

## UNICEF intervention

- *For far too many children, the migration experience is defined by danger. The treatment of refugee and migrant children often falls short of what communities would accept for their own children. Children are held in detention centres, separated from family members, deprived of education, forced to work in hazardous jobs, married off as children or pushed into the arms of smugglers or traffickers. Migration does not have to be dangerous. Indeed, for millions of children around the world, migration offers opportunity and benefits children themselves, the communities they leave and the communities they join. **The GCM provides the historic opportunity to address the risks for children and remove obstacles to help children migrate safely.***
- *To do so, the GCM must address six essential policy areas outlined in UNICEF's Agenda for Action:*
  - *First, **to protect children on the move from the dangers of smuggling, trafficking or exploitation, Member States need to intensify cross-border and regional cooperation** along migratory routes and direct state investments towards strengthening national child protection systems and expand access to information and assistance that can help keep children safe. To reduce risks for children, **the GCM must also increase safe and legal channels for children to migrate and seek refuge, make sure that children are not returned to danger and reintegration assistance is tailored to their needs.***
  - *Second, the GCM must take forward the commitment of states (in the NY Declaration) to **work towards ending the detention of refugee and migrant children by creating practical alternatives.** Many states already apply effective alternatives to detention, including for families with children.*
  - *Third, the **GCM must address childhood statelessness** – a child rights violation, a driver and barrier for safe migration. Every child needs to be provided with a legal identity at birth, **states must adopt policies to prevent family separation in transit and develop fast-track procedures to reunite children with their families.***
  - *Fourth, the **GCM must help migrant children stay in school and stay healthy.** Existing barriers – laws, policies or attitudes – must be removed so that every migrant child has access to quality education, including early childhood development, health care, including psychosocial support, adequate shelter, nutrition, water and sanitation.*
  - *Fifth, the **GCM must recognize child-specific drivers and push factors** such as under-age recruitment, child trafficking, female genital mutilation, family and domestic violence, forced marriage and address the impact of climate change and natural disasters on children.*

- *Sixth, the GCM negotiations also provide an opportunity to demonstrate **political leadership at national and local level to combat xenophobia and discrimination**, to integrate migrant children in host communities and empower them to thrive.*
- *Many governments and local authorities around the world are already providing migrant children with services and protection. In high-income and fragile settings. In the context of crisis and regular migration. **A forthcoming report of UNICEF will highlight some of these promising practices and practical solutions that ‘work’.** We hope that the report will inform the discussions at the Mexico stock-take meeting and inspire states to scale up, share and further strengthen national, regional and cross-border mechanisms to protect the rights of migrant children and their families.*