

International Dialogue on Migration 2020

COVID-19 crisis: Reimagining the role of migrants and human mobility for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

CLOSING REMARKS

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Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies, Health representatives, migrant and diaspora representatives, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking you all for taking the time to join us either in person or virtually in this IDM and for honouring us with your engagement and active participation throughout the past two days. This was the 20th edition of the IDM and was dedicated to the theme “COVID-19 crisis: reimagining the role of migrants and human mobility for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”.

Allow me to share with you **several key takeaways** from the past two days:

Safe, coordinated, and inclusive human mobility is a key part of the solution to post-COVID economic and social recovery.

As shared by our speakers, in the short term, pandemic-ensued challenges for human mobility include livelihoods and health risks, loss of employment, remittances and immigrant status, discrimination, and wage and benefit loss. The longer-term challenges for migrants and human mobility are equally significant if not more severe, with a serious impact on individuals’ and families’ welfare and wellbeing.

We have heard from our speakers a variety of ways to address these challenges and to ensure migrants, especially those that are already vulnerable, are included in the national and local health, and socio-economic responses to the pandemic, regardless of their migration status. Through these efforts, migrants can better contribute their

skills and efforts to the sustainable development and long-term resilience for all in both their destination and origin countries.

The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to reimagine human mobility

Through the COVID response efforts, we have seen new opportunities for greater migration governance with increased possibilities for cooperation networks to build more resilient societies for all.

- The pandemic requires global cooperation and cooperation of all countries. This includes joint ownership of migration flows.
- Efforts must build on existing frameworks such as the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Coordinated Migration and the Sustainable Development Agenda in order to promote the advancement of the goals and commitments made which will be key for a sustainable recovery.
- There must be expanded pathways for legal migration and skill and certification recognition to promote this recovery.

By encouraging economic and social opportunities for migrants and ensuring their rights are protected through more coordinated, targeted, and inclusive policies, we have the ability to not only empower migrants to reach their full potential, but also the ability to leverage their contributions for a better, durable future for everyone.

COVID-19 has amplified the fragility of vulnerable migrant populations and only a truly inclusive response and post-COVID recovery can ensure the safety and well-being of all.

As the COVID crisis has in some cases exacerbated vulnerabilities in migrant populations such as women, children, and victims of trafficking and smuggling and have allowed for further exploitation of these populations, it is critical that policies are established within COVID response and recovery efforts to address the needs of these populations and to ensure that governments and businesses uphold human rights within policies.

As it emerged from the discussions, to better address vulnerabilities and improve counter-trafficking measures especially in a global health crisis, inter-agency cooperation at local and regional levels must be improved along with ensuring countries receive reliable and accurate information.

The needs of migrant children especially should not be overlooked, they require urgent responses by ensuring access to protection, education and other social services. Similarly, speakers shared perspectives of international students and young internal migrants within cities that are vulnerable populations in the pandemic context, their needs must be addressed with strengthened health services and capacity building programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic provides lessons for building more resilient societies and better migration governance for the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Migrant and diaspora communities can play a significant role in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals through reinvigorating social and economic development in a post-crisis environment. We heard their personal perspectives yesterday and today, during our Migrants' Stories session, we must enable migrants and diaspora to contribute their skills for economic and social development. Economic contributions of migrants and diaspora communities during and after the pandemic must be safeguarded through policies targeted, among others at:

- lowering remittance costs;
- financial literacy programs for migrants;
- safer, global remittance mechanisms;
- increasing capacity for reskilling and certification of migrants in diaspora and for returning migrants;
- promotion of alternative work, innovation, and entrepreneurship activities; and

- agreements with destination and origin countries to ensure increased access to social services.

Migrant women are at the frontline of COVID-19 response efforts, they need to be included in the socio-economic recovery plans.

Migrant women are not only vulnerable, but they are agents of change that provide an added value to communities. COVID-response efforts must include targeted policies to empower migrant women as agents of change for a full and inclusive recovery such as:

- improving education opportunities for women and girls;
- ensuring undiscriminated access to healthcare especially for migrant women;
- establishing increased protections for domestic and healthcare migrant workers and further regulations in these sectors; and
- creating increased opportunities for reporting of domestic violence and situations of risk for domestic workers that do not put the migrants at further risk.

Global and regional pathways must be established to enable migrant women especially young migrant women to contribute their skills and efforts to the global economic recovery.

The pandemic has only emphasized the importance of healthcare and especially for those on the frontline. New policies and programs must be adopted to ensure universal healthcare especially for the most vulnerable populations within this health crisis and beyond.

Diaspora members can play a key role in informing and aiding members globally in the midst of a global health crisis.

As noted by our speakers today, misinformation can be dangerous amidst a pandemic. Accurate, timely, and accessible information is key to addressing a crisis

situation. Diaspora members can be a trusted source for spreading this crucial information for an effective COVID-19 response and prevention of future spread.

As showcased during the Migrants' Stories segment migrant speakers, diaspora members can also serve a key role in empowering young migrants and origin community members with new training for innovative industries and projects to create greater opportunities locally and internationally for these individuals despite a global health crisis.

Combatting xenophobia is key to the recovery from the pandemic. The fight against xenophobia should be reinforced and be included in economic and social recovery efforts.

Racist and xenophobic incidents have increased globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic and there is fear that with the post-pandemic, longer-term recession these will only increase.

- Migrants must be emphasized as a key part of the recovery effort and be included within post-COVID efforts.
- Migrants also must be recognized as an important part of societal enrichment and economic development in their destination and origin countries.

Cities and local municipalities are vital in ensuring migrants needs are addressed and social cohesion is encouraged within the context of the pandemic.

- To create an effective international, localized response, the different challenges and needs of both low- and high-income cities must be considered, and national governments must take into account regional and municipal needs in their policies.
- Cities can play a large role in ensuring a migrant-sensitive local health system not only assisting the migrants address their health needs, but also aiding the larger community with migrant inclusion in health systems.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration provides a framework for inclusive COVID-19 preparedness, prevention, response and recovery measures.

The GCM frames inclusive policies that protect migrants' rights and leverage migrants' positive contributions to sustainable development that can and are being used by governments around the world.

As shared by the local representatives to further implement the policies of GCM and to promote resilient societies for the future:

- mechanisms to protect migrant rights regardless of their status, particularly the most vulnerable migrants, must be strengthened;
- social and economic integration of migrants into host community with the help of international community must be facilitated;
- all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance must be combatted;
- awareness-raising and capacity-building must be increased.

Conclusions

In conclusion, allow me also to highlight the importance of coordinated action on ensuring an inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery. Only together and with the needs of all actors including the most vulnerable considered, we will be able to move past the pandemic and economic and social fallout that has ensued in consequence. To build more resilient societies for the future, we will have to work at the local, national, and transnational levels to ensure safe, coordinated, orderly migration that involves targeted migrant protections and policies. In this way, we can come closer to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

From IOM's side, an inclusive, post-COVID-19 recovery is our priority. IOM has been committed to addressing the needs of all migrant populations including those

most vulnerable and to promoting policy frameworks that benefit not only the economic recovery and development of migrants, but also that of their destination and origin country. In a recent report, “*The Global Compact for Migration (GCM): Well Governed Migration as an Essential Element of Effective COVID-19 Response*”, we have analysed the impact of COVID-19 on human mobility and created policy recommendations for how the GCM can be leveraged for an effective COVID-19 response and recovery. This IDM is helping further this analysis and policy recommendations in consequence, focusing on gathering knowledge and expertise on the impact of COVID-19 on human mobility and awareness of policies and strategies for economic and social recovery beyond COVID and for building more resilient societies for the future.

This is a brief recap of the main messages of this meeting. As always, a longer summary will be available in the coming days, followed at a later stage by a comprehensive report of this session.

I thank all panellists and all of you for your participation and important contributions to this dialogue. It was wonderful to have such a diverse and numerous audience members here today virtually and to have those who could attend the conference in person despite the current, unprecedented situation. It was great to hear so many good practices and perspectives on establishing migrants as a key part of the COVID response and recovery efforts to build more resilient societies for the future.

I would like also to thank the interpreters for the excellent job they have done. My very special thanks to all my colleagues in IOM that have worked on this event.

I hope that today and yesterday’s discussions responded to your interests and expectations and that they have been for you days as productive and insightful as they have been for me. I hope you will return to your offices with a new set of tools and good practices from this session and start implementing them in your day-to-day work. We look forward to next year’s 21st edition of IDM. This session is adjourned.