

NEW ZEALAND

Country Statement – Item 3 (b): ADDRESSING THE DRIVERS OF MIGRATION, INCLUDING ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURAL DISASTERS AND HUMAN-MADE CRISES, THROUGH PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, POVERTY ERADICATION AND CONFLICT PROTECTION AND RESOLUTION

We welcome the topic of this panel addressing the drivers of migration.

New Zealand is geographically isolated and as such does not experience the same levels or risks of mass or unscreened migration as do other countries, particularly those with land borders. In a number of vulnerable countries within our region the situation is rapidly becoming critical. While traditional drivers of migration exist, such as lack of or under-employment, poverty and political instability, new drivers of migration relating to climate change are developing.

New Zealand therefore, reiterates its full commitment to the effective implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, to address the root causes of the current unprecedented flows of irregular migration.

The Global compact should take into consideration these negative drivers, through promotion of greater and earlier investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation, conflict prevention and poverty eradication. By using a sustainable development approach to aid we can boost skills in the affected countries. New Zealand's aid programme aims to boost skills in the Pacific, therefore should Pacific Islanders need to migrate in the future; they have the skills to manage migrating to new countries and find decent work.

Global responses to climate change should continue to focus on mitigation and adaptation measures, recognising that migration may eventually lie at one extreme of the adaptation response continuum. Climate change-related pressures such as hunger, poverty, insecurity and conflict over access to water and other resources increase, so too will the pressures to migrate.

Global labour mobility has increased in recent decades; this trend will inevitably accelerate as uncertainty and instability caused by climate change threaten livelihoods and lifestyles. Initially it will be professional and skilled personnel who will be able to choose when to migrate and where to go, but eventually unskilled workers will follow.

It is important for people to have the opportunity to live within their own countries and New Zealand, as a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, is committed to the 2008 Niue Declaration on Climate Change which confirms the desire of Pacific Peoples to do so.

This ^{issue} is of particular concern for Pacific Small Island Developing States. For example, low-lying atolls, such as Tokelau, are disproportionately vulnerable to the risks of climate change, particularly given their small and vulnerable economies. We have an interest in addressing the impacts of climate change for the people of the Pacific, through effective adaptation and mitigation projects.

New Zealand strongly supports the positive contributions of migrants to inclusive economic growth and poverty eradication in countries of origin. The significance therefore, of SDG 10.7 and 10.c in promoting safe, regular and responsible migration in the reduction ^{of} ~~so~~ remittance costs is vital. Remittances sent home by migrants allow for access to education, healthcare, skills development and entrepreneurial opportunities. As we have mentioned, we strongly support practical measures to make the transfer of remittances cheaper, more transparent and safer given that in many countries within the Pacific region, remittances account for up to ¼ of GDP.

New Zealand is a signatory to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Our experience with the Christchurch earthquakes of 2011 and 2012 is that the rebuild grew the building industry within the region by 150% for more than four years requiring additional people from outside the immediate area to fulfil that demand. Those people also required housing and community facilities in an already damaged city, so the infrastructure around migration did and should be to be accounted for within resilience and disaster planning.

Local labour supply in Canterbury continues to be tight, and migrants have been the supplementing factor. New Zealand maintains a specific skills shortage list for Christchurch, particularly in the construction and trades industries. New Zealand connected this labour demand with our sustainable development aid, through bringing skilled workers from the Pacific. As we have noted previously, the Canterbury Reconstruction Programme is a pilot which includes 24 workers from Tonga, Fiji and Samoa, who have been provided with one-year visas to work with three employers as skilled carpenters.

The population of Christchurch fell 6% after the earthquakes, although nearby areas experienced population increases. While the outward flows of migrants were initially predominantly male, the

proportion of males grew again through the labour required for the rebuild. We note that, post-earthquake, female participation in the labour market dropped. New Zealand would therefore encourage other countries' national disaster risk reduction and resilience planning to incorporate a rights-based approach and cross-cutting gender aspects.

While migration should be a choice rather than a necessity, the issues that have come to the fore in recent years show that at times people do not have such a choice. We are facing a significant global challenge and it is very clear that it will not be met through rhetoric, but through comprehensive policies and useful actions by governments, international institutions and civil society to improve the situation of people migrating.

