**International Dialogue on Migration**

**October 16th, CICG, Geneva**

**Panel 5: 15:00-16:15 - Social cohesion and community resilience: countering discrimination and xenophobia against migrants**

**Statement by Ireland**

Thank you Chair,

It is a privilege to participate in this discussion on countering discrimination and xenophobia against migrants. This is a subject which has become particularly relevant this year, during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We have seen, in places, a rise in rhetoric that exploits fears about migration and tars migrants as people who not only, as it were, take jobs but also carry disease.

The reality is that migrants are all too often the bedrock of our societies – frontline workers and essential staff that make it possible for COVID-19 restrictions to be managed and for public health battles to be fought and won.

One of the most important tools we have in our collective efforts to counter discrimination and xenophobia is a vibrant and principled media that understands, records and represents the realities of migration in a way that reflects the realities for migrants as well as countries of origin, transit and destination. It is essential that global conversations on migration are well-informed, accurate and relevant – as aimed for in the Global Compact on Migration. This is why Ireland is working with IOM on the establishment of a Global Migration Media Academy.

Chair,

For most of Ireland’s modern history, we have been a country of net emigration, resulting in a diaspora of over 70 Million people from a small island with a current population, North and South, of just 7 million. Over the years, the tone of prevailing public narratives and conventional wisdoms often determined the way in which Irish emigrants were received, welcomed and integrated into different societies around the world. When these narratives went unchallenged, Irish people experienced denial of the opportunity to find work, access social services and make meaningful contributions to their new host communities.

In the last 30 years however, the narrative has evolved: from self-identifying exclusively as a country of emigration, with emigrants’ remittances as an element in our national accounts, our society has been greatly enriched by the arrival of migrants from all over the world. 17% of our population has been born outside the country. Membership of the EU, the increasing globalisation of our economy and the revolution in connectivity have made Ireland a multi-cultural society. The arrival of new migrants from a range of regions and countries is reshaping our own conceptions of our society.

This has brought new challenges and new conversations about how to welcome and integrate new arrivals into what was, until recently, a notably homogenous society. Development of the narrative around these issues is shaped by and involves our education system, mainstream and social media, political discourse, private sector activity and the role of the civil and public service in engaging society.

Chair,

Rooted in this experience, Ireland and the International Organisation for Migration will work together on the Global Migration Media Academy. The Academy will, when it is launched, aim to provide training to media professionals globally in order to prepare them better to promote more accurate narratives on migration – and counter false narratives. The Covid-19 pandemic, and the ‘infodemic’ associated with it, highlights further the need for engagement in this area. We look forward to sharing more information in due course, and to working with IOM and other partners on this in the coming period.

In the meantime, we would like to acknowledge the contribution by so many migrants in Ireland not only in health and social care services, but also in ensuring the security of our food supplies, supporting local services, and in many more areas that are essential in our day-to-day lives. We are proud that the recently published IOM Ireland *Rapid Policy Survey Report on the Irish Government’s Policy Response to COVID-19* singled out examples of good practice in Ireland in that regard.

Social cohesion and community resilience go hand in hand. It is therefore a responsibility on all of us – and in our interests, to enhance and strengthen it.

Thank you.