

144th session of the WHO Executive Board (24 January - 1 February 2019)

Agenda Item:

6.4 Promoting the health of refugees and migrants

Statement:

Public Services International welcomes the Draft Global Action Plan 2019-2023 (EB144/27) and its alignment with the UN Global Compact on Refugees and the UN Global Compact on Migration. In 2017 through 2018, PSI has been involved in the consultations in the Global Compacts. As the global union representing 30 million public service workers, we fully support the goal of putting health as essential in refugee protection and migration governance. The WHO is well-placed to implement this goal in collaboration with all the agencies within the UN Migration Network.

Towards the draft global action plan (EB144/27), we highlight three key points:

1. Grounding the Global Action Plan on international human rights law. While States have sovereignty over their migration policy, they also have the sovereign obligation to protect and promote human rights. The human right to health takes precedence, particularly when national law and frameworks become the obstacle to the right to health. Thus, we welcome para 29, in working towards removing “physical, financial, information and discrimination barriers in accessing health care.”
2. Funding public health services is vital. Resources to support the right to health for migrants and refugees need to be integrated into national and sub-national systems. Ensuring that migrants and refugees are able to access quality public health services, without fear or discrimination, while also allowing host communities to benefit from strengthened and well-resourced public services, will support social inclusion, dispel negative perceptions and fight racism and xenophobia.
3. Safety and decent work for health workers delivering the services is key. We welcome the proposal to support capacities for service provision and ensuring safety of frontline workers. The #NotATarget Campaign is a laudable campaign.

PSI is ready to collaborate with all actors in implementing the Global Action Plan.