

Barcelona, 31 May 2011 - Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, addressed the issue of **children on the move** (CoM) at her opening speech at the

[Global Migration Group Symposium](#)

last week. The GMG, the inter-agency group for promoting wider application of international and regional instruments to migration, held a two-day meeting at UNICEF HQ in New York under the overarching theme

Migration and Youth: Harnessing Opportunities for Development

The meeting gathered experts from the UN system, governments and civil society to identify a set of key policy action messages that can evolve into a road map for the next five years.

*“Despite their growing numbers and the undeniable links between migration, violence and exploitation, **child migrants remain largely invisible in debates about migration; [...] Policy responses are fragmented at best, and largely fail to protect the rights of children in migration***

and to offer them genuine opportunities for their personal development”,

she said in her opening address and continued by stressing that “

the protection of the rights of children in migration is an ethical and legal imperative
. [...] Governments hold a primary responsibility and their action must be framed by a solid human right normative agreed upon by the international community.”

When pointing to the responsibility of states to protect all children and the need for the best interest of the child to be paramount she concluded that “*the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols prohibit discrimination of any kind, and require*

States to

safeguard the rights of all children under their jurisdiction,

including their protection from violence and exploitation,

whether they are nationals, foreigners or stateless

[...].”

The issue of **children on the move** was further discussed during the symposium in two sessions where GMC CoM Working Group members ILO and UNICEF were present on the second day when ILO, OHCHR, UNCTAD and WHO ran a joint session on “Enhancing the wellbeing and human rights of migrants in support of development” where one discussion focused on “How to protect young migrant workers and ensure that the migration of children and youth is successful and does not lead to exploitation”. Following that session, UNICEF, current chair of the GMG, ran a session focused on unaccompanied children and youth.

The symposium was also attended by other members of the GMC’s CoM Working Group, Ana Fonseca, from the IOM and Olivier Feynerol from Terre des Hommes, who also addressed the issue of children on the move in their discussions.

The symposium came to a close with the drafting of a joint statement that was presented at the UN General Assembly on May 19th and the submission of a document with recommendations for action, which included some policy recommendations with regards to children on the move.

The **Global Working Group on Children on the Move** will meet again on June 23rd at ILO premises in Geneva to advance on the planning and evaluate progress.

It was created at an interagency meeting in London on 20 January 2011, convened by the Global Movement for Children following the International Conference on Children on the Move, organized in Barcelona in October 2010. The group aims at coordinated action in promoting a more comprehensive approach to public policies in the protection of children on the move.

The Global Migration Group (GMG) is an inter-agency group bringing together heads of agencies to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. The GMG is comprised of 13 UN entities, including the World Bank, plus the International Organization for Migration

Source: GMC
