

UN human rights expert voices concern over treatment of child migrants



Jorge A. Bustamante, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

27 October 2009 – Child migrants remain especially vulnerable to human rights abuses as they try, with or without their parents, to cross international borders in search of better lives, a United Nations independent expert has warned.

Jorge Bustamante, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, yesterday presented his latest report on his work to the General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York, saying that children are vulnerable at all stages of the migration process.

Children often fall prey to trans-national organized crime syndicates who engage in such exploitative practices as smuggling, human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery, Mr. Bustamante noted.

“The lack of specific provisions on children in most migration laws and the failure to take into account the specific conditions and needs of migrant children in public policies” only exacerbates these problems for child migrants and leaves them exposed to further abuses, the Special Rapporteur said.

He said children are increasingly part of mass population movements of refugees, asylum-seekers and economic migration flows and are at risk whether they travel with their parents, become separated or are unaccompanied.

Girls are the most vulnerable of all as they are often the targets of gender-based discrimination and violence, as well as sexual abuse.

In his report Mr. Bustamante, who serves in an unpaid and independent capacity, called on States worldwide to undertake “a serious and in-depth approach” to tackle racism, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, which he noted continue to affect the lives of millions of migrants each day.

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