



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

## **Second session of the International Dialogue on Migration 2021**

### ***Leveraging Migration for a Resilient and Sustainable Post-pandemic Recovery: Opportunities and Challenges***

14 and 15 October 2021

Centre International de Conférences Genève (hybrid)

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#### **Summary of conclusions**

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The second session of IOM's International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) in 2021, held on 14 and 15 October, was dedicated to the topic: Leveraging Migration for a Resilient and Sustainable Post-pandemic Recovery: Opportunities and Challenges.

The session focused on the state of global mobility in the context of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and post-pandemic efforts, in particular the contribution of migrants as key agents of a resilient and sustainable socioeconomic recovery. The dialogue highlighted the importance of leaving no one behind, in line with the call of the United Nations Secretary-General to address global and national inequalities as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Decade of Action. This IDM aimed to improve our knowledge of the impacts of global shocks on migration and development, and identify lessons learned and recommendations to improve migrant support in the future. The session also acted as a central forum for global policy dialogue, allowing IOM's Member States, observers, partner intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental stakeholders to discuss pressing migration issues in order to advance efforts to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, and strengthen migrant-inclusive public health systems, with the ultimate aim of advancing the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Senior government representatives, members of the diaspora, academic experts, representatives of the private sector, and international and civil society organizations participated in this year's second session, exchanging views, and sharing their experiences and examples of effective practices. Throughout the two days of meetings, participants addressed key questions and

challenges related to migration and displacement in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and socioeconomic recovery.

The session was structured around 8 panels led by 41 speakers and moderators, including high-level policymakers and practitioners from countries of origin, transit, and destination; migrants and members of the diaspora; and representatives of the European Union, partner United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. The panels were designed to ensure a good geographical, gender and sectoral balance.

The panels addressed the following themes:

- **Panel 1:** The impact of COVID-19 on mobility: migration triggers, government response and the future of border management in the post-pandemic era
- **Panel 2:** Advancing socioeconomic rights and access to services in the COVID-19 era and beyond
- **Panel 3:** Crisis response in times of COVID-19
- **Panel 4:** The role of migrants in post-COVID-19 recovery and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals
- **Panel 5:** Addressing the challenges faced by migrant youth during the pandemic and empowering youth to facilitate sustainable recovery
- **Panel 6:** Harnessing the potential of migrant women for a sustainable socioeconomic recovery
- **Panel 7:** Empowering migrants and transnational communities as development actors: financial inclusion, remittances and beyond
- **Panel 8:** The road to the International Migration Review Forum – looking forward to the next IDM

The meeting was opened by the Director General of IOM, António Vitorino. In his opening remarks, he invited representatives to consider what measures could be promoted to allow migrants to make a full contribution to social and economic healing from the pandemic and ensure that they were less vulnerable to global shocks in the future. The Director General underlined that the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to undo years of progress towards equitable and inclusive services in support of sustainable development, observing that the pandemic had pushed millions out of education and decent work, and into hunger, undernourishment and poverty. He also warned about the lasting repercussions of those challenges if action was not taken to ensure that health and food systems, job centres, education and vocational training services, and financial inclusion services, among others, responded to the needs of migrants and displaced people and gave them the right tools to continue their role as key actors in the long-term development of their communities.

The Director General said that there was a need to rethink the approach to managing today's global challenges by promoting innovative, multidimensional, and inclusive responses which prioritized prevention and preparedness in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. He invited representatives to continue the discussion on the implications of the pandemic for migrants, as

well as the role of migrants in the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, notably by making recommendations for action.

The Director General was joined in the opening session by Anuradha Gupta, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, who delivered a keynote speech. Describing the “fragility multiplier” role of the pandemic for migrants and displaced people, she recalled that there was no clear path to recovery from the pandemic without the inclusion of migrants and warned of the severe cost of exclusionary trends and inequitable access to immunization for the global economy. Ms Gupta highlighted the partnership with IOM, which aimed to ensure that no one was left behind in terms of immunization, as well as realize the shared goal of protecting the health and well-being of everyone, everywhere, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized. She stressed that the IDM session was an opportunity to gain a deep understanding of realities on the ground to help promote more effective ways to support migrants and displaced people and allow them to live a life of dignity.

IOM’s Deputy Director General for Management and Reform, Amy Pope, moderated a panel discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on mobility: migration triggers, government response and the future of border management in the post-pandemic era. In opening the discussion, she highlighted that governments had been divided in their COVID-19 response and that there was no one-size-fits all approach to the socioeconomic challenges of the pandemic. She invited the audience to have a conversation about what was missing in the international community’s response to the pandemic, the impact of the pandemic, and what could be done better next time a similar crisis came around.

The first day of the IDM session also included a panel discussion on advancing socioeconomic rights and access to services in the COVID-19 era and beyond, which was moderated by IOM’s Deputy Director General for Operations, Ugochi Daniels. In her opening remarks, she described the tragic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on societies. Drawing attention to the resilience within communities, but also to the inequities exacerbated by the pandemic, she underlined that the pandemic had been a disruptor which had forced countries, individuals and communities to adapt. In her view, the inclusion of migrants in service provision was not only the right thing to do, but it was also the smart thing to do.

**The main outcomes and conclusions of the two-day discussion are summarized below:**

**1. An integrated approach will be necessary for future health emergency preparedness and border management in the post-pandemic world. This must take into account cross-border mobility and international health regulations in a holistic manner.**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of well-governed migration for prosperous and healthy societies, while demonstrating the negative impact of reduced human mobility on sustainable development. As several participants recalled, restrictions on human mobility during the pandemic had led to severe impacts on global societies and economies. Connectivity and human mobility are fundamental features of today's globalized world. Participants emphasized that the integrated implementation of global policy frameworks on human mobility and its drivers would be critical in the post-pandemic scenario and underlined the need for international coordination of travel requirements and measures. That would require multisectoral, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, with proper coordination between countries and sectors, and national and local authorities, as well as inter-agency cooperation.
- A number of governments reported on actions taken to facilitate the return of migrant workers, and the life-saving role played by their consular missions abroad. In one example, Sarah Lou Ysmael Arriola, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, described the efforts of her Government to facilitate the return of migrant workers through a response based on the central components of relief, repatriation, recovery and reintegration.
- Data is crucial to conduct risk assessments and develop public health measures. In this regard, participants underscored that special measures should be evidence- and risk-based. Moreover – as Jessica Bither, Senior Expert Migration, Global Issues, at Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH underlined – approaches to data on human mobility need to be revisited in the light of the impact of COVID-19. Indeed, more research is needed to better understand these different impacts and their role in shaping population movements, and to inform policies and measures to address the needs and complex challenges faced by the most vulnerable communities. The capacity of governments to collect and share data needs to be developed accordingly. IOM and its partner organizations are ready to support this work through tools already developed, such as the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) and the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).
- Participants also emphasized that it was crucial to ensure that response and recovery measures did not exacerbate discrimination, stigmatization and inequality, or infringe human rights. Several delegations, including China, Jordan, Thailand and Qatar, called for national COVID-19 response programmes to be migrant inclusive.

All migrants, irrespective of their status, should have equal access to health care, including vaccines. Mutual acceptance of COVID-19 health certificates was crucial to avoid a potential global mobility divide.

- The IDM session included a discussion on the impact of the pandemic on crisis response measures and inter-agency humanitarian planning, during which successful practices and lessons learned were highlighted. Examples were also provided of adjustments made to preparedness interventions and the mode of delivery of humanitarian assistance during the pandemic. Participants identified three lessons learned, namely the importance of (1) planning, (2) the inclusion of migrants, and (3) access to personal protective equipment and vaccines.
- Speakers also called for a deeper understanding of and insight into more effective ways to ensure that refugees and internally displaced persons lived a life of dignity. Observing that the post-pandemic world would be different, speakers underscored the need for long-term scenarios that moved beyond short-term planning. Entrepreneurship, new forms of flexible funding, the engagement of the private sector and the creation of new resources will be key to supporting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable. Data sharing is vital in crisis situations and became even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Investing in digitalization and collaborating and sharing data is central to understanding what is going on in the field, but there is also a great need for data privacy and data security.
- Several delegates recalled that the challenges of the pandemic for human mobility and socioeconomic development could be most effectively managed through cooperation among all relevant actors, including migrants and the diaspora. We should come together to collectively face this situation with a concise and comprehensive approach that addresses governance, development and security. The pandemic has demonstrated that partners can go beyond existing partnerships to build new ties and find innovative ways to work together.

## **2. Including migrants in service provision is the backbone of the commitment to “leave no one behind” and fully achieve the 2030 Agenda for all.**

- Migrants are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response as providers of services, acting as essential workers delivering health care, food and sanitation services, care services for older people, and more. Yet at the same time, migrants – particularly those in irregular situations – are also faced with additional barriers to accessing these same services. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered incidents of discrimination, xenophobia and racism.
- Speakers recalled that any crisis made long-standing inequalities more visible and disproportionately affected people in vulnerable situations. The solution to this is clear: equal access to services for all regardless of migratory status, gender, sexual orientation,

age or any other factor. Now is the time to step forward and transform good temporary measures into permanent public policies.

- Moreover – as highlighted by the testimonies of migrant and diaspora representatives – when empowered with equal access to services, opportunities and rights, migrants can drive innovation and improve existing services, including in the areas of health care, education and infrastructure.
- Participants noted that actors at local, national and regional level played a particularly important role in translating global commitments into action and addressing local challenges, as well as the needs and vulnerabilities of migrant populations. The direct experience and perspective of migrant workers and diaspora representatives shows that inclusion and service provision take place at the local level, which is also where a better understanding can be gained of the needs and opportunities surrounding migration.
- National migration policies and approaches are often out of touch with the local reality. However, migrant workers, diaspora representatives and policymakers described examples of successfully applying a people-centred and inclusive approach to service provision. Amina Hersi Moghe, founder of the Atiak Sugar Project in Uganda, spoke about the importance of empowering local communities and underscored that the diaspora had the aptitude to adapt to where they were and to do what needed to be done; all they needed was guidance and to be given skills.

### **3. Migrants and the diaspora must be part of the solution in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.**

- Over the two days, delegates often mentioned the importance of leveraging the opportunities provided by migrants and empowering them as equal partners and development actors. Not doing so means there is a risk of leaving migrants behind, widening inequalities and cutting off any chance of achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- Participants agreed that migrants and the diaspora made communities at home and abroad more vibrant, inclusive and successful. We should not ask migrants and the diaspora for support only when it is needed, but instead build a lasting and trusting relationship where everyone benefits.
- Participants spoke about migrants who had faced income and job loss, been unable to return to their countries or access employment abroad due to border closures or faced discrimination in access to essential services. In a video message, Marta-Lucía Ramírez, Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, said that women, girls, and young people in particular were directly, and often disproportionately, affected by economic and health crises, as well as by measures implemented on the ground.

- Speakers stressed that women, including migrant women, were the backbone of our societies and had been key actors in the response to the pandemic. For instance, women account for 70 per cent of the global health workforce. However, the pandemic has had an especially large impact on migrant women from the informal sectors without strong legal protection. There is a need for women and girls to develop additional skills, such as the ability to use technology and engage in online education; for a truly inclusive pandemic recovery, women migrants need innovating education and vocational training. Access to basic services at home and in their neighbourhoods has a significant impact on health, education and employment, and on the integration of migrants. In this regard, governments and the private sector should work hand in hand to empower migrant women so as to harness their potential for the development of their communities.
- Representing the Association for the Integration of Women based in Modena, Italy, Caroline Caporossi spoke about the need to invest in cultural mediators when building bridges between the community and the job market, observing that such cultural mediators were a key element of long-term partnerships.
- During the IDM, attention was drawn to the fact that migrant youth were among the most vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic. Speakers commented that the lack of access to education and labour opportunities was a constant issue for young people, who also found it difficult to actively engage in formal policymaking spaces.
- Participants underlined that youth, including migrant youth, needed to be heard and included alongside other community members in the roll-out of health and non-health interventions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Delegates called for capacity-building activities targeting young people, including migrant youth, to help them develop adaptable digital skills, with a view to building resilience in the labour market in the context of the impact of COVID-19 on the global economy.
- The young generation has the greatest potential in terms of creativity, resilience and innovation, which makes them compelling partners for any effective and sustainable long-term recovery. Young people need to be invited to dialogues like the IDM and included in policymaking discussions. Speakers described some ways in which young people could be supported to participate more effectively and play a role in the post-pandemic recovery, including through the creation of a needs and qualification framework for highly skilled migrants; educational provision for migrants, especially young migrant women; and financial support and protection for young migrants.
- Alongside multilateral, regional and national governmental actors, it is essential to ensure that communities and individuals are included and can participate in efforts to address the complex challenges around migration and the COVID-19 recovery. It is essential to manage the challenges of the pandemic for human mobility and

socioeconomic development through cooperation among ourselves. Indeed, as the representative of Libya recalled, the migration phenomenon impacts many Member States of IOM and we must come together to face this situation collectively with a concise and comprehensive approach that addresses governance, development and security. It is therefore necessary to go beyond existing partnerships and find innovative ways to work together.

- Participants agreed that we needed to continue working with national and private actors to address challenges regarding migrant remittances, given their critical role in securing livelihoods and well-being as stressed in Objective 20 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. However, speakers also called for a more comprehensive approach to migrant contributions, encompassing diaspora investment and philanthropy, tourism and transnational networks, and migrant entrepreneurship and trade, as mentioned in Objective 19 of the Global Compact.
- Speakers drew attention to the importance of supporting migrants and diaspora communities with their contributions through assistance with financial inclusion, the enhancement of financial market infrastructure to help reduce transaction costs, and digitalization. Broader diaspora engagement policies and regulatory frameworks should also be created. Leon Isaacs, founder and Chief Executive Officer of DMA Global, stressed the relevance of looking beyond remittances when measuring the impact of economic contributions from diasporas, noting that countries needed to introduce structured approaches and specific policies that encouraged and rewarded migrants' contributions. Delegates agreed on the need to discuss further how this important part of the migration and development agenda, namely Objectives 19 and 20 of the Global Compact, could best be reflected at the International Migration Review Forum 2022 and beyond.

Finally, this session included a discussion on the way forward to the first International Migration Review Forum, which is due to take place in May 2022, and how the IDM could contribute to its preparation. Delegates spoke about efforts at national and regional level to review Global Compact implementation efforts in preparation for the Forum. They also underscored the importance of mainstreaming migration policy into the development agenda and described the Global Compact as an important outcome of multilateralism that would enable actors to rapidly develop dynamic global solutions. Delegates welcomed the proposal to discuss implementation of the Global Compact at the next IDM, ahead of the International Migration Review Forum, but noted the need to be mindful of national sovereignty, while remaining flexible to adapt to new challenges and opportunities.

- Participants agreed that the International Migration Review Forum was an excellent opportunity to advance global consensus on migration issues and urged States and international organizations to bring a renewed and constructive global approach to the Forum, such as that shown in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Moreover, speakers recalled that the efforts of the international community regarding the Global Compact should remain grounded in key communities – migrants, their home communities and their host communities – as well as considering their aspirations.

## **Recommendations on the way forward**

Speakers strongly emphasized the importance of coordinated action to engage and empower migrants – including women and young migrants – in national and local socioeconomic responses to the pandemic. Participants called for partnerships between different actors and for migrants to play a key role in COVID-19 response efforts, which should include targeted policies to empower migrants as agents of change for a full and inclusive recovery, and to advance the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. During the IDM, it was recommended that international cooperation between countries of origin and destination be strengthened to provide relief to migrant workers in difficult situations and support the repatriation of migrant workers where necessary.

Specific priority areas of action mentioned by participants included:

- Recognizing the key role that migrants and members of the diaspora play as agents of change, notably through the way in which they enrich society and contribute to economic development in their destination and origin countries;
- Implementing and strengthening mechanisms to protect the rights of migrants regardless of their status, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable migrants, and including efforts to ensure non-discriminatory access to health care;
- Promoting the social and economic integration of migrants into host communities with the support of the international community;
- Combating all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance;
- Increasing awareness-raising and capacity-building on migration issues;
- Facilitating the mobility of migrants to pave the way for post-pandemic socioeconomic recovery and address the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of migrants;
- Strengthening cooperation between host governments, countries of origin, diasporas and members of civil society and the international community;

- Providing spaces and opportunities for migrants to develop creative responses to the COVID- 19 pandemic, including with a view to longer-term recovery;
- Addressing the special protection needs of migrant children while ensuring access to education and other services;
- Expanding opportunities for youth to build their skills and tools;
- Partnering with youth networks to co-create solutions;
- Promoting sustainable long-term projects that are inclusive in terms of stakeholder engagement, but which also pass the baton to youth so they can decide how they would like to work;
- Providing opportunities for migrant women to participate in policymaking on issues that affect their lives by improving educational opportunities for migrant women and girls, so that they can contribute their skills and efforts to the global economic recovery;
- Addressing the barriers that migrant women face, enabling them to enhance their own development and contribution;
- Continuing work with national and private actors to address challenges regarding migrant remittances, given their critical role in securing livelihoods and well-being as stressed in Objective 20 of the Global Compact;
- Taking the opportunity presented by the 2022 International Migration Review Forum by dedicating the first IDM in 2022 to an exchange of best practices, innovative approaches and recommendations in relation to the implementation of the Global Compact.

## **Closing words**

In his closing remarks, the Director General of IOM, António Vitorino, noted that the second IDM had been a great opportunity to reflect once again on the impact of the pandemic on migration management systems, and identify ways in which governments could work together to respond effectively to similar events in the future, without risking a return to global immobility and further socioeconomic instability. Work had also begun on preparations for the next IDM session scheduled in February 2022, ahead of the International Migration Review Forum, which would involve taking stock of the outcome of the various Global Compact review exercises and identifying challenges and gaps to be addressed.

This summary is not exhaustive. A comprehensive report providing a more detailed account of the deliberations and highlighting the experiences, good practices and recommendations shared during this session will be made available in due course.