



**STATEMENT BY H.E. MARIA FERNANDA ESPINOSA, PRESIDENT OF THE 73RD
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**International Dialogue on Migration 2019
“Youth and migration: engaging youth as key partners in migration governance”
February 28**

Distinguished **António Vitorino**, Director General of IOM

Esteemed **Jayathma Wickramanayake**, Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth,

Dear Permanent Representatives,

Dear Young People,

Civil Society Representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I want to thank the International Organization for Migration for inviting us to this event which offers us a unique opportunity to focus on young migrants and identify how we can respond to their needs and expectations.

I am very pleased to see today the presence of young people and organizations from civil society. I am sure that your participation and contributions will prove to be most valuable and will help us to better understand the phenomenon of young migration and identify the most appropriate policies to address it.

Excellencies,

Allow me to refer to three topics:

First: the challenges that young people face in the context of international migration.

The reality is that young people are moving more than ever before. Whatever the reason why they decide to migrate, they always do it with the hopes and dreams of a better life for them and their families.

Their reasons to leave their places of origin are diverse; they range from studying, finding a job or starting a business, to reuniting with their families, escaping poverty or violence.

In the case of women, discrimination and gender violence or the restrictions to their rights can also be determining factors.

Unfortunately, many young migrants are exposed to dangerous journeys where they risk their physical integrity and their lives. Since the year 2000, it is estimated that more than 60.000 migrants have died during their journeys and thousands have fallen victims of human smuggling and trafficking.

In recent years, we have witnessed a cruel practice: the **separation of children and young migrants** from their parents and accompanies.

When reaching their countries of destination, often the dangers continue and can be added to social exclusion, xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance.

Many times young migrants are stigmatized and rejected by the communities they live in, while **female** young migrants face triple discrimination: for their gender, for their age and for being migrants.

Frequently, young migrants work under uncertain conditions, they are victims of labour exploitation and do not have social protection.

These situations deprive them from a dignified and full life and prevent them from reaching their full potential.

In a world in which 11% of all migrants have an age range of 15 to 24, we must create positive migratory experiences that can project young people into a better future to contribute to sustainable development in their countries of origin and destination.

Protecting their rights is fundamental: guaranteeing access to health, quality education, housing and basic services.

Which leads me to my **second point: young migrants are agents of change.**

Young people, with their inventiveness, creativity and dynamism, integrate faster to their new societies and they bring their communities together. They have a preponderant role to favor intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. They are key players to consolidate peaceful and inclusive societies.

Nearly **4,3 millions** of young people study in Universities outside their countries of origin, as well as many others who migrate and take their knowledge and skills with them. They all enrich their societies.

Young migrants are part of the most capable generation to take advantage of information and communication technologies and social networks for many of their initiatives and undertakings, contributing thus to inclusive economic growth and wellbeing.

Seizing the opportunities that young migrants offer us will contribute in making progress in the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

To do so, in the framework of the Global Compact for a Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, implementing policies that favor conditions of freedom, dignity, equality and security for young people in situations of human mobility is fundamental. And those policies must be designed and implemented with their participation, taking their needs and experiences into consideration. This leads me **to my last point.**

The best spokespersons and representatives for young people are themselves. We need to involve them directly in the actions that will impact their future. Nothing for young people without young people.

The Youth Forum convened by the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, during the Marrakesh Conference, is an excellent starting point. Let us echo the three calls for action that this youth Group made to us in Marrakesh: “engage with us; Invest in us; and Count us in.”

Allow me to say to the young people that are here with us today, and those you represent as well: your opinions matter and they matter a lot and your

participation can make a difference. Do not doubt how powerful your voices are.

Your contribution to successfully implement the Global Compact on Migration is essential. Therefore, I encourage Member States to include young people in their planning processes as part of the development of national strategies to implement the Compact.

As President of the General Assembly, I want to express my absolute commitment to hear you out and promote your inclusion at the heart of our Organization.

I am sure that this will be a fruitful debate and I look forward to the results of this event, which will bring innovative ideas and suggestions that will aid in making the United Nations more relevant for all.

Thank you.