Each year, millions of women embark on hopeful but uncertain journeys within countries and across borders. Women are not passive actors in migration processes, when migration is a choice and their rights fully protected, it can be an empowering experience for them. Women represent almost half of the world’s migrants and contribute around US$2.3 trillion to global productivity. The *World Migration Report 2018* highlights that women increasingly send remittances and support their families in countries of destination and of origin, thus altering social and familial dynamics.

Yet women also face heightened risks of violence and discrimination during migration. Their vulnerabilities include high exposure to sexual and gender-based violence, forced labor, human trafficking and modern slavery, inadequate access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services and structural barriers to employment. Young migrant women often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including on the grounds of their gender, age and migratory status.

This high-level event will explore concrete ways to build a conducive environment for women to benefit from migration and maximize their contribution, ensuring that migration is a choice, not a necessity; and their rights are fully protected throughout their journey. Women must always be able to enjoy their full labour and human rights within and across borders and have the same opportunities as men to access education, training, skills and career assistance, and to participate in decision-making processes. Similarly, migrant girls must have equitable and sustainable access to basic social services, health and education to fulfill their potential.

The event will also look at the challenges faced by rural women in the context of migration and how to maximize their contributions to sustainable development in countries of origin and destination.

Migration can contribute to women’s empowerment, thanks to access to a wider range of employment opportunities and relaxation of the rigid gender norms of rural communities of origin. However, rural migrant workers – and especially women- often hold precarious and poorly remunerated jobs in the informal rural economy, which do not ensure migrants’ rights and social security coverage and benefits. The migration of men from rural areas can in turn contribute to closing the gender gap in agriculture, or, on the contrary, reinforce traditional gender roles and increase the work burden for those left behind.

We are at a pivotal moment where policy perspectives and practices on empowering and protecting migrant women must be shared, articulated and strategically amplified among Member States, UN entities, and non-State actors. As Member States negotiate the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, now is the time to recognize the scale and value of the contributions of migrant women and protect their human rights, to put in place gender-responsive policies, actions and investments and to move gender equality and women’s empowerment from the margins to the centre of sustainable development.
Key objectives:

- Share experiences and success stories on how to leverage the socio-economic potential of migrant women, especially rural women, recognizing their immense contribution to sustainable development.
- Propose paths to minimize structural barriers, vulnerabilities and risks faced by migrant women and maximize the benefits associated with their migration, including by promoting safe and regular labour migration patterns ensuring decent working conditions.
- Identify ways to integrate a gender perspective in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, including the provision of alternative and sustainable livelihood options for rural women.

Agenda:

13:15 Opening remarks

- Ms. Carla Mucavi, Director of FAO Liaison Office in New York, on behalf of Global Migration Group (GMG)
- Ms. Louise Arbour, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for International Migration

13:25 Panel discussion (5 – 7 mins each)

Moderator:

- Ambassador Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General, IOM

Speakers:

- H.E. Ms. Traoré Oumou Touré, Minister for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family, Mali
- H.E. Ms. Teresa Bellanova, Deputy Minister for Economic Development, Italy
- Ms. Otilia Lux de Cotí, Migrant CSO representative, in cooperation with MADRE and WIMN

14:10 Questions and answers

14:25 Concluding remarks

The Global Migration Group (GMG) is an inter-agency group bringing together heads of UN entities to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. The GMG is particularly concerned with improving the overall effectiveness of its members and other stakeholders in capitalizing upon the opportunities and responding to the challenges presented by international migration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are the Co-Chairs of GMG in 2018. More information is available at: www.globalmigrationgroup.org

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