

**Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and
Regular Migration
Bangkok, 6-8 November**

Item 2: Australian Country Statement

Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Australia welcomes these regional consultations, having been a strong advocate for acknowledgement of the unique challenges faced in the Asia-Pacific, including in particular, reducing the drivers of irregular migration.

We are hopeful that the Migration Compact will provide a practical starting point for migration governance that can be built upon in the years ahead, addressing complex issues such as climate change, mixed movements and situations of protracted displacement, while at the same time addressing irregular and illegal migration.

Chair, many migrants have put their lives at risk by undertaking dangerous journeys and the capacity of states to determine who enters and stays in their territory has been challenged. The vulnerable circumstances of some migrants have created opportunities for exploitation by criminal human trafficking and smuggling syndicates and it is pleasing to hear the firm resolve from many countries in our region to tackle these issues. It is vital to ensure that, when pursued, migration is safe.

There is also growing global recognition of the importance of sustaining public confidence through effective and orderly management of migration flows, including more effectively distinguishing between refugees and migrants. Where this does not occur, there is a risk of weakened social cohesion and rising xenophobia.

Australia sees the Migration Compact as an opportunity to build international consensus for practical action to tackle irregular migration, and promote the development of well-managed migration programs. We support the development of a Compact that provides guidance on the development of strong national migration programs to reduce irregular migration, and facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration, consistent with national priorities and in accordance with relevant international law. The Migration Compact must also address particular vulnerabilities and gender dynamics throughout each stage of migration.

Chair, Australia recognises the right and responsibility of states to manage their borders and determine who enters and stays in their territory and under what conditions, consistent with international law. States need to retain the right to distinguish between regular and irregular migrants, and the holders of different types of migration status, in establishing access to rights and services.

We also recognise the need for states to accept the return of their nationals and include effective mechanisms for returning migrants who have no legal right to remain, including support for countries of origin to successfully reintegrate returning migrants.

Australia supports the promotion of models for global cooperation in countering, reducing and preventing irregular migration, including human trafficking and smuggling. We support the significant existing and ongoing bilateral and regional cooperation, which – in many instances – brings together dialogue and joint work focusing on transit, entry and border management. We are pleased to see our region engaging on the Compacts and will continue to encourage Bali Process involvement, including through supporting the adoption of the Bali Process Statement on the Global Compacts. The Global Compacts present an opportunity to deepen the significant work being undertaken in this space.

Chair, in relation to climate change, Australia agrees that the best response to climate-induced migration, where feasible, is effective adaptation and well-supported internal relocation, rather than cross-border resettlement as a first response. The Compact should reaffirm commitment to existing mechanisms that respond to climate-induced displacement, including the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework and Platform on Disaster Displacement.

The Migration Compact provides an important opportunity to strengthen the links between migration, displacement and sustainable development. We commend IOM's leadership in the Migration Compact process to date, and support any follow-up being led by Member states from Geneva.

Chair, Australia strongly encourages states to leverage this opportunity to propose pragmatic outcomes that will ensure the Asia-Pacific provides a strong regional contribution to the Global Compact on Migration stocktaking meeting in Mexico.

Thank you.

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