



19 June 2025

To the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM):

We welcome your recognition of the vital role that women migrant workers play in both origin and destination countries' economies. Their labor sustains themselves, their families, fuels industries, and contributes significantly to global development. Yet, this acknowledgment must also confront the harsh realities of exploitation, systemic injustice, and the profound human costs borne by migrant women in the name of "contributing to sustainable development."

We recognize and appreciate your recent statement's call to lower the costs and facilitate remittances for women migrant workers. These are critical steps toward reducing the financial burdens imposed on those who sustain families and economies across borders. Yet, such measures alone cannot rectify the deeper injustices embedded in global migration systems.

At this critical juncture, we must examine the conceptual frameworks that shape our approach to labor migration. The prevailing paradigm, which positions migration primarily as a poverty alleviation tool, inadvertently reinforces a transactional view of human mobility – one that privileges economic outputs over human rights, labor rights and human dignity. There is a vast difference between what migrant women, many of them migrant workers, do as survival strategies for themselves and their families, and turning that into an inherent virtue or a policy goal.

While remittances are celebrated as a lifeline for families and a contribution to development financing, they often come at devastating personal costs: families torn apart, children raised oceans away from their mothers, and women risking their lives in precarious work. The framing of migration as a development solution obscures the truth: poverty, lack of decent work opportunities at home, violence, and inequality are the very forces that push women into migration, only to face systemic abuse as cheap, disposable labor. Moreover, migrant women face discrimination that often leads to job segregation into sectors and categories often seen as "women's work", particularly care work, and as such are underpaid and undervalued.

Moreover, women workers deserve the right to stay in their home communities with access to decent work and to migrate by choice through migration channels that provide for access to jobs that fully respect their core ILO labor standards, are not segregated by gender, and allow for pathways to permanency and family reunification. And we must move beyond a narrative that defines development as remittance values and ignores the real cost of low-wage migration on decent work options at home, families, and the agency of women as economic actors.

The focus on remittance flows and temporary labor migration schemes serves governments and employers—not workers. Furthermore, the emphasis on migrant women’s access to financing ignores the glaring inequity: while migrant women are expected to overcome poverty through individual resilience, structural constraints systematically deprive their home countries of vital economic resources. It diverts attention from failed development policies; the massive drain of resources from South to North due to debt servicing; unequal terms of trade; tax havens and profit remittances; lack of global North support for technology transfer, access to generic pharmaceuticals, and climate financing; and failure of global North nations to adequately finance development.

Furthermore, so-called regular migration often means temporary labor migration schemes that deny women rights to unionize, change employers, access justice for workplace abuses, or escape exploitation. The resulting protection gaps—in labor rights, remedy, family reunification, and social security—are not accidental oversights but logical outcomes of this structural arrangement.

We recognize the critical importance that remittances currently play as lifelines for families and join the call to reduce costs of remittance transfers and remove barriers to mobile phone ownership and internet access. We also insist on the inherent injustice of imposing taxes on these transactions when workers have already paid income tax on them. Steps that relieve the burdens and advance the rights of women migrants are much needed. However, at the Sevilla Fourth Financing for Development Conference and the upcoming International Migration Review Forum (2026), it is incumbent upon Member States, UN agencies, the UNNM and stakeholders to intensify our commitment to rights-based, gender-responsive, regular migration; to realize the sustainable development goals that address drivers of migration; and to shared responsibility for development financing.

We appreciate the UNNM's leadership in addressing migration challenges and believe these considerations could strengthen efforts to protect women migrant workers' rights. We stand ready to collaborate in developing solutions that recognize both the economic contributions and human dignity of migrant women worldwide.

In solidarity,

Women in Migration Network