



The Council of Global Unions denounces the decision of the United States Government to withdraw from participating in the UN Global Compact on Migration

The Council of Global Unions (CGU)¹ denounces the decision of the United States Government taken on 3 December 2017, to withdraw from participating in the Global Compact on Migration process. The decision came on the eve of the three-day United Nations meeting in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, convened to advance discussions leading up to the adoption of the Global Compact in 2018. In announcing the US withdrawal from the process, the Ambassador to the UN, Niki Haley stated that "the global approach [adopted for negotiating the Compact] is not compatible with the nation's sovereignty".

"This decision is both regrettable and counterproductive, and places the United States on the wrong side of history, " commented Ambet Yuson, Chair of the CGU Working Group on Migration and General Secretary of Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI). "It comes at a time when world governments, UN Agencies, trade unions, civil society organizations, business entities, organizations of cities and local governments, and other stakeholders are unanimous in agreement on the urgent need to effectively coordinate global responses to tackle the widespread abuses of migrants that have arisen from the huge flows of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers over the past two years, as well as provide a framework for fair, safe and regular labour migration".

"This decision abdicates US leadership on a critical human rights issue," said Cathy Feingold, AFL-CIO's International Director. "It also enables the Donald Trump administration to continue to advance an agenda that criminalizes migrant workers in our country and turns away people fleeing violence and persecution".

There is no doubt that the scale of global migration is phenomenal. Some 244 million people are migrants, living outside of their country of birth, the highest number in recorded history. An estimated 66% of these are workers. 60 million people have been permanently displaced by war and conflict. There are 400,000 displaced Somalis living in Kenya, and 3 million displaced Syrians are spread across the Middle East and Europe. Tens of thousands of migrants are exposed to slavery in Libya. Over the past two decades, over 60,000 adults and children have died in the course of migration journeys across dangerous and hazardous land and sea routes. In 2016, an estimated 5,000 people drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa in perilous boats. Families have been fleeing poverty and violence in Central America. In 2017 there has been a 17% increase in recorded deaths of migrants along the United States and Mexico border.

Migration is clearly a global phenomenon, driven by economic hardship and the quest for viable economic opportunities, as well as by political conflicts, wars and environmental disasters. Often, the toll of human suffering is high, and in addition, deaths and disappearances along migration routes are all too frequent occurrences. Guaranteeing human and labour rights and critical protections for all migrants, regardless of their migration status, are important

¹ Global Unions are international trade union organisations working together with a shared commitment to the ideals and principles of the trade union movement. They share a common determination to organize, to defend human rights and labour standards everywhere, and to promote the growth of trade unions for the benefit of all working men and women and their families. The member organizations of Global Unions are BWI, EI, IAEA, IFJ, IndustriALL, ITUC, ITF, IUF, PSI, TUAC, and UNI.



imperatives that should guide migration policies in origin, transit and destination countries. This can only be achieved if all countries work together on coordinated measures anchored in international human and labour rights standards to realize the rights and advance the well being of all workers, nationals and migrants alike. Isolationist positions such as those proclaimed by the US Government, based on concerns about national sovereignty, are totally inadequate to advance the important societal objectives of social cohesion, inclusion and acceptance of diversity which should lie at the heart of migration policies. National sovereignty must be matched by global social responsibility for ensuring adequate rights and protections for migrants and their families. Now more than ever, the multilateral system of institutions and human rights norms for global governance must be affirmed. It has served us against all odds, and the international community has managed to maintain a semblance of peace and stability in the world for the last 70+ years.

It is encouraging that multi-stakeholder actors in the US, including many trade union federations, civil society organizations, the Mayors of some twelve cities, have all declared their support for the continuation of the process leading up to the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration.

Governments around the world must also fill the void created by the US withdrawal, strengthening their resolve to work in concerted fashion for a human-rights based Compact that significantly improves the lives of migrant workers and their communities of origin and destination.

Global unions will continue to make their contributions within the process, representing the voices and aspirations of working people. As outlined in our [Labour Demands](#) document tabled for the negotiations, we shall advocate for a Compact that promotes a fair system of labour migration and accords to migrant workers full and equal rights with nationals. We shall continue our efforts to ensure that this process results in a Compact we can fully support - one that puts the focus on regularization, humanitarian resettlement, and policies that promote sustainable development and decent work for all, in countries of origin, transit and destination.