

International Dialogue on Migration
Geneva, 15-16 October 2020

Panel 6 (16th October, 4.15-5.45 pm)

Applying the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts

Statement by Portugal

To be delivered by H. E. Ambassador Rui Macieira, Permanent Representative of Portugal

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Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Portugal welcomes this year's thematic international dialogue on migration, which takes place under the COVID-19 pandemic.

This pandemic highlights the important part migrants play in our communities; it also shows the many challenges they face. The need for a more effective migration governance became even more crucial to shape inclusive actions in all phases of the pandemic. This has been demonstrated by the policy brief presented today.

After nine months living, working and socialising in different ways all over the world and adapting to a "new pandemic normal", there are good examples from all over the world, ready to be debated and shared on migrants' rights protection and migrants' positive contributions to sustainable development.

Let me share with you the Portuguese experience.

From the very beginning, Portugal engaged actively with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM). We believe this is an unprecedented opportunity for a comprehensive integrated approach to international migration, minimizing factors that exacerbate vulnerability at different stages of migration. Portugal planned and implemented its own practical framework.

We were the first country to establish a National Plan for the Implementation of the GCM. In line with its 23 objectives, the National Plan encompasses 97 actions, under a ministerial coordination committee chaired by the Minister of State for the Presidency. Based on an intercultural model of diversity management; with joint and concerted work of state and non-

governmental actors, the National Plan and its coordination committee reflect our whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to migration.

The willingness and the capacity to implement the GCM, seeking better management of the international migration phenomena, translated in our recognition as a *Champion Country* by the UN Migration. We're very proud of this recognition.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Portugal used its governance model for migration that had just been put into place to mitigate the negative impacts of the crisis. In doing so we aimed to protect human rights and shape a more inclusive and organised method to address future crises.

COVID-19 response and recovery efforts meant implementing several measures, aligned with the GCM, ensuring a dignified and human rights approach on preparedness, prevention, response and recovery stages of this international public health emergency.

First, Portugal secured access to healthcare for SARS-CoV-2 infections to all, irrespective of migration status.

Migrants were exempt of charges for the diagnosis and treatment of SARS-CoV-2 infections. COVID-19 information materials were translated into several languages. Mediation and translation services were put in place to facilitate migrant's interaction with the National Health Service. Since the first case diagnosed, on 2nd March, 265 translation Services have been provided. These actions strengthened the work to provide access to basic services and create conditions for migrants to fully contribute to sustainable development, as stated in objectives 5 and 19 of the GCM.

Second, aiming at facilitating regular migration; support vulnerable families; and maintain jobs and labour market, Portugal decided to grant temporary residency rights to all migrants and asylum seekers with pending applications. This measure became valid when a state of national emergency came into force and was further extended until 30 October 2020.

In light of the mobility constraints posed by the pandemic, Visa arrangements for seasonal workers were also adjusted. Since July 2020, a new e-platform allowed the renewal of 50,000 residence permits, allowing migrants to access social support and medical care. These measures align with objectives 4 and 5 of the GCM, as they guarantee that migrants have adequate documentation and they improve the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.

In line with objective 16 of the GCM, which aims to empower migrants and communities for full inclusion and social cohesion, Portugal has worked with children and young people under vulnerable situations. This is under the

umbrella of the *Choices Programme (Programa Escolhas)*, which aims to reduce dropout rates and promote responsible and inclusive entrepreneurship. The programme continued during the confinement period, focusing mainly on promoting continued access to education.

Portugal has continued to deliver on the GCM objective 5, promoting negotiations on labour mobility agreements. In September, in collaboration with IOM, the Portuguese Government organized a technical webinar on labour mobility, emphasising the mutual gains of concerted routes, not only for States but also for migrants.

Throughout the pandemic, the Portuguese Government continued to support the return of Portuguese citizens through its consular network, as well as to increase partnerships for development with countries of origin and transit. With this, we aim to build on GCM objective 14.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As human beings, we are all vulnerable to diseases. It is our duty to ensure that we do not add other layers of vulnerability that undermine our efforts to minimise the impact of the disease in our lives.

The examples shared with you demonstrate that Portugal attaches the utmost importance to applying the GCM values and commitments to the COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

In addition, and looking ahead to the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2021, Portugal reaffirms the goal of making Europe more inclusive and equitable, respecting the humanitarian principles.

In these challenging times, solidarity and debate on international migration and COVID-19 will shed light on ways to provide a more efficient response, while also advising on how to move further towards social cohesion, inclusion and community resilience.

Thank you very much.