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Statement by Louise Arbour

**Secretary-General of the Intergovernmental Conference
to adopt a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly
and Regular Migration**

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**Concluding Session: Towards a Global Compact for
Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**

Puerto Vallarta, 6 December 2017

**Your Excellency, Mr. Miroslav Lajcák, President of the
General Assembly,**

**Your Excellencies, the co-Facilitators, Ambassadors Gómez
Camacho and Ambassador Lauber,**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

**The drive and commitment towards bringing into being
a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is
borne of two fundamental dynamics.**

**On the one hand it is rooted in the many challenges that
migration presents: the evolution of the world's demography,
stresses in the environment, the legacy of entrenched
poverty and chronic conflicts, have all contributed to
displacements of populations often in life-threatening or
otherwise degrading situations.**

**Often poorly regulated labour markets have attracted
migrants, many in irregular situations, to work in unsafe and
unfair environments.**

And public misperceptions of migrants, rooted in apprehension of economic decline, fear of globalisation, including identity and cultural concerns, all have contributed to bringing us where we are today.

Meanwhile, in the course of this process, a different aspect of human mobility has emerged. One full of promises of better and more sustainable development, more attuned to international labour market needs and to the benefits of decent work standards for all, and more responsive to the needs of vulnerable and marginalised people, both migrants and host communities.

We stand today tasked with the mandate to weave these challenges and opportunities into a global effort to enhance state cooperation in the management of migration.

The global compact will be a product of our time. A time of transition, of uncertainty, of both apprehension and excitement about the future. A time in which we are still exploring the full implications of globalisation and the technology revolution. Also a time when we have consolidated the pillars of multilateralism: respect for state sovereignty and enhanced interstate cooperation, pursuit of sustainable development, conflict prevention and protection for human rights.

It is in this context that the Secretary-General's report, which should be before you in mid-January, will seek to contribute to the shaping of the Global Compact on Migration. The report will be anchored in the themes that have emerged from the rich formal consultations that have taken place so far, and from the many equally enriching conversations in which we have participated in the course of the last few months.

Putting this report together would not have been possible without the inputs we received from many of you in this room, alongside many others. In particular, I make special note of the support and contributions made to this endeavour by the International Organization of Migration. I thank you all.

The Secretary-General's report will not be a reiteration of statements and commitments made so far. Rather it will be an articulation of what he views the opportunities to be; what challenges that compact should seek to overcome; and a proposal as to the range of solutions or approaches that merit exploration.

Permeating it will be four points of emphasis.

First, that the Global Compact must be true to its title – it must be global.

This means that migration is neither a unique experience, let alone burden on any one state or region. Regardless of any action we take, migration will continue and it will likely grow. It is an experience of immense significance for the migrants themselves; but it also impacts the communities from which they come and those into which they settle.

Second, the compact must be grounded in a strong cooperative framework.

It must be respectful of different perspectives: the particularities of migration do vary considerably from state to state, from region to region, including from different regions inside a state, and, actually, from time to time. Cooperation doesn't require uniformity. Quite the opposite. The compact should facilitate and support regional initiatives that are flexible and responsive to local particularities.

And cooperation must work to enhance global security by ensuring the effective control that states must exercise over who enters and stays in their countries, and on what terms, while guaranteeing greater protection for all, under the rule of law. This is a matter of state security, public safety, and individual protection; the three co-exist.

Third, the era of implementation has arrived.

I believe the Secretary-General will encourage implementation of the many commitments that have been made to date, and favour initiatives that are expected to produce concrete, measurable results.

Many long-standing commitments can be implemented now. For many others, real progress can be made, whether by the entire membership of the UN, or different regional groupings, or other configurations, also mobilising many non-state actors.

And underpinning all these commitments, invariably, will be our belief in the universality of our human rights and our drive towards realizing the SDGs. Safe, orderly and regular migration cannot be reduced exclusively to a question of development and rights; yet it cannot be realized unless it's grounded in both.

And, finally, none of this is possible without political leadership.

Migration often generates a discourse in which popular perception runs counter to the demands of sound policy-making.

This requires us to focus on three imperatives.

We must make every effort to avoid language which has the effect of dehumanizing those whose interests we seek to protect.

We must strive at every turn to base our discourse on facts, not perception.

And we must design policies that are inclusive. The fight against inequality is of equal relevance to migrants and non-migrants alike, and must begin with a focus on those most vulnerable.

In this regard, I make special note of gender. Equality and the empowerment of women and protection of their rights should be core principles of any emerging Compact, as should the best interests of children always anchored in all decisions affecting them.

The Secretary-General will look at the situation of regular migrants – the majority – and how best to ensure that the vulnerabilities they face are reduced, and the benefits they bring with them, and send home, are maximized.

He will look at the situation of irregular migrants and ways to bring them out of the shadows such that they, too, can face lives of certainty and security, and in which their contributions can be better acknowledged.

And he will look at a signature issue of our time: the tragedy of large mixed flows of people on the move and how to deal with those who are ineligible for international refugee protection, yet for whom humanitarian assistance and longer-term solutions are no less urgent.

Finally, the Secretary-General will reflect on issues of system response; intergovernmental oversight; and Global Compact follow-up. All three are vital; all interlinked; and all dependent, of course, on the shape and content of the final product.

But here, too, three things are evident.

First, the Secretary-General is determined to ensure that the United Nations system is well positioned to respond effectively to any calls by the membership to assist in implementing the Global Compact.

As migration finds its better home in the United Nations, we will rededicate ourselves to ensuring that our support for you is the best that it can be; that it maximizes all the contributions that the system can bring to bear; that it takes full advantage of the unique migration capacities and expertise of IOM, alongside others; and that its focus is squarely on delivering.

Second, a corollary of integrating migration better into the UN, is that Member States may wish to reflect on whether – and if so how – current oversight mechanisms are best configured. The Secretary-General will offer his support here, as needed.

And, finally, he will stress the point that the Global Compact can only ever be part of a process. As dynamics change – in ways both anticipated and, likely, not always accurately – there will be the need for you, the Member States to return to this issue over the years, allowing opportunity for adjustments to be made as circumstances dictate.

None of this is necessarily easy. We would not be here if it were.

But what is also certain is the commitment of all in this room, and many more elsewhere, to make the Global Compact the best it can be.

What is certain is the unbending commitment of the Secretary-General to assist you in this task.

And what is certain above all else are the legitimate demands of all migrants that the words of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights apply to them as to all others: “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”.

Thank you.