



UN NEWS CENTRE

With breaking stories and
newswire products from



UN human rights chief urges States to end discrimination against migrants



High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay

11 November 2010 – The top United Nations human rights official has urged States to end the criminalization of irregular migrants and to reduce barriers to human mobility by expanding channels for legal migration, deploring the discrimination, abuse and exploitation many migrants are subjected to.

“Although States have legitimate interests in securing their borders and exercising immigration controls, such concerns do not trump the obligations of the State to respect the internationally guaranteed rights of all persons,” Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said yesterday in a [speech](#) to the 4th Global Forum on Migration and Development.

She told delegates attending the five-day meeting that got under way in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, on Monday that human rights violations against migrants are often closely linked to discriminatory laws and practices, and to deep-seated attitudes of prejudice and xenophobia.

“The principle of non-discrimination is fundamental in international human rights law and runs across all international human rights instruments inspired by the Universal Declaration [of Human Rights], notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” Ms. Pillay said.

She urged States that have not ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families to do so and to ensure its effective implementation. This year is the Convention's 20th anniversary.

“For State parties to the Convention, we urge you to make the rights guaranteed therein a reality through concerted efforts at implementation. And even for States which are not yet party to the Convention, they must ensure that domestic laws and regulations conform to international human rights standards,” Ms. Pillay added.

She said that there are an estimated 214 million people – about three per cent of the world's total population – recognized as international migrants, while the number of internal migrants is estimated at 740 million.

Those people, Ms. Pillay said, contribute to economic growth and human development both in countries of origin and destination, noting that officially recorded remittance flows to developing countries alone are estimated to reach \$325 billion this year, according to the World Bank's Migration and Remittances Fact Book.

The figure does not include remittances to developed countries, such as France, Spain, Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom, which according to the World Bank data, are among the top 20 recipients of migrant remittances.

Ms. Pillay is also chair of the Global Migration Group (GMG), which is made up of 14 UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank, and is tasked with promoting coherence in the international response to migration.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Warning of threats to migrant children, UN calls for better protection](#)