

## OPENING REMARKS

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**International Dialogue on Migration in Geneva**  
*Understanding migrant vulnerabilities: A solution-based approach towards a  
global compact that reduces vulnerabilities and empowers migrants*

**18 July 2017, Geneva**

Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants and panelists,  
Ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honor to welcome you to Geneva for this year's second IOM International Dialogue on Migration (IDM).

We are honored and pleased to see so many gathered here today, so many representatives of Governments, local authorities, the diplomatic community here in Geneva, representatives of civil society, academia, the private sector and especially migrants, from all the corners of the world. Welcome!

The 2017 IDM is dedicated to *Understanding migrant vulnerabilities: A solution-based approach towards a global compact that reduces vulnerabilities and empowers migrants*.

This dialogue takes place at a crucial time:

- At a moment when Member States and all relevant actors are involved in the consultation phase of the Global Compact on Migration.
- When the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants
- adopted by Member States at the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2016
- put the international community on a new path of cooperation and action towards safer, more orderly and regular migration.

At the NY Summit, Member States made a commitment to strengthen global governance of migration by:

- (a) bringing IOM into the UN system; and,
- (b) through the development of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

A global compact will be grounded in fundamental existing agreements and norms such as:

- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development;
- the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and;
- the Paris Climate Agreement, as well as

- international human rights law and labour standards; and,
- transnational criminal law.

These agreements and norms will ensure a solid foundation for the Global Compact on Migration.

The Global Compact on Migration presents us an historic opportunity. We must and shall not miss this “rendezvous with history,” as this opportunity may not present itself again anytime soon.

The GCM invites the international community to:

- move away from reactive, un-dimensional, populist approaches to migration governance;
- to reach consensus on a comprehensive, long-term, multi-faceted policy framework of cooperation and shared responsibility;
- to enable migrants to move in a safe, orderly and dignified way; and,
- to enable governments to manage migration more humanely and productively. Such a consensus will create “shared opportunities.”

The global compact is expected to achieve several objectives:

- (1) to create a comprehensive framework to guide the field of international migration;
- (2) to fill an important gap in today’s international system;
- (3) to create the first comprehensive global agreement on human mobility, one that will guide States’ approaches to migration through a set of common principles and understandings regarding migration in all its dimensions; and,
- (4) to foster deeper collaboration between Member States and with relevant partners on international migration.

In the Modalities Resolution, Member States called on IOM for support in developing the global compact. In response, IOM is taking important steps to support this essential undertaking; we are putting at Member States disposal the technical and policy expertise of the Organization as well as our operational capacities and tools worldwide.

Consistent with the Modalities Resolution, and with Article 1(1)(e) of the IOM constitution, the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) “*provides a forum for Member States, as well as international and non-governmental organizations for the exchange of views and experiences, and the promotion of cooperation and coordination of efforts on international migration issues.*” IOM is dedicating the IDM in 2017 to in-depth exchanges of views between Member States and with other relevant actors on core elements for consideration in the global compact.

I would like to make three points:

First, **the importance of cooperation** – a concept that is at the heart of the Global Compact for Migration;

Second, **the danger of exclusion**, of allowing migrants to be left out, trapped in situations of vulnerability; and about

Third, some possible **solutions to the problem of vulnerability.**

## **I. The importance of cooperation**

Today's workshop builds on the conclusions of the first IDM workshop which took place on 18-19 April 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York. There, representatives of Member States and partners pointed out repeatedly that:

- it is only through cooperation that the international community will succeed in developing a comprehensive governance framework for migration;
- that migration governance must be consistent and coherent with human rights obligations, and humanitarian and development considerations.

I would like to recall just a few of the important points raised on that occasion, such as the need to:

- understand the drivers of migration;
- build a comprehensive and coherent approach to migration;
- synergize efforts of the international community;
- ensure the effective implementation of existing normative frameworks; and,
- perhaps most importantly, ensure that commitments are implemented by setting-up a robust follow-up mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of the Global Compact.

Several participants also stressed the need to establish priorities, and the possibility of a graduated timeline for its implementation, along the lines of the SDGs. Given the wide range of issues which might be included in the Global Compact, participants called for key focus to be on ensuring protection of the rights of migrants and specifically the need to address migrants in vulnerable situations, whether in countries of origin, during transit, at destination or upon return.

## **II. The risk of exclusion**

Which brings me to my second point: The IDM I am opening today will build on the discussions in New York. Our hope is that this IDM will provide you the opportunity to engage in an interactive exchange and provide your views and make your contribution to the important subject of migrants in situations of vulnerability.

Let me pause here to underscore that we are mindful of both the carefully crafted directive from the New York Declaration and the recent reminder at IOM's Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance: we are speaking of situations of vulnerability for migrants, we are not talking about creating a new category of vulnerable migrants to whom new protections are owed. While some migrants may be inherently vulnerable (such as separated and unaccompanied migrant children) the focus is primarily on:

- what situations create vulnerabilities for migrants;
- at which stages in their migratory journeys;
- how these vulnerabilities can be reduced or eliminated; and;
- by whom.

Situations of vulnerability for migrants present various challenges and complexities. Several of these have already been discussed during the first three GCM thematic consultations. This IDM provides an opportunity to deepen this discussion and to reflect on what could usefully be considered in the Global Compact on this critical subject of vulnerability.

The overall objective of this Second Workshop is, therefore, to address all aspects of vulnerability that migrants experience and the challenges involved, from a policy, cooperation and practical perspective. In these two days we will seek to:

- (i) understand situations of vulnerability for migrants, their multidimensional aspects and complexities;
- (ii) identify vulnerability and assessing the causes, considering both structural and situational factors of vulnerability;
- (iii) review protection systems available to international migrants and identifying protection gaps, barriers and needs;
- (iv) foster consensus on appropriate policy responses to situations of vulnerability before, during and after migration processes; and
- (v) propose frameworks for inter-state and inter-agency cooperation and collaboration on policies to prevent, address and sustainably resolve the vulnerability of migrants.

These two days will also be the occasion to consider the crucial role of integration and social inclusion as a critical means of addressing and mitigating situations of vulnerability for migrants, as well as for promoting resilience and empowering migrants.

### III. Paths to solutions

**Third**, and finally, as we start our discussion, I would like to call your attention to five aspects that I believe should be taken into account while addressing the issue of migrants in vulnerable situations.

1. The first is to avoid assuming or characterizing all migrants as victims, and, instead, to recognize the capacities of migrants.

While looking at the specific needs of certain migrants, such as children, disabled and trafficked migrants, it is essential to recognize in the GCM how to address situations that contribute to making migrants vulnerable.

To assess or predict the vulnerability of individuals, households, or groups, therefore, a holistic evaluation of the risk and protective factors of their circumstances is helpful, as well as the resources at their disposal, facilitating differentiated responses to different migrants' specific vulnerabilities.

2. The second consideration to bear in mind is that the global compact should place the human rights and dignity of migrants at its center.

Through practical measures and actionable commitments based on existing norms, the Compact should ensure in practice the respect and protection of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their status.

That means, concretely, to put respect for the human rights of migrants at the core of all our action (at border controls; in return, readmission and post-return monitoring; and in establishing accountability mechanisms, where needed).

The global compact should be seen as the foundation for a human rights and evidence-based governance framework and approach to international migration and mobility.

3. The third point is the need for specific policy and practical options -- options to prevent and reduce the abuse and exploitation of migrants.

We need to be concrete, in this effort, to propose solutions. It's indispensable to acknowledge and empower the role of diaspora, Mayors, the private sector, civil society, health personnel, schools and local institutions.

Responding effectively to the immediate needs of migrants in vulnerable situations requires appropriate programmatic responses and distribution of tasks. It is essential to increase cooperation and coherence, build national and regional responses in a shared and comprehensive approach --one that addresses the root causes of situations of vulnerability.

4. The fourth aspect is to understand that social inclusion and integration, are crucial prerequisites for protecting migrants' rights and reducing situations of vulnerability that many migrants encounter.

We hope that the GCM will acknowledge and promote the role of integration, inclusion, access to health services, education, linguistic and cultural skills as means to reduce situations of vulnerability. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling migrant rights are means to facilitate social cohesion, mutual respect and future development.

Involving all of government and society is essential to achieve effective integration and social cohesion; considering the role of local authorities, communities themselves, civil society, the private sector and migrants and their associations, each of which have rights and responsibilities. Since its "Global Migrants and Cities" conference, the IDM has always involved local authorities in every dialogue. This time again we are ensuring that the voice of local authorities as the custodians of daily migratory interactions is heard in this important discussion.

5. My last point is that solving structural vulnerability requires not only clear policies and frameworks, but their full implementation and monitoring.

With the GCM, States can work to implement migration governance and rights frameworks, thereby recognizing the universality of human rights and migrants as rights-holders, and ensure appropriate protection for migrants.

Discussing challenges and proposing solutions will not be enough, however, if a way towards the implementation of the commitments is not clear and defined from the very beginning. We need to discuss the follow-up phase now if the GCM is to succeed after its adoption.

In concluding, IOM proposes an integrated, comprehensive approach to meet these challenges. Let us work towards the same goal: working together to facilitate safe, regular, and orderly migration for the benefit of migrants and societies.

With this last thought, I would like to open the IDM and wish you fruitful discussions.