

Statement on Children and the Global Compact for Migration on behalf of 41 members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs

Co-Facilitators,

Luxembourg has the honor of delivering this statement on behalf of 41¹ Member States who are members of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs as we begin this critical 5th round of negotiations.

I would first like to thank you for the way you conducted the negotiations until now and thank all delegations for their support to uphold children's rights.

The revised draft you submitted reflects the consensus in this room that children matter. Children are affected by migration in multiple ways. The principles and policy options proposed by the co-facilitators will affect and have a lasting impact on the lives of millions of children around the world.

Co-facilitators,

From the outset, you reminded us of the importance of taking a 360-degree view of migration. This is we think of particular relevance when considering the way migration affects children. Migration should never be an act of desperation. We must save lives and keep children out of harm's way. We must protect the most vulnerable and empower them to be part and contribute to our societies. Families should be kept together. We should work towards increasing availability and accessibility of alternatives to detention for children and families. Finally we have to ensure returns are safe and child-sensitive and more broadly in children's best interests.

What does it mean in terms of pursuing our process in the coming weeks? We think we should focus on three priorities:

First, we need to strengthen or maintain the specific measures proposed in the draft in front of us that directly refer to children.

Second, we need to make clear that each and every one of the 23 objectives is interconnected and relevant for children, including those measures that do not mention the word 'child'.

¹ Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Belarus, Benin, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Estonia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Lesotho, Malta, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Senegal, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, Uruguay

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Finally, regarding capacity building, implementation, follow-up and review, we should prioritize investments in the people, procedures and places that can protect children, provide reception and care to children and take decisions that affect their lives. We must invest in and strengthen child welfare actors and service providers at local, national and transnational levels and work with civil society and faith based organizations.

We would like to highlight the importance of keeping the following specific measures related to children as outlined in the text:

- age disaggregated and child sensitive data collection and use in objective 1;
- recognize child-specific drivers for migration in objective 2;
- take measures to register births, prevent statelessness and provide effective and safe access to basic services for all children regardless of their or their parents' migratory status in objectives 4, 7 and 15;
- remove practical barriers to ensure flexible, fast and efficient family reunification without discrimination in objective 5;
- protect vulnerable migrant children, especially unaccompanied and separated children, through specialized procedures, referral and care arrangements in objective 7 and 11;
- provide access to temporary protection on humanitarian grounds and facilitate access to secure status to minimize children's vulnerabilities in objectives 2, 7 and 16;
- strengthen transnational cooperation to protect all children, including those in the hands of smugglers and traffickers, in objectives 9, 10 and 11;
- prioritise investments to train and empower front line and consular officials, border and law enforcement personnel and social workers to identify and protect children at risk in objectives 7, 9, 10, 11, 14 and 21;
- prioritise prevention and victim-protection over law enforcement in objective 10;
- take practical steps to increase the accessibility and availability of community and non-custodial alternatives to detention for children in objective 13;

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- provide for safe, assisted and child-sensitive returns and reintegration support following an assessment of a child's best interests by competent authorities;
- eliminate all forms of discrimination by treating all children as children first no matter what across all 23 objectives;

Co-Facilitators,

We have come far since February. The new draft presents an invaluable opportunity to deliver on the promise we made in 2015 by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in 2016 by adopting the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Millions of children affected by migration share one common hope: that we keep our promise. They look to us for solutions. They count on us to make the right choices - this week and during the final, critical discussions in July.

Co-Facilitators,

Please count on our full support as friends of children during these coming weeks.

Thank you.