



IOM International Organization for Migration
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Keynote Speech

“Migration Across the Mediterranean: the need for concerted, coherent and holistic action” Conference for parliaments from the European Union and from the Mediterranean Region

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to be here, and I would like to thank most sincerely the Interparliamentary Union, the Parliament of Malta and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean for the kind invitation to address you today. I pass on regrets of IOM Director General William Lacy Swing, who had very much hoped to be here with you today. Finally, I would also like to congratulate the organizers on the timeliness of this discussion.

The surge in the scale of movements and loss of life of refugees and migrants that we have seen in recent years – whether in the Mediterranean, Europe or elsewhere - has reverberated across the world and raised questions about the adequacy of existing national and international systems for addressing refugees and migrants. It has brought into focus the need for us all to examine critically our approaches and attitudes to addressing the movement of people, to think of what we can do differently and what we can do better. This is the question that is being raised at the local, national, regional and global levels, most notably in the framework of the United Nations

General Assembly and its current process to develop a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (GCM). The GCM offers a truly historic opportunity to fill an important gap in today's international system and define the global migration policy agenda and landscape for decades to come. However, for this opportunity to be realized, the GCM needs to be truly inclusive and reflect views of all relevant stakeholders.

Parliaments and parliamentarians have a critical role to play in a world which is increasingly globalized and mobile, but in which people also increasingly need to feel a sense of identity and belonging through the preservation and valuing of cultural origins, and through intercultural exchanges. It is therefore important that your voice is heard in the development of the global compact, and you will also have a key role to play in its implementation.

Last year, IOM celebrated its 65th anniversary, and in the same year IOM joined the UN system as a related agency. We have worked closely with our Member States, and with our partner international organizations, including the UN, of course, but also many regional organizations such as the European Union and the African Union. I would like to share some observations based on these experiences, and briefly discuss the development of the global compact for migration and its significance, as well as the role of parliamentarians in this process and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is as old as humankind. Yet, migration, or human mobility, rarely receives the attention, recognition and thought it truly deserves. Few areas of public policy are subject to greater neglect or misrepresentation in public and political conversation than international migration. The contemporary discourse is overwhelmingly focused on the crises of the moment. Given the amount of media attention these crises receive, and – more importantly – given their humanitarian dimension, this is perhaps only to be expected. However, of the nearly 250 million international migrants in the world today, the overwhelming majority move through safe, legal and orderly means and as a matter of choice. The numbers

of forced migrants, including some 22 million refugees, is historically high but by no means most people on the move. However, they will probably continue to loom large in our field of vision for some time to come. Regrettably, however, this “crisis focus” dampens our ability to do two important things:

-- **First** to understand and appreciate the key role that migration plays in human and societal development; and,

-- **Second**, our ability to look ahead, and to evolve long-term, comprehensive migration and asylum policies.

I would like to take this opportunity, therefore, to place our current pressing preoccupations of the moment in a broader and, hopefully, a more realistic perspective. I will do this by focusing on three main points:

1. **Challenges that we face**; and efforts of the international community to move towards the solution by developing
2. **The Global Compact for Migration**, and
3. **The role of parliamentarians** in promoting such policies – policies that will ensure a fairer, smarter and more humane way of managing migration.

I. THREE MAIN CHALLENGES

A. The demographic challenge

Demographic trends have profound implications for our economies and societies. In broad brush strokes, the populations of developed countries – the so-called “Global North” – are contracting and ageing. This means that the domestic labour supply in developed countries is getting smaller and is likely to continue to shrink. In contrast, trends in the developing world are forecast to go, broadly speaking, in the opposite direction. The populations of countries of origin in Africa and Asia continue to grow rapidly, with most of their populations already concentrated in younger age cohorts. Even though South/South migration today is nearly as significant as South/North

migration, the interplay of these population dynamics will continue driving migration and give rise to important and difficult issues for policy makers. Certainly, migration will never be the only answer to demographic and skills deficits and inequalities, but there can be no doubt that migration has to be part of the answer.

B. The diversity challenge

Migration has and will continue to have an impact on societies and their composition. This means that governments will need to come to terms with and manage inexorably growing social, ethnic and religious diversity if their societies and economies are to thrive.

At IOM, we see **two main ways** to address the diversity challenge effectively: change of the migration narrative and investment in integration:

1. First, we must find a way to **change the current toxic migration narrative**. As one whose country was built on the backs of migrants, I can attest that, historically, migration has been overwhelmingly positive. Yet, most of what we hear today about migration is overwhelmingly negative, and ill-informed. We need to return public discourse to a more balanced and historically accurate narrative through informed, open dialogue.
2. Second, we must actively **promote migrant integration**. Effective integration is essential to managing diversity effectively, but does not happen on its own. It requires dedicated investment, and in all spheres of public life – schools, places of work, community centers, and more. Successful integration and social cohesion are only possible in tolerant societies that value diversity and recognize the humanity that migrants bring.

Migrants and nationals alike can come to understand that they share common interests and core values – interests and values that can provide a social “glue” for diverse yet strongly cohesive societies.

C. The humanitarian disaster challenge

More people are on the move today than at any other time in recorded history. The number of international migrants has risen by over 40 percent in the last 15 years to reach around 250 million. Unfortunately, among these are 65 million forced migrants, some 22 million forced across borders as refugees and more than 40 million forcibly displaced with their own countries, the largest number since World War II -- driven by an unprecedented number of simultaneous, complex and protracted disasters and conflicts -- interlinked humanitarian emergencies across an “Arc of Instability” stretching from the Western bulge of Africa to South and Southeast Asia.

As a result, we see a significant increase in population flows of a mixed nature, including refugees, stranded or otherwise vulnerable migrants, particularly trafficked persons, unaccompanied and separated children, stateless persons and undocumented migrants. Just this year, 157,000 migrants arrived in Europe by crossing the Mediterranean. While en route, many face profound dangers, often associated with smuggling rings and other national and transnational criminal groups. This has led to nearly 3,000 migrant deaths already this year. Those are the ones whose bodies have been recovered; many more who lost their lives in the desert or elsewhere along their route are unaccounted for. The large-scale mixed migration flows across the Mediterranean have received the most attention, but we see the same challenges in other parts of the world.

The international community is confronted with the challenge of providing effective and coherent responses to large movements of people. And it is not just a question of attending to their immediate survival needs. We must also be prepared to deal with protracted situations of displacement.

Crucially, we must find a way to ensure protection of the human rights of all those on the move, and provide the needed assistance to the vulnerable. The major challenge of mixed migration flows is that they include diverse people travelling side-by-side: people from different countries of origin, with different statuses, reasons for

migrating, intentions and different degrees of vulnerability and needs. While all persons are entitled to the protections of international human rights law, in practice, we see in mixed flows that only a few specific categories of persons are afforded dedicated legal protection, notably refugees and those migrants identified as “trafficked”. We must do more to focus in the immediate term on addressing needs, protecting all those who are vulnerable.

In this endeavor, experience has taught us that short-term, stop-gap measures are not enough. The international community can respond most effectively to emergencies if we have comprehensive, long-term migration policies -- policies that address all aspects of human mobility, that recognize the diverse drivers of migration, and the consequences of forced and irregular migration, as well as the need for labour migration. Establishing legal channels of migration, corresponding to both labour market needs as well as to protection obligations, will significantly reduce the vulnerabilities and risks incurred by those who would otherwise use dangerous irregular channels. In other words, we need to work towards good governance of migration. This brings me to my next point.

II. TOWARDS A GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION

The positive news is that good progress has been made in building inter-state dialogue on migration both at the regional and global levels. The two General Assembly High-Level Dialogues on International Migration and Development, the annual state-led Global Forum on Migration and Development, the migration-related commitments made in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, and more have shown that States from around the world can come together for constructive discussions on migration even if their perspectives on and experiences of migration differ.

In 2015, the IOM Council adopted the Migration Governance Operational Framework, setting out the essential elements of well managed migration. This is a significant achievement as it is the only internationally agreed document outlining how migration is best governed in a coherent and comprehensive way.

On the 19th of September 2016, the United Nations convened a Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants. The Summit was the first Head of State gathering dedicated to refugees and migrants in the United Nations. It made a historic contribution to forging consensus on managing the world's movements of migrants and refugees. The resulting NY Declaration expresses the recognition by the 193 UN Member States of the need for a comprehensive approach to human mobility and enhanced cooperation at the global level to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale. This includes substantive commitments that apply to both refugees and migrants, commitments specific to refugees and commitments specific to migrants. Furthermore, the New York Declaration provides for the development of two global compacts to be adopted in 2018: a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

The development of the global compact for migration has dominated the international migration agenda in the past year. It is expected to be comprised of common principles and understandings regarding all aspects of migration – human rights, humanitarian, development and more, actionable commitments, means of implementation and a framework for follow-up and review of its implementation. This last part is essential to ensure that the Compact is not simply words on paper but makes a real difference in the lives of migrants and in the ability of Member States to manage migration. It will not replace or in any way diminish existing international norms and standards, including those found in human rights and labour law, but focus on how to facilitate their effective implementation in practice.

Moreover, it is expected to foster deeper collaboration, not only between Member States, but also with non-governmental partners, to ensure that migrants are not left behind and benefit from the full range of the SDGs, including for example, access to health, education, decent work and gender empowerment.

IOM believes that the Global Compact presents an invaluable opportunity for the international community to work in a dedicated

manner towards a common vision of a world in which migrants move as a matter of genuine choice and not desperate necessity, and in which their rights are protected throughout their migratory cycle; a world in which migration is well governed, leading to positive effects for all peoples and societies, and where any negative effects of migration are limited. But whether this will happen and how strong a document it will be depends on all of us.

The state-led process for the development of the Compact is well-underway, having just concluded 6 thematic consultations and 5 regional consultations, amongst others. Although we have a lot to build on, this is still a tall order to achieve in 2018, in particular given the current focus on the short-term and the temptation to pursue singular interests.

As requested by the Member States, IOM is and will be providing policy and technical support at all stages of the GCM process. But we all need to join forces and contribute to building cooperation and consensus around migration issues at this critical time, including at the regional level. Regional cooperation on migration is something IOM has long supported. We believe it is important that the key global developments and agreements are taken into account when defining migration priorities at regional level, and vice versa, as regional and inter-regional migration dialogues have an important role to play in contributing to global processes and to implementation of their outcomes.

This brings me to my last point: How Parliaments can help achieve the objective of safe, orderly and regular migration?

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

Parliaments and parliamentarians should have a strong voice in the development of the GCM and, crucially, play a key role in its implementation.

My admonition to you is to use wisely three powers that are in your hands:

1. The power of Policy;

2. The power of Parlance; and
3. The power of the Purse.

THE POWER OF POLICY. Through your legislative authority to make laws and shape migration policy, you are primary agents for the protection of migrants and for the establishment of comprehensive and balanced migration policies. A rights-based approach to migration places the migrant at the center of migration policies and management, and pays particular attention to those who are most vulnerable or marginalized. Such an approach ensures that migrants are included in relevant (1) national action plans and strategies, such as plans on the provision of (2) public housing or (3) national strategies to combat racism and xenophobia, (4) access to health care and education.

It is you who have the power to pass anti-trafficking laws to protect migrants; or measures to de-criminalize irregular migrants. You can enact legislation to help migrants integrate smoothly into society; or to pass dual-citizenship provisions and facilitate portability of social security benefits;

At the same time, Parliamentarians can help galvanize a comprehensive approach to migration policy-making -- an approach that views migration holistically and as an inter-Agency and inter-Departmental responsibility -- in other words, a "whole-of-Government" approach. You thus help ensure that your country's migration policy truly serves the broader national interest. We cannot address only parts of the framework (border control, return, integration). Particularly timely in this context is the need to include migration and migrants in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a commitment of the IPU through the "Hanoi Declaration.", adopted by the 132nd IPU Assembly, marks a significant contribution by all of you to the

THE POWER OF PARLANCE. Parliamentarians can play a significant role in changing the presently toxic tone of public discourse on migration to a more balanced, evidence-based and historically accurate approach -- an approach that counters widespread but false stereotypes of migrants and misleading "mythology" surrounding the public debate on migration. Growing anti-migrant

sentiment, especially in Europe, is unnecessarily endangering the lives of migrants, while ignoring the overwhelmingly positive contribution that migrants continue to make. Unfortunately, people all too often take their lead from the irresponsible rhetoric of some politicians and parliamentarians. Rather than succumb to these negative perceptions and caustic discourse, we need to focus on the many contributions migrants make to both host and home countries.

THE POWER OF THE PURSE. How you approve and allocate resources can have an effect on migration policy and on migrants themselves. Migration policy needs to include a number of elements, all of which require funding.

1. **Integration policy.** Cultural orientation, often language training and other facilitative measures can help ensure that a migrant is able to integrate harmoniously into local society.

2. **Return Policy.** For those who, for various reasons, cannot remain and who are willing to return to their countries of origin, it will be important to have a voluntary return policy -- one that contains financial support so that migrants can return with dignity and have an opportunity to re-start their lives. IOM returns some 100,000 persons annually under just such a program, called "Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration". From the year 2000 to date, European Union Member States spent 11 billion Euros to deport migrants. Under IOM's AVRR program, these same persons could have been returned in dignity with several thousand Euros each to re-integrate in their home countries. This would also have avoided the risk of exacerbating relations with the countries to which these migrants returned.

3. **Access to Public Services.** The general view about migrants is that they are only coming to take advantage of free health and education services. There's the reverse way of looking at this, however. Do we not want healthy migrants? Unhealthy migrants make unhealthy communities. Do we not wish migrant children go to school? Do we not want educated migrant children in our communities?

4. Diaspora policy. Our diasporas may be the most neglected and potentially greatest assets in migration policy. Do you have, for example, laws and policies that encourage your citizens living abroad to maintain ties to their home country? Do you offer tax incentives? Out-of-country voting rights? Or, even dedicated diaspora representation in the Parliament? Other incentives to remain in contact and engaged? If not, then you have little basis to complain about “brain drain”.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Migration is a fundamental feature of our time, it is here to stay: so rather than seeing migration as a problem to be solved, we need to regard migration as a human reality to be managed. As we face the continuation of inequalities globally, as well as simultaneous, unprecedented and complex emergencies, people will continue to flee and resort to migration as a coping mechanism, or a poverty reduction strategy. We need bold, collective thinking and action to develop a truly comprehensive approach to the governance of migration that will ensure that the precious commodity of protection is available for refugees, but will equally create safe and regular migration channels while offering community stabilization and development programmes to reduce migratory pressures.

I would like to reiterate that while the global compact is an ambitious undertaking, we are building on strong foundations and practical tools that already exist. Importantly, the agreed outcome should be grounded in reality. This is where discussions such as today's, at the regional level, are key.

You, the parliaments, are key stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of government policy, and also in leading and influencing public opinion. We need your help to change both the content and the tone of the migration debate and lay the foundation for a road map for migration and mobility in the 21st Century. We need to join forces and be ambitious. Dialogue and greater cooperation are

paramount – more than ever before, we need to work together with purpose and determination.

I wish you all very engaging and interesting discussion. You can count on IOM's full and enduring support for this process now, and in the months and years to come.

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