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GMG Panel

98th session of the Council of the ~~International~~ Organization for Migration

Director General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear friends,

It is a great honour for me to attend the 98th session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration, and to present the highlights of the work that has been done by the Global Migration Group under UNITAR's chairmanship during the second half of 2009.

As many of you are aware, the GMG has been the object of criticism in the past. Since its inception in 2006, it sometimes struggled to delineate and mobilize its membership and to formulate a joint programme of work that would include, but not be limited to, support for inter-governmental processes such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

In the midst of global crises, I therefore dedicated my chairmanship to transforming what could be called a "crisis" within the GMG into an opportunity for the Group to redefine its goals and expectations and to adopt rules of engagement that will ensure its smooth functioning in the future.

The endorsement of an annual GMG work plan at the beginning of June of this year marked an important first step in this direction. The work plan set out 3 strategic objectives:

- (1) To instill a strong sense of purpose and develop a coherent voice for the GMG on current migration policy and governance challenges, most urgently the global recession and its impact on migration;
- (2) To review the mandate and clearly define the working methods of the GMG to enhance its performance and value added;
- (3) To increase public visibility of the GMG and support the third Global Forum on Migration and Development, held in Athens, Greece on 4-5 November 2009.

I am pleased to say that we have made significant progress in the achievement of all these goals:

1. We have won the renewed commitment of GMG Heads of agency at a high-level retreat convened by UNITAR on 9 October. At this occasion, Principals pledged active and "clever" leadership as well as enhanced engagement with all stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities that migration presents, especially in the context of the global recession.
2. We agreed on a common set of priorities, as reflected in the reorganized terms of reference of the GMG.

3. We endorsed clearly defined working methods for the GMG, including the establishment of a governing troika and the use of annual work plans to ensure greater continuity in the work of the Group.

4. We spoke with one voice at the third Global Forum on Migration and Development in Athens. Through the statement of the Chair, and a joint GMG press conference we shared with Governments our assessment and policy recommendations on the impact of the economic crisis on international migration.

5. Indeed, we pooled our resources and expertise to provide timely analysis and guidance on the impacts of the crisis on many aspects of migration and related policies. A series of fact-sheets was made available at the GFMD 3, which will be updated on an ongoing basis and is also disseminated through the GMG public website.

6. We overhauled the GMG website to provide a centralized, easily accessible repository of information and resources on international migration and the GMG.

However, we are not satisfied. These achievements mark the beginning rather than the end point of our efforts. We have only laid the groundwork for enhanced future engagement of the GMG with governments and non-state actors at the global and regional levels. Many challenges lie ahead:

The three main areas of concern, which we identified this year in the context of the global recession, will remain on the GMG's agenda well beyond 2009. Indeed, we are committed to working together to ensure that: a) the development gains of migration are being widely recognized and leveraged; b) migrants' rights are protected; and c) more robust data is collected to provide a solid evidence base for policy-making.

UNDP, the next chair of the GMG in 2010, just recently launched the 2009 Human Development Report on human mobility and development. I am confident that the report's recommendations on how to increase the positive effects of migration for human development and make mobility work for the poorest will provide valuable impulses for future GMG initiatives.

I also see a window of opportunity in strengthening local capacities and promoting cooperation between municipal authorities in countries of origin and destination to respond effectively to the challenges of migration governance. Empowering local actors could pave the way for national policy frameworks that are better attuned to migration realities and grounded in international law. Local actors could also add a valuable voice to, and help implement the results of, international and regional consultative processes.

All our efforts will need to be accompanied by improved public information to raise awareness of the positive contributions of migration to global prosperity. The organization of a GMG public conference in early 2010 will provide an opportunity for UN agencies, the IOM and the World Bank to spread this message, speaking with one voice and in the spirit of collaboration and results-orientation that has characterized UNITAR's chairmanship.