International Organization for Migration (IOM)
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Opening Remarks
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"Exploring Contemporary Migration Challenges: Reflecting on the Outcomes of the 2013 High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Post-2015 Development Agenda"

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Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all at the Fifth Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretariats of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs). Allow me to express my sincerest appreciation to the League of Arab States for co-organizing this meeting with IOM.

This is a milestone year for two reasons: first, this is the tenth year since our first Global RCP Meeting in 2005; and second, we are launching the Arab Regional Consultative Process (ARCP) in partnership with the League of Arab States. This is a testament to the importance of the region when we talk of migration.

I would like to outline three items today: (1) the context in which RCPs operate; (2) the purpose and achievements of RCPs; and (3) what are the remaining prospects for the future.

I.   Setting the Scene: Migration in a World in Disarray

We live in an era of unprecedented human mobility – a period in which more people are on the move than ever before – more than 1 billion in our 7-billion world. Of these, 250 million are international migrants, and 750 million are domestic migrants. International migrants have remained constant at about 3 percent of the world's population for several decades, but numerically, migrants are more numerous than ever before. And this is because the world's population quadrupled in the last century – a first that is unlikely to be repeated.

Migration is a "mega-trend" because of a half-dozen or so "drivers" of large-scale migration – in current EU parlance, these are also known as "root causes". I list them under the letter "D" for easy recall:

1. **Demography**, which I have already described.
2. **Demand for labour –** an aging industrialized Global North in need of workers at all skill levels, and a youthful, heavily unemployed Global South with a turgid rate of job creation.
3. **Distance shrinking technology** – e.g., budget travel.
4. **Digital revolution** – 300 million persons connected to the Internet at the turn of the century and today, 3 billion, heading toward 4 billion Internet users. (Mark Zuckerberg).
5. **Degradation** – of the environment, as well as the effects of climate change. Whole islands, such as Kiribati in the Pacific forecast to disappear into the sea as it rises, which will lead to a new definition of "statelessness".
6. **Desire –** for a better life. Many of those crossing the Mediterranean today are not refugees but migrants, fleeing abject poverty. Unaccompanied minors (UAMs), persons seeking to join their families are also part of this group of migrants.
7. **Disparities –** socio-economic – ever widening gaps between the Global North and Global South, growing inexorably, as more and more wealth is concentrated into the hands of the few
8. **Disasters –** of all sorts: natural, armed conflict, internal turmoil and political instability.

As we speak, the world is experiencing the largest displacement and movement of people in recorded history: 60 million currently uprooted around the world.

Europe's neighbours to the south and east are confronted with the direct or indirect impacts of war, internal conflict, political instability, economic collapse and, increasingly, the environmental effects of a changing climate. Persecution, violation of human rights, poverty and lack of access to essential services are only some of the factors that drive individuals from their homes.

More than 500,000 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have arrived in the European Union this year.

While focusing on the emergency in Europe, however, we bear in mind that Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey are the generous but often unpublicized hosts for more than 4 million Syrians who have fled their homeland. And there are other large displaced contingents scattered around the world: Afghans in Iran and Pakistan, for instance; or Somalis in East Africa.

We remember also that we, the international community, are most unlikely to respond effectively to emergencies, without comprehensive policy frameworks addressing all aspects of contemporary mobility; which brings me to my second point: In what way can RCPs help us achieve this objective?

II.   Revisiting the Purpose and Achievements of RCPs

A.   Purpose

IOM and its partners have been supporting RCPs for some 30 years. The number of RCPs has doubled from nine in 2005 to 18 in 2015 – covering almost every region of the world with some 160 countries participating in one or more RCPs. It is worth looking at what three decades of RCPs has achieved but before doing so, we need to review what they were intended to do.

Allow me to reiterate the purpose of an RCP. At its very core, a regional consultative process is a platform that brings together like-minded countries to do three main things:

1) **to understand** the nature, causes and consequences of migration;

2) **to track** migration trends and patterns; and

3) **to identify** appropriate policy responses.

B.   Achievements

Given the political sensitivity of migration, the very fact that governments in all regions of the world have committed themselves to consultation is perhaps an achievement in itself. Thankfully, however, there is solid evidence that RCPs have produced much more than meetings and meeting reports.

The conclusions that Professor Randall Hansen drew in his (IOM-commissioned) 2010 assessment of RCPs remain valid today:

- RCPs create bonds of trust among participating countries; all RCPs operate as "depoliticized" settings, where the main objective is not to defend positions but engage in open and honest discourse.

- RCPs have increased the international community's appreciation of migration issues and challenges. The exchange of information and the improvement of the understanding of migration have had substantial impact on migration governance world wide. Many RCPs for instance, have systematized the way in which they gather, store and disseminate information on migration and migration policy.

- RCPs have encouraged communication among migration practitioners. Contacts established through RCPs last beyond specific meetings and evolve, over time, into professional networks.

- RCPs build capacity. They are places where practitioners can learn – at relatively little expense - what policies have been tried, under what conditions and with what results.

- RCPs can shape public policy. At the international level, they have contributed to the emergence of convergent policy approaches concerning topics as varied as labour migration, integration, return or border management. At the national level they have encouraged migration-related ministries and agencies to coordinate their activity and to develop plans, policies and practices.

- Finally, allow me to focus on the contribution of RCPs to strengthening the nexus between migration and development. RCPs must be given particular credit for cross-fertilizing important global processes like the UN High level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

I recall with satisfaction that the Fourth Global RCP Meeting in Lima in 2013 included in its outcome document specific recommendations for consideration by the UN Secretary General and the UN General Assembly in the context of the 2013 High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. This paved the way, in turn, for the inclusion of migration in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This brings me to my next point, the road ahead for RCPs.

III. Looking Ahead: **Prospects for the Future**

A. **Migration and Development**

In the past RCPs have demonstrated an impressive ability to promote policy innovation. The Colombo Process has worked hard to improve levels of protection for migrant workers. The RCM has had success with the criminalization of human smuggling and trafficking. The IGC has had considerable influence on the shaping of asylum systems in Europe. I would expect RCPs to continue to work across a broad spectrum of policy issues, but there is a clear case for the inclusion of migration and development as a new focus of attention.

I would like to congratulate all of us on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted on 25 September 2015.

You will recall that migration was – rather inexplicably – absent from the Millennium Development Goals.

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a new vision for the future; a vision that embraces the contribution migrants can – and very often do – contribute to inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The new Agenda formally recognizes migration's role for development and migration is a target mentioned explicitly under various goals, including: (a) gender equality, (b) employment, and (c) inequalities. It is also relevant for the goals of (a) poverty eradication; (b) sustainable cities, and (c) climate change.

This is welcome change for the migration community but the realization of these targets will require new thinking. There are migration and development policy objectives that are familiar to us all and that will continue to be of relevance, for instance, the reduction in the transfer costs of remittances; the mobilization of diaspora resources; the return of talent to countries of origin. In addition to these, however, we are now challenged to link up our efforts with what is being attempted in larger policy fields such as employment and poverty reduction.

One of the big challenges ahead is the choice of clear and strong metrics to track progress on migration-related targets. I trust that RCPs will be able to provide advice on the selection of good indicators.

B.   Managing Diversity

Many countries, like mine, have been built on the backs of migrants. Through the diversity that migrants bring, countries like mine remain resilient. RCPs can help countries that are not traditional migrant destinations manage the growing economic, social, religious and ethnic diversity.

RCPs could foster exchange of lessons learnt and experiences between the countries that have successfully managed migration and those that are reluctant to open their borders and hearts to newcomers.

RCPs can be instrumental in promoting better manage migration systems so that people migrate under safe, legal, and better conditions, thereby allowing them to contribute optimally to the development of their communities. This can be achieved by including special topics in the RCPs' such as: enhancing proper reception and integration of migrants, and promoting public education and information programmes in this regard. RCPs could also guide governments in taking the lead in promoting regular legal migration channels.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to reiterate IOM's gratitude to the League of Arab States for its excellent cooperation and in making this event possible. I would like to thank the Governments of Australia and the United States of America for their generous contributions to this meeting. I would also like to acknowledge the financial and in-kind contributions of several other donors to various RCPs. These contributions are critical to RCPs' capacity to fulfil their potential for sustained dialogue and cooperation on migration issues.

IOM will continue its support to the RCPs within our core work, fully respecting the state-driven character of your achievements. I am confident that the Global Meetings of RCPs will continue to enhance dialogue and information exchange between RCPs and other processes on migration.

Let me wish you a successful Meeting and fruitful discussion and reconfirm IOM's readiness to continue its support to RCPs and its commitment to the new Agenda for Sustainable Development.