



Restoring Dignity, Inspiring Change.

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Mr. Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Migrant girls and boys are some of the most resilient but at-risk people on the move, being exceedingly susceptible to violence, abuse and exploitation along the migration route. Many leave with their families and become separated. Some leave to join family. Others to escape violence or extreme poverty and find safety. Their capacity for growth and learning combined with their hope, easy trust and lack of experience constitute both their strength and vulnerability. According to IOM, 1 in 8 migrants is a child¹.

Regrettably, migrant girls and boys do not always receive the responses and protection they need. I will mention two challenges and provide two practical recommendations.

The International Catholic Migration Commission very much welcomes IOM commitments² to implementing child-sensitive guidelines in its work—including, but not limited to, best interest procedures and child participation, family unity and non-refoulement. We encourage states to support IOM's child protection programming in the following two ways.

- 1. Fill in gaps in data collection and mapping of child migration:** Specific data on migrant children are lacking. For example, when a child enters a territory, some states do not differentiate between an accompanied child or an unaccompanied child, nor do they disaggregate by age or gender. Having better data means that policy makers can create or reinforce child-sensitive policies that appropriately respond to migrant children's needs.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATION³: We encourage States to systematically strengthen data collection and reporting on migrant boys and girls entering their territories and to insure that this information is disaggregated between gender and age and indicates whether the children are accompanied by parents or legal guardians or are unaccompanied. Such data will prevent double-counting or incorrect listing of children as missing when, in fact, they may

¹ IOM, <https://eea.iom.int/protection-children-migration>, accessed 19 November 2020.

² IOM, https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/170607_Child_Protection_Prog_VF.pdf, accessed 23 November 2020.

³ IOM and UNICEF: <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/unicef-iom-call-for-papers-on-data-for-displaced-children/>, accessed on 19 november 2020; and RefWorld, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/gmdac_data_briefing_series_issue5.pdf, accessed 19 november 2020.

already be listed in another jurisdiction. IOM can provide technical expertise and support to improve such data collection by States.

- 2. Facilitate family unity as a regular, safe and orderly pathway:** We know that many families become separated *en route* and children traveling alone are especially vulnerable to many dangers. According to UNICEF⁴, 27%, or nearly one-third, of children arriving in Europe during 2019, for example, were unaccompanied or separated. Family reunification programming urgently requires strengthening and must be based on best interest procedures. Prioritizing unaccompanied children and eliminating practical obstacles to family reunification are essential.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATION: IOM's Family Assistance Programme⁵—thanks to the generous support of Germany—is a practical mechanism facilitating family reunification for vulnerable migrants, in a child-friendly manner, by providing remote and in-person assistance to families in 10 centers in Africa, Asia, MENA and Europe. Very importantly, too, the FAP provides support and enhanced capacity to consulates processing applications. Since 2016, the FAP has been assisting over 366,000 beneficiaries⁶. We encourage states to support and engage this very practical programme.

Conclusion:

At the International Catholic Migration Commission, we have seen many migrant girls and boys who possess a steadfast resilience and hope for a better life; we share IOM's commitment to responding to the needs of migrant girls and boys because investing in children today bears good fruit for the future.

Thank you./

⁴ UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/eca/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children>, accessed 19 november 2020.

⁵ https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/IBM/updated/04family_assistance_programme_info_sheet.pdf, accessed 24 November 2020.

⁶ IOM, Family Assistance Programme (FAP), https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/IBM/updated/04family_assistance_programme_info_sheet.pdf, accessed 24 November 2020.