

First Session of the International Dialogue on Migration 2023
Leveraging Human Mobility in Support of the Sustainable Development Goals
30-31 March 2023, New York

Summary of conclusions

I. Background and Scope

The IOM's International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) 2023 was held in New York (with opportunity for remote participation) on 30-31 March 2023, on the theme "Leveraging Human Mobility in Support of the Sustainable Development Goals." This session of the IDM took place at a crucial timing, in light of the forthcoming SDG Summit (September 2023) which will mark the mid-way point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and provide an opportunity to assess progress towards the SDGs. This NY session of the IDM, along with the one scheduled in Geneva in October, is part of a broader global process to develop transformative and accelerated actions leading up to the SDGs target year of 2030. This IDM was also timely in the lead up to global commitments that include the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the UN High-level meeting on universal health coverage (UHC-HLM), the SDG Summit, and the Summit of the Future.

The scope of this session was to provide an opportunity for Member States, international organizations, civil society, youth, women, communities and other key stakeholders, to take stock of the complex and intertwined ways in which human mobility is impacted by and impacts major transformations and challenges of our time. Building on progresses made since 2015, and the landmark IMRF Progress Declaration, this IDM session also intended to keep and advance the momentum to maximize the positive impact of human mobility by exploring and refining practical actions towards the acceleration of the SDGs.

The NY session of the IDM 2023 had the following objectives:

1. Take stock and discuss promising and emerging practices of integrated migration governance solutions for the acceleration of the SDGs, with a focus on interlinkages across SDGs and targets, and key areas where transformative pathways for accelerated progress have been successful.
2. Promote community-based approach discussions about challenges and good practices on identifying and addressing the needs of migrants, leaving no one behind.
3. Identify opportunities and recommendations to accelerate tangible global and regional actions timely in the road of the UN processes global summits.

II. Structure and attendance

Since a successful implementation of the SDGs requires systematic and multi-stakeholder engagement, the IDM NY was structured in 5 panels that provided the platform for multi-layered discussions: at the Global, People and Local levels, in line with the UN Common Agenda, the GCM and the Agenda 2030. In this way, the IDM intended to promote interlinkages between national implementation, regional and local efforts, highlighting good practices in the context of the evaluation of the SDGs, with a whole-of-society and whole-of-organization approaches.

This session had 709 participants registered from over 130 countries and it involved around 230 participants on Day 1 and 125 on Day 2. Of the 41 speakers and moderators, 51% were men and 49% women representing all continents. Representatives from Member States, Regional organizations, civil society, academia, youth contributed both as panelists and from the floor (online and in person). The agenda of the two-day session was structured as below:

Day 1

- Opening session: Ensuring human mobility is leveraged as a crucial component to achieve the 2030 Agenda
- Panel 1: Strengthening migration data for action, insight, and foresight
- Panel 2: Towards the acceleration of SDG 3 implementation: ensuring an inclusive Universal Health
- Panel 3: Empowering Diasporas and Migrants as Development Agents

Day 2

- Panel 4: Engaging Youth to Capitalize on the potential of Human Mobility in the context of Climate Change, Environmental Degradation, Disasters and for Greening the Economy
- Panel 5: Building resilient and peaceful cities and communities
- Concluding remarks

III. Summary of conclusions

A summary of conclusions is provided below, in a way that highlights challenges, progresses on migration management towards the SDGs and tangible good practices in alignment with the expected outcomes.

Opening session

The meeting was opened by IOM's Director General, Antonio Vitorino, who draw attention on the **inter-relation and connection between development and human mobility**, which is profound and more relevant than ever. Human mobility can be an impactful driver for development, and a powerful engine

to deliver the SDG agenda, if right conditions are in place. The need to anchor the GCM in the 2030 agenda is essential; the SDGs cannot be realized without the involvement of migrants.

The **challenges of our times**, like pandemic, forced displacement, climate change, require urgent action; global multi-stakeholders' efforts and partnerships are needed to face these realities and protect vulnerable groups, including migrants, which are the most affected. The GCM serves as blue print for managing migration, protecting migrants, and promoting the positive impact of human mobility. **Human mobility considerations need to be integrated** not only within development plans and programs but also in crisis prevention, preparedness and disaster risk reduction.

A **whole-of-society approach**, which includes the involvement of diasporas and migrants themselves as well as localized leadership, is needed for effective action and to advance development goals. The goal is to join forces and seize the momentum and identify and agree on concrete actions towards accelerating the achievement of SDGs; there is need to be **bold and ambitious**.

During the opening session, other topics were raised. These included the need to promote the regularization of undocumented migrants, through pathways of regular migration, a dignified and safe reception at borders, a protective right to asylum, the closure of places that deprive people's liberty.

Several **good practices** were highlighted, including: regional platforms for information sharing, and gathering perspectives on mobility, environment, and development, as well as to disseminate good practices, promote innovation, and engage diasporas and civil society; bilateral and multilateral partnerships for the identification of common solutions, for example around migrants' skills transfers, and regular migration pathways. The need to increase representation of affected populations in high-level dialogue on migration, to involve youth which are ready to commit and innovate, and the need to integrate mobility concerns into international processes and treaties were also mentioned.

Other good practices were presented, such as the provision of social benefits as a way of helping migrants to remain in their own countries; the creation of offices to work with irregular migrants, refugees and stateless people on the municipal level, offering social and legal services, and emergency shelters; the work of municipalities which are piloting new initiatives to welcome migrants and refugees. It was made clear that migration policies of welcoming are possible.

Day 1 Panel 1 - Strengthening migration data for action, insight and foresight

During the first panel, speakers underscored how **data** about international migration **highlights the positive role migrants play in sustainable development**. It was highlighted that the increase of remittances flow during the COVID pandemic is evidence of remittances being a leading source of development finance worldwide. Additionally, **migrant labor** plays an essential role in global food security, and migrants make up a significant part of essential workers as well as senior managers and leaders.

It was agreed that **high quality data** will be needed to deliver on the mandate of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM, to inform evidence-based policies, and this will require domestic and international

collaboration, to avoid that data exists in silos. **Disaggregated and inter-sectional data** is needed, especially for vulnerable groups, like minorities, children, youth, migrant women and non-binary persons, was raised as a way to generate tailored policies.

It was noted that **scarcity of data** currently exists on the drivers and impacts of migration, and on the benefits of migration on sustainable development. Speakers highlighted that many administrative records or vital statistics are designed to meet government-specific needs, and do not include migration-related indicators; therefore, **methodology-strengthening is needed**. While the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred innovation in data methodology and collaboration, **capacity varies greatly** between countries, and administrative ecosystems are often incomplete. Speakers highlighted the need for political, financial and human resources commitments to improve data capacity at the national and international level.

Several **good practices** on data collection were shared, such as UNOC's observatory on smuggling data, a migrant registry to understand access to healthcare, which also includes disaggregated data on people with disabilities and different ethnicities (in Colombia), the African Union's observatory on migration, and regional partnerships. Other participants noted some challenges, like collecting data from irregular migrants, and the inclusion of returning migrants' experiences in data collection. Overall, **investments and partnerships on data collection** were encouraged.

Day 1 Panel 2 - Empowering Diasporas and Migrants as Development Agents

During panel 2, speakers reinforced the importance of creating effective and **whole-of-society strategies** to guarantee social and economic integration of migrants and the communities they call home. Countries that have applied this approach by working with different stakeholders, like migrants, diasporas and civil society, have made significant progresses. Mobilizing and empowering women and youth is also critical to leveraging human mobility for development.

Speakers underscored the **power of diaspora** to drive development and the need to invest in the collective leadership of migrant communities. It was emphasized how **remittances** are an important contribution to national GDPs and an accelerator for economic and social development. **Diaspora entrepreneurship** is valuable to both host countries and countries of origin, as well as diasporas' **knowledge, skills, and technology transfers**. The needs to establish national skill development policies, capacity building, and education programs in developing countries was raised, as a way to increase migrants' opportunities, job security and improve migrants' skills and financial power, along with the need to build financial systems that promote migrants' financial inclusion and literacy.

It was noted that governments and financial institutions must work together to create **inclusive financial and digital infrastructures** which facilitate international exchanges. This includes equipping migrants with adequate systems to safely and conveniently send remittances. Some platforms (like OACPS) have established engagement opportunities that allow direct contact, integration, and exchange between diaspora groups worldwide; others allow donations to countries in crisis (ex. Ukraine).

Host countries **need to promote welcoming communities** for migrants which are embedded in inclusivity

and non-discrimination and which elevate migrants' opportunities for employment, business creation, access to services and information. Creating welcoming communities contributes to achieving sustainable development, resilience to authoritarianism, and a sense of *esprit de corps* which encourages more individuals to see themselves as stakeholders in their communities, economies, and democracies.

Day 1 Panel 3 - Towards the acceleration of SDG 3 implementation: ensuring an inclusive Universal Health

This panel offered concrete actions for the acceleration of SDG 3 implementation and the **inclusion of migrants within the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda**. Access to health care is a human right for all, including migrants and refugees, regardless of administrative or legal status, and is protected by several international conventions. UHC inclusive of migrants and refugees is necessary to achieve SDGs and the costs of excluding migrants from UHC in host nations are higher than the costs of including them.

Several **good practices** and ideas for advancing this agenda were shared, including i) **cross-border collaboration** between multiple sectors for health emergency preparedness; ii) practices to address the **unique health needs of migrant women, children and adolescents**; iii) the power of **community engagement and leadership** in health programmes; iv) **generation and sharing of data** on health outcomes and the **barriers** faced by migrants; v) the role of **health professional diaspora** in both sending and receiving communities; vi) **durable solutions in health** for internal displacement, among others.

The inclusion of civil society organizations and diasporas to improve health of migrants and refugees was mentioned as crucial, along with the **need to integrate migrants' needs and perspectives** in health programs. Children, adolescents, youth, including unaccompanied minors, who make up a substantial proportion of affected populations and have unique needs, need to be engaged in health policies.

Essential health services surrounding migration must include mental health and psychosocial supports, services for returning migrants, and for IDPs. Some destination and transit countries face specific challenges such as hypermobility of migrants, intensification of migration, cultural and linguistic difficulties, or raising migrants' awareness around risks. These issues, in addition to human trafficking and violence, have a cost. **Technical support and collaboration are needed** to address these challenges.

The importance of **building strong health systems and healthcare worker capacity** to develop the skills, knowledge, flexibility, and cultural competence to care for refugees and migrants was raised. It was also mentioned how governments need to ensure a clear firewall between health service and immigration authorities, to build trust with migrants and engagement with healthcare services.

Day 2 Panel 4 - Engaging Youth to Capitalize on the potential of Human Mobility in the context of Climate Change, Environmental Degradation, Disasters and for Greening the Economy

This panel discussed the linkages between climate change and human mobility and the disproportionate effects of climate change on youth. Speakers clarified that one of the biggest barriers to transitioning into green economies is the lack of investments and trainings. Innovative green economy solutions need **the**

right investment to accelerate green economic activities and prevent future greater costs. **Access to finance** is essential and must reach small enterprises.

Some **good practices** were highlighted, including platforms for collaboration between countries that are climate vulnerable (i.e. through the Climate Vulnerable Forum); direct funding for climate driven loss and damage addressed to climate-vulnerable countries for green development; the empowerment of youth to promote climate diplomacy and ambitious climate actions; dedicated fundings and awards for best practices developed by migrants and diasporas. Other points raised include local collaboration in green energy, conservation, coastal protection; the importance of local actors' green economies; the importance of remittances to support resiliency in climate affected countries.

Other good practices were mentioned, such as mobile training programs for rural, low income and climate vulnerable communities, green bonds for youth, regional collaboration centers to integrate efforts between IGOs and development banks to support agricultural enterprises, the Loss and Damage Fund (proposed at COP27), for compensation to those most affected but least responsible for climate change.

Some recommendations were presented, like offering opportunities for **migrants to build innovative solutions for their countries of origin** to accelerate the transition into green economies, and the availability of **green jobs for youth**. Youth migrants can influence policy decisions by engaging with relevant industry players to drive key policy actions that lead to green economy transitions. **Equitable distribution of the opportunities** related to the transition to green economy and markets is crucial for the legitimacy of the green transition and for addressing the drivers of migration, especially towards the cities.

It was stressed how **education is key** to develop a "green civic spirit". Education on climate change, which is coherently funded and systematically introduced in the curricula, is an indispensable precursor to young people taking up green careers for their communities. The needs for good urban planning and support to small and medium locally owned agricultural industries were also raised. Data, coherent policies, multi-stakeholder engagement (including private sector) are needed to develop green economies that address adaptation and resilience. The need to facilitate both **mobility and settlement as climate solutions/mitigation tools** for vulnerable populations was emphasized. The GCM is the leading policy document on addressing the role of migration and diasporas in addressing climate change.

Day 2 Panel 5 - Building resilient and peaceful cities and communities

During this panel, **community engagement (including of migrants and citizens) and community policy-making** were presented as complementary concepts that work together to create peaceful and inclusive cities. Panelists highlighted that through community engagement, communities feel empowered to make positive changes in their neighborhoods. By empowering **communities to take ownership of public safety and building trust** between community members and law enforcement, as well as between migrants and host governments, a shared sense of responsibility for community well-being can be created. Perception of fairness of access to services is also key for peacebuilding.



There was consensus on the need for **migrants to be integrated in communities** through better access to education, language training, organizing, housing, and networks. Participants also shared a collective understanding that migrants need to be considered as partners and problem solvers, and contribute to practices that are beneficial for the overall communities' wellbeing. Participants advocated for the need to establish effective networks between rural and urban societies; sustainable development of secondary cities and rural areas is needed to provide economic opportunities for youth who may otherwise leave, and for migrants who would otherwise gravitate to mega-cities where living conditions are challenging.

Some **good practices** shared included: community-based models that are driven by people, regardless of migration status, gender, ethnicity, age, religion, or other factors, for alternative governance that can solidify into longer-term policies and approaches; inclusion of migrants at all levels of decision making; establishment of structural dialogue committees to collectively decide on priorities; provision of psychosocial support for communities and for migrants specifically, and of skills and language trainings that can help migrants integrate and contribute to sustainable development in their host community; laws that accelerate women's participation in policy-making and local governance.

Some **recommendations** shared included joint initiatives between migrant and host communities to pursue common interests, like children's wellbeing; the modernization of labour laws to promote migrant workers' rights and protection; the promotion of plans and programs to combat racial discrimination, and xenophobia and of welcoming national migration policies.

Closing Recommendations

Some closing remarks that were shared are presented below:

- ✓ **Improve Data Quality and Analysis:** This is critical to supporting evidence-based policy making. While there has been progress in the availability and quality of data on international migration, the data is still incomplete; the need for more disaggregated data and migratory routes worldwide are needed.
- ✓ **Reduce Remittance Transaction Costs:** Remittances continue to play a key role in the progress towards the SDG's. In 2021, a record \$605 billion USD in remittances was sent by migrants to low- and middle-income countries; but remittance transaction costs need to be reduced. Currently, worldwide, the average fee for remittance transactions is 6%; the goal is to reduce this to 3%.
- ✓ **Promote the Inclusion and Empowerment of Women and Youth:** Women, girls and youth make up a significant portion of today's migrants. The interaction between gender and migration is complicated and ever evolving. Women and girls' rights are the forefront of our sustainable development efforts and social justice, in order to leave no-one behind. The critical role that the youth play in advancing the SDGs needs to be recognized, and youth needs to be meaningfully engaged in decision making and implementations.



- ✓ **Increase International Cooperation:** International cooperation is critical to leveraging migration as a driver of sustainable development and the SDGs.
- ✓ **Develop Safe & Regular Migration Pathways Across Borders:** Safe, orderly, and law-abiding migration is a crucial element of completing the 2023 Agenda. Safe and regular migration pathways across borders need to be promoted.
- ✓ **Continue Research on Root Causes of Migration:** The existing gaps in knowledge regarding the drivers of migration and human mobility often lead to poor decision-making and mistrust. Governments and civil society need to narrow this gap in knowledge. Drivers/roots of migration are closely linked to the challenges to promoting development.
- ✓ **Improve Healthcare of Mobile Populations:** We must advocate for the right to healthcare for people on the move with specific focus on women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. This is key to reducing inequality. For instance, consider the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The fundamental right to healthcare is not just in the interests of migrants, but in the interest of all communities where migrants are present.