

International Dialogue on Migration 2021

Accelerating integrated action on sustainable development: migration, the environment and climate change

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Closing remarks by the Deputy Director General, Ms. Laura Thompson

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Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by sincerely thanking you all for your participation and active engagement over the last three days.

It is with pleasure and a bit of mixed feelings that I am closing this IDM session today. Eleven years ago, I was opening my first IDM session as a Deputy Director General of IOM. Over these quite so many years, the IDM, IOM's flagship Dialogue, has had an important place in my work. I have had the privilege of learning from the numerous inspiring practices, perspectives and stories shared by relevant actors on migration at all levels and seeing how connections and partnerships emerged a result of the cross-sectoral and open setting the IDM offers to stakeholders.

I have also witnessed the growth of the IDM during these years, and the increase in its relevance for you, Member States and partners, evolving from a regular workshop involving the Geneva-based delegates, to an international forum engaging also the New York diplomatic community, and to a series of high-level conferences on critical topics - such as diaspora matters, GCM, urbanization, and youth- involving migrants alongside Ministers, the UN Secretariat, Presidents of the General Assemblies, Heads of UN Agencies and experts from the public and private sectors from all regions worldwide.

I would like to express my thanks to the numerous delegates at all levels, who over the years contributed their expertise to the IDM and to it becoming an acknowledged and appreciated forum at the global level, and tool for strengthened collaboration and coordination on migration.

The session I am closing today is undoubtedly another one in the series of IDMs aimed at contributing to global action on migration.

This was the first IDM for the year 2021 and we dedicated it to one of the major issues of our times – the linkages between migration, climate change and the environment. It aimed at canvassing views of states and relevant actors on key dimensions of the nexus between migration, environment and climate change and assessing actions to mitigate the impacts of climate and environmental change. This is linked to the broader implementation of global framework, such as the 2030 Agenda, GCM, UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Much has been said and done since the release of the first report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1990, which already noted that the greatest impact of climate change could be on migration with millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption. It is this first IPCC Report that triggered IOM's engagement on migration and climate change with the organization releasing its first thematic report in 1992.

The last IPCC special reports released in 2019 revealed that land degradation is already negatively impacting the livelihoods and well-being of at least 3.2 billion people, while sea level rise, associated with a 2°C warmer world, could submerge the homeland of 280 million people by the end of this century and across the world. It is today widely recognized that environmental migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, that can amplify existing vulnerabilities, but also allow people to build resilience, leading us to explore different migration policy options to tackle this issue. As the Prime Minister of Fiji, Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama said in the opening of this IDM, "The sea has been a source of livelihoods, prosperity, and identity for generation. It is a brutal twist of fate for that same sea they depend on to now threaten their security."

Ten years after the first IDM dedicated to the topic of migration, environment and climate change, the last three days have allowed us to take stock of progress in this area and identify some of our key challenges for the future.

We heard inspiring keynote remarks from:

- the Honourable Prime Minister of Fiji,
- the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans living abroad of Morocco,
- the President of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly;
- the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
- and from the Founder and Executive Director of the Friendship NGO.

This IDM benefited from contributions of countries championing action on migration and climate change through the addresses of the Ministers of Bangladesh, Egypt, North Macedonia, and the United Kingdom. We also had the opportunity to benefit from the presence and valuable expertise of distinguished representatives of many other governments worldwide, including of local authorities, as well as of many renowned senior experts from UN agencies and conventions, regional organizations, civil society; senior academics, youth and diaspora representatives, and the private sector who together contributed significant views and recommendations. The event also benefited from support of key IOM partners, including the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), and the Mayors Migration Council (MMC).

This rich discussion has yielded some important outcomes that will undoubtedly support key upcoming milestones, notably the November 2021 COP26 and the 2022 International Migration Review Forum. I would like to highlight a few takeaways from the discussions:

More than ever, multilateralism is needed to address the changing nature of our world. As the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated, governments cannot act in isolation in the face of an immense, global crisis. When opening the IDM, the IOM Director General set a high objective for us "to call on

governments, partners and experts to accelerate action on migration, environment and climate change, through strong partnership and innovative initiatives.”

As Mr. Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans living abroad, Morocco highlighted in his keynote remarks « Nous n’avons pas seulement la responsabilité d’agir, mais aussi le devoir de le faire rapidement pour juguler les déplacements liés aux dérèglements climatiques et mitiger les causes des catastrophes naturelles et la dégradation environnementale ».

In the same way, we need to enhance our collective action to address the impacts of climate change on migration patterns around the world. This includes working together to effectively implement international commitments, especially those related to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The UN System stands ready to support this immense undertaking, notably through the work of the UN Network on Migration. His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco, a GCM Champion country announced Morocco’s intention to hold this year a ministerial conference of the GCM Champion

Looking towards the 26th Climate Change Conference, we need to bring the messages we heard in these three days of IDM and link them with the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, as also emphasized by Ms. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, the UK State Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth and the COP26 Presidency representative. The UN Deputy Director General, Ms Amina Mohammed, also called on States “step-up with credible enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions ahead of COP26, and with long-term strategies to put the world in a trajectory of net-zero emissions by mid-century.”

We need to remember throughout these international processes and evidence, that we are talking about people and their lives. As the UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary, Ovais Sarmad said: "When we talk about climate change numbers, statistics and economics we must never forget that the true impact of climate change is measured in human lives and livelihoods, which we can save and suffering that we can avoid."

We also need to remember that we are finding solutions for individuals and their specific contexts, or in the words of Ms. Runa Kahn, the Founder and Executive Director of the Friendship NGO “Each migration, each reason for migration, each migrating community in each country has unique issues and problems. It needs to be micro and macro managed! There is no panacea for everyone everywhere.”

Historically, global crises offer the opportunity for positive societal and economic changes as we learn to think and act differently when faced with immense disruptions. **In that respect, we currently have the opportunity to radically rethink how we approach the linkages between migration, climate change and health.** The current COVID-19 crisis puts migrants moving in the context of climate change at higher risk to fall through the cracks and not receive the necessary medical care and other essential services. This crisis and environmental changes have created vulnerabilities and will create further vulnerabilities among migrant communities, for women, and for marginalized groups. These vulnerabilities and their compounding effects must be addressed. In our interconnected world, as Beth Ferris, Research Professor at the Institute for the Study of International Migration of the Georgetown University, said “no one is safe until everyone is safe”, which is true of the COVID19 pandemic as is true for climate change.

Comprehensive action must include all relevant policy areas in order to secure sustainable and positive changes. We need to develop innovative migration programmes that support both health and climate change actions, and we need to make sure that our health systems are climate resilient, more environmentally friendly and migrant-inclusive, as noted by Dr Maira Neira, the WHO Director on Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health and Dr Ibrahim Abubakar from The Lancet Migration.

We need a global, multidimensional approach to reducing vulnerability, and need to keep in mind that approaches that include all vulnerable groups are going to ensure the most effective responses, as highlighted by the Spanish and Portuguese representatives during the discussion.

Supporting the operationalization of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus is a priority. As we learned during Panel 3 yesterday, we need to better understand and address the linkages between migration, environment, climate change, human security and conflict.

As General. Anicet Nibaruta, Head of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Management of Burundi and other speakers said, “We need to align our strategy to respond to migration and displacement with our civil protection, disaster risk reduction and development plans”.

We need to develop more comprehensive approaches to climate-related security risks and promote human-rights based and gender sensitive approaches to support those displaced in the context of climate and environmental impacts. We need to channel our efforts and investments into prevention and preparedness at the community level, and into early action to tackle the climate emergency and the root causes of vulnerability. Such actions are essential to support our commitments towards sustainable development and peace. Above all, we need to work better together to address the complex and interconnected humanitarian and development issues we are facing in the context of climate change and its impacts on migration and displacement.

As Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons noted, “it is that important that such groups are not only seen as vulnerable, but as agents of positive change, and that we facilitate the establishment of conditions for their agency in our respective areas of responsibility.”

“We need to leverage the power of global collaboration and partnership. We need to link local, national and global and involve all relevant actors to put policies into practice”, as Mr. Joost Klarenbeek, Special Envoy for Migration of the Netherlands said.

Leveraging the positive contribution of migrants, diasporas and communities is a priority. Not enough has been done to date to facilitate and support the contributions of migrants to climate action, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development in places of origin and destination. As Mr. Ignacio Packer, the ICVA Executive Director underlined, “The leadership, knowledge and capacity of communities, local organizations and local authorities are to be genuinely respected and empowered. We must address the past failures of inadequate investment in the communities.”

Migrants are key actors of climate action and efforts should be made to promote and develop their skills to contribute to the green economy. We also need to strengthen our public-private partnerships, and

work with private companies to address environmental migration, like the Senegalese representatives of the public and private sector, Dr Amadou Diaw and Mr. Belal Altiné Sow, respectively, explained.

We should also ensure that migrants' voices are heard in decision-making forums, including the upcoming COP26 and IMRF. Let's not forget about the voice of youth and their critical contribution to promoting climate action and sustainable development. And I am glad we were able to show migrant and children stories at this IDM through the two individual giving campaigns of IOM on migration, environment and climate change, namely *Find A Way* and *Do The Right Thing*.

We have ample evidence that the regional and local levels are key to addressing issues of climate change, migration and displacement. As shown in the previous panel the distinguished speakers from Mexico, Argentina and IGAD, regional and sub-regional policy dialogues are flourishing and developing concrete solutions to support both states and migrants. We are also seeing numerous national and local initiatives that are effective to manage migration in the context of climate impacts, including at the city level, such as the Freetown Waste Management Micro Enterprise program that employs more than 800 youth, the majority of whom are rural migrants, presented by Mayor Aki-Sawyerr. The Mayor also announced a new joint Task Force of Global Mayors on Climate and Migration in the lead up to COP26 which she joined with the Mayors of LA, Milan, Dhaka, Dakar, Lima, and many more.

At the national level, Bangladesh is the first LDC to set up a Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund with their own resources, as Dr. Abdul Momen, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, explained. The Republic of Tajikistan is one of the few countries world-wide that mainstreamed migration in climate policy, as per the country's National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change which identified migration as a cross-cutting issue. This is a good practice that can be replicated in Central Asia and elsewhere.

We however need to scale up technical support to vulnerable countries to implement climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives that directly address the consequences of adverse climate impacts on migration. As Mr. Volkan Bozkir, the President of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly said in the opening of this IDM, "Unchecked climate change will have a profound effect on migration, threatening the relocation of entire regions". There are numerous opportunities, policies and tools available to us: we must now act and support their implementation, with no further delay.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

True to its role, as stated in IOM's Constitution, this International Dialogue on Migration edition provided for the 20th consecutive year a space to promote greater cooperation and cross-sectoral partnerships to develop and implement collective actions that concretely address the increasingly complex and interconnected migration challenges of today.

As always, a summary of the discussions and main recommendations gathered in the past three days will be shared with you in the coming days.

The good practices, lessons learned and recommendations shared by participants will be published in the IDM Red Book which will be made available to all contributors and participants. These recommendations will also feed into upcoming events and forums, including the UNFCCC COP26 and the International Migration Review Forum.

Let me extend once more my heartfelt thanks to all the panelists, contributors and the audience. Last but not least, I also take the opportunity to warmly thank all IOM colleagues who have been leading and supporting the organization of this event.