

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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We live in the “age of mobility.” International migration is a major global trend; an estimated 232 million people live outside their countries of birth.

A significant part of today’s migrant population – more than 10 per cent – are young people aged 15 to 24.

Migration offers countless young people opportunities for education, employment, skills acquisition, personal growth and empowerment that might have been unavailable at home. However, few policies and practices are in place to address comprehensively the challenges facing young migrants, or to realize their potential. Many are confronted with unemployment, discrimination, exploitation, social exclusion and the absence of social protection. While migration can be an empowering experience for women in many cases, migrant girls and young women can also face particular gender-based risks. Especially in times of financial crisis, migrants face hostility and are turned into scapegoats, blamed for unemployment and other social and economic ills. More broadly, both origin and destination societies often perceive migration only as a problem, missing the underlying opportunity offered by energetic and determined young migrants.

Migration has an ever-higher profile on national and international policy agendas. As the world shapes a post-2015 development agenda and new set of sustainable development goals, we must do more to meet the legitimate aspirations and needs of millions of young migrants. It is critical to ensure that migration is a choice, not a desperate necessity, for young people, by providing them with education, decent work, social protection and security in countries of origin.

The intersection of migration and youth remains a large, inadequately addressed challenge for governance in countries worldwide and at the international level. This intersection will become more critical in coming decades, as demographic and structural changes see aging populations and declining workforces in an increasing number of countries, while growing youth populations boost demand for employment, social services and a greater role in decision-making in many developing countries.

This report by the Global Migration Group is the first publication to comprehensively address the multi-dimensional issue of youth migration. It assembles knowledge, lessons learned, good practices and innovative policy perspectives from nearly a score of United Nations agencies and international organizations, as well as academics, civil society representatives, youth leaders and other experts and stakeholders.

Its key messages and policy recommendations address the full range of issues facing governments and societies: better data; more attention to human rights, social protection, gender, employment and education; the facilitation of remittances; the role of local government; encouraging youth participation; mainstreaming youth migration into development policy and planning, as well as the emerging challenges of environmental degradation and climate change displacement.

I commend this report’s practical focus on how to transform youth migration from a challenge to an opportunity. Together, we can empower today’s youth – tomorrow’s students, workers, entrepreneurs, parents and leaders – to achieve their full human potential in a more peaceful, equitable, inclusive and sustainable world.