

GFMD CSD Commitments Day – 1 July 2017

Speech by Milena Franke, Child Rapporteur of the 10th GFMD

Good afternoon. My name is Milena, I am the child rapporteur for the 10th GFMD. I migrated from Armenia to Germany when I was four years old.

The GFMD Civil Society Days are coming to an end and it is time to report back in my function as a child rapporteur. Thank you for the rich, targeted and practical discussions with lots of *Tatendrang!*

I would like to summarize how participants of the GFMD were making references to children in vulnerable situations and identifying concrete mechanisms to ensure **safe, orderly and regular migration**:

- What I mean by orderly migration is to create safe spaces for children on the move to make them feel at home and welcomed.
- What I mean by regular migration is to find a regular situation of protection for children after a period of insecurity

Recommendations and conclusions:

1. **Safe and regular pathways** for children on the move and other children affected by migration as well as their families with full protection throughout their journey. Children must not be separated from their families, unless this is in their best interest.
2. **No child should be detained for immigration purposes!** Provide alternatives to detention which evidently are better solutions for children. Effective case-management can be used as cost-effective and efficient alternative to detention like the UNHCR pilot program in Mexico and other countries. Further alternatives to detention include foster care and group homes, residing at a particular address determined by the authorities, reporting periodically to the police station, depositing a sum of money or an ID with the authorities, etc.
3. Ensure that the **best interest of the child** is the primary consideration in all matters concerning migrant children. The Best Interest Determination Procedures must be individualized on the one hand to address the unique situation and demands of the child, and formalized on the other hand.
4. Global Compacts should provide appropriate **accountability mechanisms** similar or in reference to the reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
5. Adopt and implement measures to foster an **open and non-discriminatory society to prevent xenophobia, racism and discrimination** against children.
6. **Inclusion and Integration:** Adopt and implement measures that actively support inclusion, but both ways: Integration and inclusion is not a one-way street, but requires programs and commitments of both the host communities and the migrants themselves. Inclusion is largely facilitated by access to formal and regular **education** and **health care** systems in the host country. Having the chance to learn the language is critical to successful inclusion of migrant communities. Also let's please not forget that the situation of a child does not fundamentally change over-night when the child turns 18. We need to make sure that youth from 16 to 24 have access to services and protection if necessary.

7. **Legal Citizenship:** Grant minors citizenship after five years of residency in the host country.
8. **Terminology:** Change our perception by using the right language and terms when we refer to migrants and especially children on the move. For instance, by replacing the term “illegal migration” with “undocumented migration” and “legal pathways” with “regular pathways”. The role of media is critical in influencing the public perception of migrants.
9. **Deportation and Return:** First of all, no unaccompanied minor should be deported to a country where the child would face war, conflict, abuse, persecution or exploitation. Only if return is in the best interest of the child or fully voluntary, assess the re-integration options. Ensure family and social re-integration. Ensure the safety of all persons concerned.
10. Provide **psychosocial and medical support** as necessary. Provide individual follow-up in the form of accompaniment and re-integration support. It is extremely important that the social workers are skilled and trained on their work to cope with the challenges they face.
11. **Exploitation and Trafficking:** Along the migration journey as well as in the destination countries, no child should be forced or incentivized to enter into exploitative labour. We must reduce the risk of re-trafficking and increase the chances of successful reinsertion. The immediate identification and referral of exploited migrants to the child protection system is critical.
12. **Participation and Empowerment of Children and Youth:** Children and youth are more than just victims – of war and conflict, of abuse and exploitation, of poverty and trafficking. We have a voice and – more importantly – dreams, wishes and ambitions for ourselves. As the only child in this room, let me urge you adults to never speak about us, without us. As children and youth, we will continue to join political spaces like the GFMD because we are part of civil society as well. We will continue to claim our right to participation as children on the move. And we will continue to advocate for the rights of migrants and refugees together with all of you.

We must hold states and governments **accountable** to these measures and recommendations: in the Global Compacts, but especially in the implementation of all the principles and agreements that will be included in the Compacts.

Therefore, let me share the **commitments and action items** I take back home from this GFMD that are especially related to children:

1. We have a really good **Working Document from the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts** that summarizes the situation and rights of children on the move. Now, let’s make sure that everyone is aware of these rights and mechanisms! So, **we** must take this document and approach our national governments and convince them to commit to the goals, targets and indicators in this Working Document.
2. For this purpose, let **us find and collaborate with friendly states** and other relevant stakeholders who are allies in advocating for the rights of children on the move and other children and youths affected by migration. This way, we can influence the development of the GCM in favour of these rights.

3. Collect, disseminate broadly to all relevant actors and create awareness about **good practices from the ground for child rights** related matters (for example, alternatives to detention) to develop evidence-based, solid arguments for the inclusion of these rights in the Global Compact on Migration.
4. We will make sure that **children and youth are included** in the further process of development and monitoring of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration as well as the Compact on Refugees. Yesterday during Common Space I explained how migrant children's voices must be heard and taken seriously – of course always in accordance with their age and maturity. Believe it or not, we can also influence major policy documents like the Global Compacts and help ensure that our goals, targets and indicators are met by governments.
5. We appreciate that the *Destination Unknown Campaign to protect Children on the Move* and the *Campaign to End Child Immigration Detention* have committed to forming a joint youth advisory board. This board will enable children and youth to not only shape the direction and strategy of these big global campaigns, but also play a vital role in raising awareness and advocating for the rights of children on the move.

Finally: To quote François Crépeau, the important word in “**United Nations**” is **Nations** – this is the reality. So, in that case, let **us** be **united** for the rights of children on the move.

But let's go beyond the talk and take action!

Thank you