**FWCC Oral Statement for 50th Session of the Human Rights Council**

**Interactive Dialogue with the High Commission on State Response to Pandemics**

**Human Rights and Border Governance in Future Pandemics**

Friends World Committee for Consultation welcomes this opportunity to reflect on lessons learned two years into this pandemic.

A side event we co-sponsored at the International Migration Review Forum focussing on preparedness for the next pandemic considered what is needed for a resilient global architecture on borders and health.[[1]](#footnote-1) This included the idea of a set of principles that are: Clear; Equitable; Streamlined, and Future-focused.

Today we can comment on just two.

An equitable approach must understand the differential impact of any measure and prioritise prevention of discriminatory impact; a full border closure affects everyone who needs or wants to cross that border, but it does not affect everyone the same way. Recognising that people are not inherently vulnerable, but that some are put at greater risk by policy decisions and discrimination, any guidance must ensure that border governance measures in response to health crises do not create situations of vulnerability and where possible mitigate them.

Being future focused includes learning from what is happening now. In the Progress Declaration adopted by that Forum, States committed to promoting migrants’ meaningful contribution to policy development.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The experiences and expertise of migrants must inform planning and preparedness. Sustained and sustainable engagement with migrants would allow communication channels created now to inform policy planning to be used if, or more likely when, a health crisis happens, both to shape communication out to communities and to enable rapid feedback on any measures proposed or implemented.

High Commissioner, what steps are needed to ensure that human rights are central to guidance on border governance in future health crises, recognizing that this is about both national response and coordination amongst States?

**\*\*\* ENDS \*\*\***

Delivered by Laurel Townhead

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1. <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k16/k16gs55otw> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum, A/RES/76/265, para. 53:

   Recognizing that migrants are integral to our societies, we commit to promoting their meaningful contribution to policy development, delivery and reviews, and recommit to fostering inclusive and cohesive societies, by strengthening the provision of information, support and services, which contribute to migrants’ integration. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)