



STATEMENT

Ms. Louise Arbour, Secretary General of the Intergovernmental Conference

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Second Informal Thematic Session on

“Addressing drivers of migration, including adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters, and human-made crisis, through protection and assistance, sustainable development, poverty eradication and conflict prevention and resolution”

Dear Co-facilitators, Ambassadors Juan Jose Gomez Camacho of Mexico, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber of Switzerland, Excellencies, esteemed guests

I am pleased to be here with you today at the second thematic session on drivers of migration. Our discussion is informed by the issue brief prepared together with the International Organization for Migration and the Global Migration Group.

It is important to understand why people move and the circumstances in which they move. What drives migration is as complex as the context each individual faces and the elements each weighs in making the decision to move. These factors are often referred to as the "pushes and pulls" of migration. Conditions at home may act as an incentive to leave - the pushes, while the conditions abroad, at least the migrant's perception of them, are the pull factors.

When both the pushes and pulls are strong, the impulse to migrate is equally very strong; so much so that if there are no legal pathways available, irregular routes may be resorted to. In such a case, attempts to stop the move will likely simply increase its cost, to the point that migrants will risk their lives to attain their objective.

Conversely, the best way to curtail irregular migration is to reduce its attraction by reducing, to the extent possible, the pushes and pulls, and opening legal pathways when this proves impossible or undesirable.

Therefore when discussing the drivers of migration we must remember our mandate which is to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration, not to discourage mobility altogether. Our principal goal, rather, must be to try to understand what compels people to migrate through irregular channels and seek to better regulate those.

Some of the factors that incite people to leave are such that the decision to migrate is hardly a free choice, and addressing these drivers is a long-term endeavour. Extreme poverty

and deprivation, natural disasters and human-made crises, among other drivers, create untenable environments and force those who can afford to relocate.

Addressing these drivers is in large part embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the international human rights framework, and the UN's conflict prevention and sustaining peace agenda will go far in tackling these drivers, improving responses to crises and strengthening resilience of communities. But this will not happen overnight. And if it serves to curtail the impulse to move at all costs, including through dangerous irregular channels, it will not eliminate the desire to relocate, temporarily or permanently, which is part of our common history and will continue to be a positive force in our common humanity.

The current narrative around migration is focused on the scale of migration but this can be misleading. The reality is that the level of human mobility has remained relatively constant. There are more migrants in the world today but there are also more people in the world today. International migrants currently constitute only 3.3% of the global population, a proportion that is relatively constant and that has increased by only a fraction in the last decade.

The fact is that most people do not migrate across borders; they remain in their own country. Those that do cross international borders stay close to home, remaining within the same region as their country of origin. Most do so by choice, through regular channels. They pay taxes and contribute to social security. They fill skilled and unskilled labour gaps and often rebalance the undesirable consequences of aging populations. They support their home communities by sending back money and their remittances constitute the largest source of external finance for many developing countries.

Improperly managed migration, on the other hand, produces a range of undesirable effects. It feeds informal labour markets where migrants are often exploited, particularly women and girls, and creates downward pressures on wages in the formal markets. It makes it difficult for states to know who is on their territory and it creates environments which attract international criminal networks. And it adds fuel to xenophobic attitudes, exacerbating social and political tensions in a climate of distrust of both the migrants and the state.

Coming back to the pull factors : in making the decision to move, migrants fundamentally go where opportunities are, or are believed to be. The search for better economic opportunities is a decisive factor ; 70% of all international migrants are migrant workers. Increasing employment opportunities at home would therefore be a critical aspect in reducing the drive to migrate and, more importantly, in making the decision to move a true free choice, exercised through safe and regular channels. Which brings us back to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the necessity to reduce all the drivers of unsafe, irregular and disorderly migration.

And meanwhile, faced with the reality of the strong impulses to leave and the attraction of perceived opportunities elsewhere, we must expand access to regular channels of legal migration such as family reunification, study, and access to work. And we must improve

access to the information necessary for migrants to make informed choices about their options. In weighing the risk of relocation, which is often a life-changing decision, people should be in the best possible position to assess the costs and benefits of their decision.

Our success can only come from genuine collective efforts, from international cooperation and solidarity, and from an evidence-based approach to the development of new initiatives.

I look forward to exploring these complex issues with you over the next two days and to working with all of you to ensure a global compact that meets our objectives and the broader goal of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.