

For immediate release

Refugee Rights Activists from Across Asia Denounce Australia's Decision to Withdraw from the Global Compact for Migration

Bangkok, 22 November 2018, 07:00: On 21 November 2018, the Australian Government confirmed that they intend to withdraw from the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM). The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) strongly criticises this decision by Australia to shy away from this historic agreement.

Prepared under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), the Global Compact for Migration represents the first global agreement that explicitly provides a framework for international migration. Scheduled for adoption in Marrakesh, Morocco on 10-11 December 2018, the GCM is a result of 18 months of intense consultations and negotiations that have taken place between 192 UN member states. It is expected that more than 180 countries will adopt the GCM.

Australia's decision to pull out from the GCM can be considered nothing short of a myopic decision to score quick points for domestic political leverage. APRRN's focal point for the GCM Ms Carolina Gottardo notes that "the Compact doesn't attempt to tell states what to do on border management, nor does it threaten state sovereignty." Instead, Gottardo emphasises that the GCM is an attempt to "improve cooperation on international migration to ensure that migrants in all countries will be afforded conditions of safety and will be able to uphold their rights". As such, it is disappointing that the Australian Government would choose to not support such a beneficial and positive agreement.

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network urges the Australian Government to reconsider this decision prior to the adoption conference in Marrakesh. Instead of seeing migration through a unilateral lens, Australia must recognise that migration is in fact a global issue that requires a global solution. By fully withdrawing, Australia would join the likes of Hungary and Austria, two countries that have already withdrawn as a result of pressure from far-right political parties.

Evan Jones, Programme Coordinator at the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network states that "Australia's decision to withdraw from the GCM fails to acknowledge that migrants have made, and will continue to make, a huge contribution to Australian society". He added that "refugees and migrants from across the globe should not be treated as political pawns to appease concerns from domestic constituents. Instead, they should be afforded the rights and dignity that they deserve."

About APRRN:

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network is a network of over 350 civil society organisations and individuals from 28 countries in the Asia Pacific region committed to advancing the rights of refugees, through joint advocacy, capacity-strengthening, resource sharing and outreach.

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