



QUNO

Quaker United Nations Office



Briefing for Friends — December 2018

Towards an ambitious, effective and human rights-based global migration policy:

A short guide for engaging with the
Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

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Human Rights and Refugees

QUNO's belief in the inherent worth of every individual leads us to work for the promotion and protection of human rights for all. Our Human Rights & Refugees programme raises up the concerns of marginalized groups, so they are better understood by international policy makers, which leads to stronger international standards.

Frontline organizations can use these strengthened international standards as a tool to limit suffering, improve lives and challenge the root causes of injustice. Our work focuses on migrants, refugees, children of prisoners, children of parents sentenced to death or executed, conscientious objectors to military service, and Indigenous peoples.

On 10th December 2018, after a two year negotiation process, States formally adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. As an international agreement determined to enhance cooperation on migration policy, the Global Compact provides an unprecedented opportunity to acknowledge that all countries are places of origin, transit and destination, and that States have a shared responsibility in their approach to people on the move.

The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) was present throughout the negotiation process of the Global Compact, championing a human focused approach to the diverse issues of global migration. Now that the Compact has been formally adopted, we are keen to help make this agreement an effective advocacy tool, by informing Friends of its contents, and sharing suggestions on how it can be engaged with to protect and speak out for the human rights of migrants from now on.

This briefing paper offers an explanation of the final text, a brief timeline of how it was developed, some suggestions of how Friends can use the document to support their witness and their activism, and a short description of what QUNO's next steps will be.

The Compact does not contain all that we hoped it would—it does not, for example, call explicitly for the decriminalization of irregular migration, whereas we are firm in our belief that no person is illegal. Nevertheless we feel strongly that as an agreement it has the potential to improve the lives of many, and we celebrate its existence, especially during this period of spiking populism, rampant xenophobia and increased isolationism.

What does the Global Compact contain?

23 Objectives

The Global Compact is made up of 23 Objectives, each focused on a specific issue or theme, each of which is expanded upon with a number of actions, intended to guide States' decision making on their national and bilateral migration policy. Briefly put, the objectives centre on the following:

1. Data collection
2. The causes of migration (including climate change)
3. Information provision during migration
4. Access to legal identity and documentation
5. Regular migration pathways (such as academic scholarships and family reunification, allowing people to enter and remain in a country)
6. Recruitment and safeguarding of conditions for migrant workers
7. Circumstances and identities of vulnerability
8. Saving lives
9. Smuggling
10. Trafficking
11. Managing national borders
12. Screening, assessment and referral systems at border crossings
13. Detention and its alternatives
14. Consular protection
15. Basic service provision
16. Inclusion and social cohesion of migrants in transit and destination countries
17. Discrimination and the public discourse around migration
18. Skills development and recognition
19. Migrant and diaspora involvement in development
20. Remittances and financial inclusion
21. Returns (deportations)
22. Sharing social security and earned benefits across borders
23. International cooperation on migration

The Objectives are laid out with a preliminary paragraph that outlines the overall commitment of that concern. For example, Objective 8, 'Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants', reads "we commit to cooperate internationally to save lives and prevent migrant deaths and injuries through individual or joint search and rescue operations, standardized collection and exchange of relevant information, assuming responsibility to preserve the lives of all migrants, in accordance with international law".

This overall statement is followed by specific actions for States to take that would uphold that commitment, looking at it from a range of angles and approaches. For example, for Objective 8, there is action a): "Develop procedures and agreements on search and rescue of migrants", and also action c): "Enable migrants to communicate with their families without delay to inform them they are alive by facilitating access to means of communication along routes and at their destination". These two actions together recognise the importance of emotional and mental health in wellbeing, as well as physical safety, and the right to life.

In Autumn 2018, the death rates on some travel routes, such as sea crossing in the Mediterranean, were at an unprecedented high, in part due to the restriction of humanitarian search and rescue missions. In these circumstances, it is paramount that States honour this commitment to the shared responsibility of protecting the lives of those on the move.

This is just one example of the power of a multilaterally negotiated agreement that stretches beyond regional groupings—it asks States to think beyond their specific geographies to consider more holistically what it means to create global migration policies that respect human rights, whatever the location and circumstances. By working together as a global community, States are persuaded to agree to recommended national recommendations that are more progressive than they might ever come up with alone.

10 Guiding principles

In addition, the Compact commits to 10 guiding principles that are shared across the 23 objectives. They are:

1. People-centred
2. International cooperation
3. National sovereignty (acknowledging the right of States to determine their own national migration policy)
4. Rule of law and due process
5. Sustainable development (rooted in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 'SDGs')
6. Human rights
7. Gender-responsive (a commitment to addressing the needs of migrant women and girls beyond 'the lens of victimhood')
8. Child-sensitive
9. Whole-of-government approach (an awareness that migration is not the issue of any single policy sector)
10. Whole-of-society approach (involving all of society, including migrants themselves, into migration governance)

Many of these guiding principles are part of why at QUNO we feel optimistic about the Global Compact's potential to achieve real change. The mainstreaming of a gender-responsive and child-sensitive approach requires States to consider mixed demographics with the implementation of each and every objective and action. It is a recognition that migrants are not a homogenous category, but multifaceted and diverse groups with differing needs and experiences.

The sixth guiding principle, human rights, recognises that though the Global Compact is a new document, it is rooted in and builds upon a long standing global commitment to the protection of universally held human rights, as decreed in the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights. As focus shifts from negotiation and adoption into implementation, we hope this can be used as leverage to ensure swift action on translating these on paper recommendations into real policy action.

If you are interested in reading the final text of the Global Compact in full, you can do so here:

<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>.

What was the process to develop the Global Compact on Migration?

The development of the Global Compact had five identifiable stages:

1. **Declaration:** On 19th December 2016, the UN set a new agenda for responding to large movements of people across borders: the New York Declaration. This included a commitment to develop a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.
2. **Consultation:** Between April and November 2017, consultations took place at the national, regional and international level to share perspectives and learn more about different migration realities.
3. **Stocktaking:** States and others met to reflect on what had been discussed in the consultation phase, and the UN Secretary General produced a report containing his observations and recommendations for the Global Compact.
4. **Negotiation:** The first draft of the Global Compact was shared in February 2018, and was reworked through six rounds of negotiations in New York, ending in July 2018.
5. **Adoption:** The final negotiated text was adopted at a conference in Morocco in December 2018.

How can Friends engage with the Global Compact?

As already outlined, the Compact includes a significant number of concrete actions to achieve the objectives, covering a broad scope of issues and circumstances. It also contains a strong encouragement to governments to develop national plans for implementation.

At this stage, QUNO encourages Friends to contact their representatives to welcome the adoption of the Compact and to encourage swift and progressive action to begin implementing it. Misinformation about the Global Compact is being circulated in many countries and we encourage Friends to contribute to a better-informed discussion.

Friends might wish to highlight a few of the Objectives that most resonate with their concerns in relation to migrants in their country, such as

- Objective 13: Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives

- Objective 15: Provide access to basic services for migrants, which includes access to healthcare, legal counsel and education.

Friends in countries commonly seen as countries of origin might wish to highlight Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their countries of origin.

We are keen to hear from Friends about how international policy documents can be made tangible and functional for those engaged in local, regional and national advocacy. In September 2019, as part of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network Conference, we will hold a workshop explicitly on advocacy and the global compact. We would welcome your ideas and suggestions about this, and to learn whether you would be interested in future publications or workshops on this topic. You can contact us at: cmckenna@quno.ch.

What's next for QUNO's work on the Global Compact?

Now that the Global Compact has been adopted, QUNO will focus on supporting implementation, follow up and review of the commitments made within it, especially within the UN systems in which we typically work, and by seeking to foster links between those working nationally and the UN on these issues. We will continue to advocate for an ambitious, effective and human rights based approach to the Compact, and will work with States to support them in making actionable decisions to both improve their national migration policy, and to support other States in doing the same.

The Global Compact is not a flawless document, but it does represent an unprecedented achievement that deserves to be celebrated. It affords us all a new opportunity to let our governments hear our loud support for the human rights of migrants, and to insist they uphold the whole-of-society approach the Compact itself commits to, by listening to that, and acting accordingly.



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