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Parliamentary impetus to local and regional development of countries with high levels of international migration and to stopping all forms, including state-sponsored, of human-trafficking and human rights abuses

Explanatory memorandum submitted by the co-Rapporteurs
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Migration crises have accelerated recently in many areas of the world, with the consequences for individuals becoming more severe and resulting in an increased burden on transit and receiving countries. Women, children, and elderly and disabled persons, as well as other vulnerable groups, suffer disproportionately from these crises.

The crises continue to escalate in line with the enormity of international migration. According to the International organization for migration's (IOM) World Migration Report 2022, the number of international migrants has surged dramatically over the past five decades. There are about 281 million migrants around the world or 3.6% of the global population in 2020. The number has nearly tripled compared to the estimated number in 1970. In addition, almost two thirds of the total are labour migrants searching for a better economy, and more than 79.5 million have been forcibly displaced from their home countries.

Migration crises are pervasive in almost all parts of the world and countries are still lacking global instruments to address the related challenges.

In addition to conflict and economic motives, migration will be driven massively by climate change and natural disasters. A recent report by the World Bank predicted that, by 2050, climate change-induced migration could hit 2.1 million people around the world. Hence, these multiple structural causes of migration create more vulnerabilities.

Criminal human-trafficking and people-smuggling organizations and their global networks exploit these vulnerabilities for their own economic purposes and are particularly active in Central America, Africa and the Middle East. Attempts by individual States and State actors to get directly involved in human trafficking and use migrants to blackmail other States, such as recently witnessed in Europe on the Belarusian border, has introduced a new dimension to this crime.

Stronger international and regional cooperation remains key to resolving the drivers of irregular migration such as poverty, conflict, instability and climate change. The creation of appropriate mechanisms, through global and regional dialogue, negotiation and agreement, to protect the most vulnerable persons living in grave poverty, human deprivation and inequality must remain a high priority.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated global inequalities, and imbalances in the global economy have plunged millions more across the globe into poverty. The pandemic has also increased the risk of exploitation by people smugglers and traffickers, particularly for women and children. In many countries in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Central and Southeast Asia, the presence of violent State and non-State actors, civil wars and war-like scenarios have contributed to insecurity and resulted in the deterioration of fundamental human rights. Armed and organized criminal groups are profiting from poverty by recruiting thousands of young people to reinforce their organizations and criminal activity.

No one who can meet their basic personal and professional development needs will leave their place of origin, their roots, family, friends and possessions to embark on a perilous journey to reach another country. Irregular migration is being forced by people's need for security and the hope of overcoming poverty and helplessness in their home countries.

The UNHCR Refugee Convention adopted in 1951 and its 1967 Protocol enable parliaments to protect those seeking international protection by defining the term refugee and enabling States to fairly assess those seeking asylum.

For migrants and in contexts of cross-border disaster displacement, there is no international treaty of this kind. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, endorsed in 2018 with a 90 per cent consensus, provides a comprehensive, yet non-binding agreement and framework for States to address international migration by recognizing that a cooperative global approach is required to optimize the benefits of migration and equally address the associated risks and challenges.

However, irregular migrants, driven by economic, conflict or climate-change reasons, are equally vulnerable when embarking on their journeys. Globally, we are also increasingly witnessing the alarming instrumentalization of vulnerable migrants to blackmail other countries or with the aim of destabilizing neighbouring countries. Such an orchestrated instrumentalization of vulnerable people seriously puts lives at risk and provokes a migrant crisis merely for political purposes. Frequent reports of migrants dying when being smuggled also indicate the scale of the organized crime of human smuggling and its networks.

The war of aggression started by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, and in which the Russian Federation has violated international law in a way not witnessed in Europe since the end of World War II, has caused a new unprecedented refugee crisis in the heart of Europe. Human rights violations, violations of international humanitarian law and potential crimes under international law such as war crimes and crimes against humanity have forced millions of civilians in Ukraine to flee the country.

As parliamentarians, we must support our governments to tackle the direct repercussions of these refugee and migratory crises as well as the structural causes of forced displacement and migration, strengthen capacity to respond and find sustainable solutions as a global community, and eradicate the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking by targeting the perpetrators and their wider criminal networks. The social, economic, climatic and political pressures that fuel the crime must be tackled by developing a comprehensive response and addressing the issues of development alongside the drivers of forced displacement and irregular migration in order to create solutions for those risking their lives in search of a better life.

Countries must uphold the principle of burden and responsibility sharing in our efforts to devise necessary measures, particularly countries that have made commitments under the Geneva Refugee Convention and endorsed the Global Compact on Refugees.