

**ADSP Statement – Second Asia Pacific Regional Review of the Implementation of the
Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**

Agenda Item 3, “Thematic discussions on progress and challenges with regard to implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration at all levels, with due respect to its cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles”

Roundtable (c): Supporting migrants’ protection, integration and contribution to development (addressing objectives 14–16, 19, 20 and 22)

Honorable chair and distinguished delegates,

Across the world, refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants hold the potential to make significant contributions to the sustainable development of their hosting countries. However, in the Asia-Pacific region, these individuals are too often relegated to the margins of society, excluded from development planning initiatives and prevented from reaching their full potential.

Yet in spite of their exclusion and marginalization, a recent report by the [Protecting Refugees in Asia \(PRiA\)](#) project¹ on the [current and potential economic contribution of Rohingya refugees](#) found that Rohingya are neither a burden to public resources nor passive recipients of aid. Rather, they are developing the professional and language skills needed to pursue income generating opportunities and contribute to local economies through informal employment. Due to their lack of legal recognition, however, they face elevated risks of workplace exploitation, non-payment of wages, and lack of protection for work undertaken in high-risk work environments.

By formalizing refugees and irregular migrants' right to work, and extending labor protections and fair compensation, the economic contributions of irregular migrants would be significantly enhanced. This would enable greater contributions to hosting states which would help address key labor market shortages associated with aging workforces and revitalize economies with the

¹ ‘Protecting Refugees in Asia’ (PRiA) is an ECHO-funded initiative launched in 2021 to address refugees’ protection risks and needs in Asia with a particular focus on India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

diverse skills, perspectives and innovative ideas that migrants, regardless of their migration status, bring.

Therefore, to achieve GCM Objective 16, we call on states to adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to formalize refugees' work rights and enhance labor protections to ensure fair compensation for workers in the informal economy. We call for support for increased access to certified formal education and dignified livelihood opportunities, including vocational training, microfinance initiatives, and entrepreneurship support.

To ensure migrants can fully contribute to sustainable development objectives and 'leave no one behind,' access to basic services must first be ensured. However, in the Asia-Pacific region, this is severely constrained due to delays and restrictions in the provision of and access to legal documentation. In Malaysia, for example, delays in registration have meant that asylum seekers from Myanmar are compelled to wait multiple years before their refugee status applications are processed, causing them to face significant barriers in accessing critical protection and health services.

Therefore, to achieve GCM Objective 15, we call on states and international agencies to support greater cooperation and dedicated resourcing for expedited registration processes for asylum seekers to reduce backlogs and provide asylum seekers with the registration documentation and proof of legal identity necessary to safeguard their basic rights.

Thank you.