Migration continues to increase in scope, scale and complexity. Roughly one out of every seven people on the planet today is on the move, including some 214 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants. The actual number of people directly affected by migration is even larger; family members depend on migrants, who often move to ensure a better life for their children, breaking trans-generational poverty cycles. Businesses, labour market sectors and national economies in developed and developing countries alike rely on migrants to fill key labour and skills shortages. The presence and contributions of migrants stimulate growth and employment in countries of origin and destination as well as the cultural life of societies.

Migration drivers include the search for better living and working conditions, labour markets, economic, social and demographic inequalities, human rights violations, environmental change as well as conflict and violence. South-South migration is almost as common as South-North migration and is likely to increase. Internal migration contributes to rapid urbanization, especially in Asia and Africa. While there continue to be permanent movements, migrants are also moving in more fluid, short-term and circular patterns, when it is possible.

Migration has the potential of improving human development outcomes for migrants and their families by raising incomes and improving education and health outcomes. Migrants contribute to development through their labour and skills, remittances, trade, investment, networks and knowledge sharing. These contributions can be enhanced by lowering migration costs, ensuring equal treatment concerning their working conditions, wages, safety and health protection, portability of pensions and other social security benefits, and through promoting mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications.

At the same time, migration as it is managed today, often entails a number of trade-offs, vulnerabilities, and social costs, such negative impacts on children and families left behind. At the heart of migration are human beings who move; all of whom have human rights. States have both an obligation and an interest to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their legal status. Migrants whose rights are protected are able to live with dignity and security and contribute more to societies than those who are exploited. Migrants in an irregular situation, especially women, children and youth, are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Host countries should avoid the criminalization of irregular migration, and prevent and combat
discrimination, xenophobia, related intolerance and crimes against migrants and their families. Care should be taken to ensure that all persons in need of protection, including refugees, are identified and assisted within mixed migration flows.

The post-2015 agenda provides an opportunity for governments to enhance access to safe migration channels; combat all abusive forms of migration; and address potentially adverse effects at origin, transit and destination. It can incentivize countries to mainstream migration into national development planning and strategies, taking into account a rights-based, age- and gender-sensitive perspective.

As a key feature of globalization in the 21st century, migration intersects in both positive and negative ways with many of the emerging post-2015 development priorities:

- Mobility will continue to be a key factor for reducing poverty, fostering inclusive social and economic development, and enabling the growing number of young people in the world to access education and employment opportunities, especially when migrants’ rights are protected.

- Goals related to urbanization or disaster risk reduction would be incomplete without taking into account the implications of rural to urban migration.

- Efforts to address patterns of inequality and exclusion and to promote human rights and gender equality should address migrants’ experiences of discrimination and exploitation. States should ratify and implement all relevant international instruments related to international migration. This includes the core international human rights instruments, relevant ILO conventions, the protocols against human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and the 1951 refugee convention.

- Labour market shortages for highly and low-skilled workers in ageing societies are expected to exacerbate. The sustainability of social security, health and care systems is already reliant on migrant labour. Regular migration channels should be more in tune with labour market needs.

- A partnership on financing for sustainable development should consider migrants, including young women and men, and diaspora investors as key stakeholders.

- Lastly, the post-2015 agenda provides an opportunity to foster enhanced cooperation and coherence on migration and mobility at the global, regional, bilateral and national levels as no country can manage international migration alone. Cooperation requires the involvement of all stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector, employers’ and workers’ organizations, civil society and the research community.

As the UN Task Team affirmed: “The central challenge of the post-2015 UN development agenda is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the worlds’ peoples of present and future generations.” As the sixteen entities that make up the Global Migration Group, we believe that, in a holistic and human rights-based post-2015 agenda, migration – ensuring freer and safe movement of people – ought to be part of the equation.