders and the clear responsibility of States to accept the return of their nationals who no longer have the right to remain elsewhere.

The final draft of the Compact is available online at: https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf.



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