

**International Dialogue on Migration 2016**  
**Session 3 – October 12, 2016**  
**Remarks of Suzanne Sheldon – United States**

- The 2030 Development Agenda touches on migration in so many ways we'd be hard-pressed to say there is anything in it that's not related to migration.
- The big themes are (1) ending poverty and hunger; (2) protecting the planet; (3) ensuring prosperity; and (4) fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies. We in the migration community can instantly see the links between migration and these overarching goals.
- Migration is also inherently linked with some of the sub-themes, such as empowering vulnerable people and ending poverty.
- Finally, there are the targets that are directly related to migration:
  - 8.8 on labor rights (including the rights of migrant workers);
  - 10c on reducing remittance costs;
  - And of course target 10.7, calling on states to " Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies."
- What I will briefly talk about today is the question of how we can give life to the SDGs. What concrete steps can we take to implement the broad language on "orderly and safe migration"? How can we partner with others to do so? How do we make real what so far is mostly an abstract discussion?
- One key point at the outset: the United States does not believe the answer to migration challenges is -- or can be -- solely to help migrant origin countries develop so people don't leave at all. We should support development for its own sake and to improve the lives of people living in poverty. But migration has been a constant since the beginning of time. We should embrace that reality, and look to harness the enormous development potential of migration.

- Kathleen Newland of MPI recently said that even though the links between migration and development aren't linear, we need to work with what we have and make it better.
- So what can we do? We migration policy people aren't the ones who will "count things" to see if we've met the SDGs. Our Statistical Commissions will do that. We'll be the ones on the ground.
- But here are a few things we have to work with right now:

### **September 19 Outcomes**

- The New York Declaration adopted on September 19 called for a global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration. Its realization will depend on robust partnerships and dialogue among governments, international organizations, NGOs, and migrants themselves.
- We hope much of the substantive work on the Compact will take place in Geneva where those partnerships are so well developed.
- The United States believes the Compact should build on the widely-supported body of international law and policy that already exists, rather than generating an entirely new framework.
- One existing framework is of course the SDGs, which all UN Member States unanimously committed to support, and which nearly all said should serve as an overarching context for the Compact.
- The United States wants the Compact to focus on protecting the human rights of migrants, many of whom are in vulnerable situations and fleeing conflict, extreme human rights abuses, or climate-related disasters, but who may not be refugees under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.
- The Compact should address ways to create safe and legal alternatives to irregular migration and to identify and protect victims of human trafficking.

- The Declaration asked states to consider developing non-binding guiding principles and voluntary guidelines on the treatment of migrants in vulnerable situations, an idea the U.S. advanced and many other states supported. We would like to see this effort undertaken in parallel with the Compact.
- Such guidelines should be quite broad, since prescribing specific measures could run afoul of states' sovereign rights to regulate the entry of persons into their territories – but even within these parameters there is much we could do.
- An OHCHR colleague recently pointed out that the key thing is to compile the law and policy that already exists and put it in one place – the problem isn't so much that it doesn't exist but that some countries aren't implementing what's there.
- The Compact alone would go far toward implementing the SDGs. Other efforts include:

### **MICIC Initiative Guidelines**

- On June 16 the United States and the Philippines launched the "Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster" at the UN.
- The impetus behind what came to be the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative was a recognition of the serious gaps in assistance to migrants caught in conflicts or natural disasters, who face heightened vulnerability due to lack of legal status, language barriers, constraints on movement, and separation from support systems.
- The MICIC Initiative is an excellent example of how strong partnerships can help achieve SDG objectives.
- This was a state-led, voluntary, and very broadly inclusive effort. This is an example of the "mini-multilateralism" model - where states seize on a need and take action, without waiting for bureaucracies to act.
- Over two years we consulted hundreds of stakeholders from states, civil society, academia, the private sector, diaspora groups, and international organizations around the globe.

- And of course we could have done none of this without the expertise of, and great partnership with, IOM, the Secretariat for the MICIC Initiative.
- The MICIC Guidelines address one critically important part of any well-managed migration system – the ability to quickly and flexibly assist migrants trapped in crisis situations, but who don't fall under the refugee framework.
- Thus, they reflect one of the most concrete ways stakeholders can partner to achieve the SDGs, with respect to both the process we followed and the concrete, substantive result.

## **Role of IOM**

- The United States welcomes the new relationship agreement between IOM and the United Nations.
- IOM's new status as a United Nations related organization will improve coordination and avoid duplication of migration-related activities.
- We hope to see IOM take on a very robust role on the Compact, in partnership with states, UN bodies, civil society, and others, and we urge all members states to actively support IOM in this role.
- IOM has already laid a lot of groundwork that can inform both the Compact and broader efforts that will help states implement the SDGs:
  - IOM's Migration Governance Framework sets out some excellent guidance that can help states establish a framework for what effective, rights-based migration management looks like.
  - IOM's Migration Crisis Operational Framework is a comprehensive and multi-sectoral lens through which to approach migration crises before, during, and after a crisis.
  - IOM has also done innovative work in tracking migration trends from beginning to end along the migration route, shedding light on the reasons for migration and particular vulnerabilities. Their work tracking migrant

deaths has helped the world see the horrible consequences that irregular migrants face.

- The Compact should encourage more research like this, since currently no single, global platform of migration data exists.
- That is why the United States joined with Germany to support the pilot phase for a Global Migration Data Portal, which will collect, organize, and share reliable migration data via a comprehensive database.
- And of course, IOM's ongoing work on programs around the world helps countries build their capacity to humanely manage migration and thereby implement SDG objectives.
- The United States supports ten regional IOM migration programs that have developed a number of good practices such as:
  - Training officials on the human rights of migrants, how to identify trafficking victims, and special needs of children.
  - Establishing migrant response centers in the Horn of Africa where migrants can find emergency assistance and help in returning home.
  - Referral networks for responding to unaccompanied children in southern Africa.
- Experiences from these programs can potentially help provide concrete examples for realizing the SDG targets.
- Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.