



UNDERSTANDING LARGE MOVEMENTS OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

GMG preparatory event for the 19 September High-Level General Assembly Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants

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Towards Orderly, Safe and Regular Migration: Migration & the SDGs

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Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be here on behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at this timely event, focusing on migration and the Sustainable Development Goals in the framework of the upcoming UNGA high level meeting this September on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants.

Migratory movements are driven by simultaneous push and pull factors that drive people to leave some areas towards others.

- Key push factors include: the forces of globalisation and technological and telecommunications revolutions (Internet, social media); urbanisation (+50 per cent of the world population lives in urban areas); lack of economic opportunities, financial crisis, unemployment; political, religious and inter-ethnic conflict (Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Central African Republic, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Eritrea, etc); more frequent and more severe natural disasters linked to environmental degradation exacerbated by climate change; increase in population and fertility rates; creation of free movement zones.
- Key pull factors include: economic growth and employment opportunities; structural labour gaps in specific sectors (agriculture, construction, elder care, nursing, physicians, engineers, IT specialists); ageing population and long life expectancy (for example, to maintain current working population Europe needs more than 48 million immigrants by 2050, and 183 million more to keep the current dependency rate); global competition for talent (based not only on wages but also on other elements such as quality of life, partner's employment opportunities, integration possibilities, etc.).

There are new complexity of migratory flows in terms of direction and recurrence – South-South as much as South-North, and new North-South flows.

- The relationship between migration and development and the importance migration and labour mobility have in economic and human development for economic growth, poverty reduction, innovation and research, and social and cultural exchange, has not always been properly recognised or understood, despite ample evidence that migration, if effectively managed, contributes to development, growth and prosperity in both countries of origin and destination. Let me give you some examples:
 - 9 per cent of the labour market in the EU-28 is made up of migrants;



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- 18 per cent of large US companies are founded by immigrants and 23 per cent by children of immigrants;
- Diaspora communities play a fundamental role in trade exchanges, investment ties, skills transfer, cultural links and exchange of know-how;
- More than 440 billion USD of economic remittances are sent to developing countries annually, providing access to food, health, education and housing, and to productive activities if basic needs are covered.

A major breakthrough in the new global development framework agreed to last September is that migration has been recognized as integral to sustainable development, rectifying the omission made 15 years earlier in the MDGs.

- In paragraph 29 of the SDG Declaration, Member States recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. They also recognize that international migration is a multi-dimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. Member States commit to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons. This cooperation is also intended to strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries. The declaration underlines the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship, and recalls that States must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received.
- In the goals and targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the main reference to migration is under goal 10, on reducing inequalities. In Target 10.7, Member States commit to facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
- The SDGs also make several additional references to migration and migration-related issues in different parts, including: 5.2 – 8.7 – 16.2 all call for the eradication of modern day slavery. Target 8.8 calls for protection of labour rights, including for migrants, and target 10.c aims at lowering the cost of remittances.
 - The impact of humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people on development progress.
 - The need for empowering vulnerable groups, including refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants.
 - The need for access by all – including migrants – to life-long learning opportunities.
 - The commitment to eradicating forced labour and human trafficking and to end child labour.
 - The commitment to reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.

To facilitate understanding of what well-managed migration means, IOM presented and its 162 Member States adopted a Migration Governance Framework in November 2015 that sets the basic elements of how to:

- Increase the positive development and socio-economic outcomes of migration;
- Develop appropriate human rights protection systems;



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- Address crisis-related forced migration challenges;
- Build institutional capacity at the national level; and
- Foster coordination and partnerships at the international level.

There are no magic or easy quick fix solutions to deal with large movements of refugees and migrants.

In the first instance, prevention measures are needed to reduce the forces that compel migrants to leave their homes, for reasons of safety or survival. This means policies outside of the migration domain to reduce violence, criminality, environmental degradation, natural disasters, food insecurity, restricted livelihoods and more. The goal is not to prevent migration, but to reduce pressures that compel forced, irregular and unsafe migration. To make it possible to have a genuine choice to stay safely and productively at home, or to migrate safely and through regular migration channels.

Secondly, protection of the rights of all migrants – at all stages of the migration process and regardless of migratory status – is a common imperative. Many migrants encounter vulnerabilities along migratory routes, either because of the way in which they migrate, i.e. through the assistance of exploitative migrant smugglers or human traffickers, over land and by sea. Many encounter vulnerabilities at reception, detained simply for the administrative offense of irregular entry.

Excessive border controls, walls, fences and other restrictive measures such as tightened visa regimes and criminalising irregular migration have proven to be ineffective and not led to the expected reduction in the number of persons arriving irregularly.

These measures have simply re-routed existing flows and created opportunities for criminal smuggling and trafficking organizations to expand business and thrive, and present a very real risk of hindering access to asylum and needed protection for vulnerable migrants.

It is important to recognize that there are migrants who are not refugees but who nonetheless face vulnerabilities and have profound needs and rights that must be addressed. Victims of trafficking and separated or unaccompanied children are just some of the migrants that have protection needs. IOM promotes a needs-first approach looking to identify and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities individuals face, regardless of status.

It is time to re-think traditional security-oriented approaches to migration and to move towards more forward looking policies that not only respect and enhance systems for the protection of migrants with vulnerabilities, but also better connect development and migration policies and address labour, demographic, research and innovation needs.

In this regard, we must work together to change the negative and indeed toxic narrative on migrants and migration pervading so many societies. The promotion of inclusive societies that value diversity, dynamic economies that promote innovation and research, and open channels for safe and regular migration facilitating mobility are fundamental in this endeavour.

In essence, there is a profound need for comprehensive and balanced national migration policies – facilitating labour migration at all skills levels, family unification, educational opportunities, humanitarian admissions, and working to reduce the incidence and impacts of irregular migration – as well as the capacity to carry them out, as was pointed out by our co-chair here today, the Permanent Representative of Thailand. For example, countries like the



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Philippines have put into place dedicated policies and investment in preparing their nationals for overseas work, protection mechanisms throughout the migration life cycle, and return and reintegration policies.

Close cooperation is imperative among governments and all concerned actors – including private sector employers and recruiters of migrants, unions, civil society, migrant and diaspora groups -- in countries of origin, transit and destination. This means that not only whole of government but also whole of society approaches are essential.

- There have been important developments at the regional and global levels –
 - Increasing inclusion of migration in the work of the regional economic communities, emergence of Regional Consultative Processes on migration s in every region as well as inter-regional fora;
 - Emergence since 2007 of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and its continued vitality;
 - Integration of migrants and migration in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris UNFCCC agreement, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, amongst others.

The overwhelming majority of migration is safe and orderly, and is enormously productive for the individuals and societies involved. We also know migration can become even more beneficial when comprehensive policies with foresight are applied, aiming to lower the exorbitant human and financial costs of migration, combat exploitation and abuse, addressing labour gaps and providing needed opportunity.

The UN General Assembly has called for a focus on “well-managed migration policies”. We have for years seen the failure of one-dimensional border-control policies, or worse, “no policy at all” leaving behind large swathes of populations, or effectively leaving migrants to drift upon international waters.

We need to address the root causes of forced migration – not to prevent migration but rather to reduce the pressures that compel persons to migrate in search of safety or survival.

There is a consensus now that we need to further explore migration governance, institutional gaps and best practices. These discussions have been sparked by the findings of the state-led Berne initiative on “balanced and comprehensive approaches to migration” and, amongst others, the more recent work in the Nansen Initiative to develop a protection agenda for migrants displaced across borders as a result of natural disasters or climate change; and the Migrants in Countries in Crisis “MICIC” Initiative – co-chaired by the Philippines and the U.S. – developing guidelines to protect and assist migrants caught in countries experiencing conflicts or natural disasters. The MICIC Initiative looks at the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination, private sector recruiters and employers of migrants and providers of services to them, international and civil society organizations as well as migrants and diaspora groups, and what each can do at the pre-crisis preparedness, emergency phase and post-crisis reconstruction and recovery phases to better protect and assist vulnerable migrants.

We need to speak more openly and pragmatically about how to bring about more comprehensive migration policy approaches; identify best practices and engage all actors in their realization. We need to work on this collectively.

In the coming months and years, a vast coalition of stakeholders will seek to implement a number of measures and projects geared towards achieving these targets. As always, IOM will work with its Member States and partners to make sure that substantial progress is made on migration-related SDG targets and above all, to work toward making migration a genuine choice, and not a desperate necessity, and to make sure that no one is left behind.

Thank you for your attention.



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