

Conference of European Churches
Governing Board
Brussels, 22-24 November

Public Issues Proposal

Statement on global compacts on refugees and migrants
(2nd Draft 23 11 21)

The Conference of European Churches Governing Board notes with thankfulness the efforts of the United Nations and its member states to adopt global compacts on migration and refugees.¹ We take note of the intention to adopt these compacts at the UN General Assembly and an intergovernmental conference on international migration in December 2018. The compacts are receiving the support of the vast majority of UN member states, along with reservation from some, including European countries.

We share the analysis expressed by the “New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants” of September 2016 that “since earliest times, humanity has been on the move(i.1.)” and that yet “we are witnessing in today’s world an unprecedented level of human mobility (i.3).”

In this context, CEC and its partners have noted that “Christians are migrants by vocation”² and, therefore, also welcome the New York Declaration that the UN and member states “reaffirm and will fully protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status; all are rights holders(i.5).” They echo the World Council of Churches Executive Committee message of 7 November 2018 that “stresses as a matter of first principle that all refugees and migrants, regular or irregular, are human beings each created in the image of God, children of God, sisters and brothers, with equal human dignity and rights regardless of their immigration status.”³

The CEC Governing Board believes that the exercise towards and finally the adoption of both compacts are good examples of further establishing a process and regime of global governance in the areas of displacement and migration. The board also notes that a certain

¹ The “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)” and “Global compact in Refugees (GCR)” (building on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

² Joint press release CEC CCEE of 11th March 2011: Christians: migrants by vocation; CEC CCEE joint committee 7-11 March 2011 Istanbul

³ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/uppsala-november-2018/statement-on-people-on-the-move-migrants-and-refugees>

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

<http://www.unhcr.org/towards-a-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

lack of communication on both compacts may have contributed to suspicion about the instruments themselves, particularly in countries where migration is seen with scepticism.

For many years churches and related organisations have been calling for an international regime on displacement based on human dignity, human needs, and human rights. They have argued strongly for safe and regular migration to reduce or stop deaths and exploitation in the process of international migration and allow for better reception in host countries. While not all provisions supported by churches and related organisations in the discussions on the global compacts have been taken up, the adoption of the compacts will be an important step forward. These frameworks will hopefully help in the process of the establishment of a clearer human rights framework for those migrating for different reasons, an enhanced understanding of responsibility among the different countries and regions on the globe. They will also hopefully contribute to more solidarity and trust between UN member states and their citizens in addressing displacement, migration, welcoming newcomers, as well as the possibility or necessity of return.ⁱ

While the Governing Board notes with some concern that the global compacts are per se non-binding frameworks, it strongly hopes and encourages that the follow up and monitoring mechanisms of the compacts will be designed and resourced in a way that they achieve the much needed international standard setting.

Churches and related organisations in Europe are aware of their responsibility in this domain, domestically, regionally and internationally, and commit to supporting the UN and its member states in these endeavours.

ⁱ Cf. http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/20_Areas_of_Work/01_Refugee_Protection/2018-05-30_position_paper_return_FINAL.pdf