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Opening Remarks at multi-stakeholder hearings

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**Your Excellency, Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the
General Assembly,
Distinguished Co-facilitators,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today at the first multi-stakeholder hearing as part of the preparatory process towards the global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration.

I would like to recognize, in particular, civil society representatives who have travelled from far to join us here today.

I am also delighted to see Member States present who are eager to engage and exchange with civil society.

Allow me now to share some observations I have drawn from the discussions and the process so far.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, fully integrates international migration in a global development framework. The New York Declaration adopted in September last year, took that commitment one step further by calling for the development of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018. In doing so, the General Assembly recognized that no one state can deliver on better managing migration in isolation. The compact will therefore require the expertise and participation of non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic institutions, parliaments, diaspora communities, the private sector, national human rights institutions, migrant organizations and migrants themselves.

I count on all of you to seize the opportunity to contribute to this important process, to capitalize on your field experience, to be strategic in your advocacy and to formulate action-oriented proposals in a spirit of principled pragmatism. From the discussions so far, it has become clear that we need to depart from a longstanding, purely normative approach of listing, restating and reaffirming fundamental rights and principles, and instead shift towards real operational deliverables that will, in a sustainable way, facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.

Most importantly, we need political support for the commitments made in the compact, if we do not want to fail people on the move and the millions of others who depend on them. As we have learnt from past experiences, ambitious frameworks and even legally binding instruments do not have any effect of targeting those most in need if they are poorly ratified or lack implementation.

Over the past months, many of you have actively contributed to the thematic sessions of the UN General Assembly, which are aimed at gathering substantive inputs for the global compact.

I have listened carefully to your messages and will continue to do so in the coming months. Some of you are actively involved in an initiative called “children on the move”, highlighting concrete recommendations to protect the rights of children in the global compacts. This is a great example of leadership and organized advocacy on a cross-cutting issue and I hope to see similar engagement on other topics, including the development aspects of migration.

Civil society is best placed to target gaps and shortcomings in Member States discussions and frame issues where real progress can be made. In this context, I have taken note of the ten recommendations produced by civil society at the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Berlin last month.

Dear civil society colleagues,

The multi-stakeholder hearings offer an important opportunity to gather the diversity and richness of views and voices from civil society practitioners and experts, and from grassroots organizations and migrants themselves. In particular, I encourage you to bring the often neglected voice of migrant women and to help highlight not only migrant women's vulnerabilities, but also their leadership and contributions to sustainable development processes.

Your views and experiences are equally crucial to change the current negative narrative and correct the many stereotypes and myths about migration in public opinion. Civil society are uniquely positioned to attest that migration has an overwhelmingly positive social, economic and cultural impact on countries of origin and destination and presents an empowering experience for millions of migrants.

While we cannot expect public opinion to change dramatically in the short timeframe given for the negotiations and adoption of the compact, we depend on leadership, including yours, in the political and public sphere to anchor the debate on facts and ground it in reality.

I would like to draw your attention to the many opportunities to make your voices heard, including in the consultations for the global compact at the regional level.

Starting at the end of August with Latin America and the Caribbean, there will be a total of four regional preparatory meetings organized by the UN Regional Commissions held in Santiago de Chile, Beirut, Addis Ababa and Bangkok.

In addition, there will be a total of seven Regional Civil Society Consultations covering all corners of the globe. These consultations will feed directly into the preparatory meetings of the UN Regional Commissions and I understand that your joint messages will be presented at the civil society stocktaking meeting just prior to the stock taking meeting of the intergovernmental process taking place 4-6 December in Mexico.

In closing, it is useful to remember that considerable progress has been made over the last two decades on cooperation on international migration at the United Nations and within the Global Forum on Migration and Development. It will be crucial for the global compact to build on key existing normative frameworks and actionable commitments, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I am looking forward to listening to your exchanges today.

Thank you.