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**Ms. Louise Arbour
Special Representative of the Secretary-General for
International Migration**

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**The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants –
One Year On**

New York, 20 September 2017

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be with you today. Your attendance speaks to the importance of the issues before us.

I shall focus my comments on your efforts to realise a global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration by this time next year.

But before I do, I add my voice to those of the Secretary-General [the President of the General Assembly] and High Commissioner Grandi in reiterating that our ability to better manage human mobility rests on both compacts – on migrants and refugees – being as strong as possible: widely-supported; and human rights-centred, with the needs of those most vulnerable firmly at their heart.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with High Commissioner Grandi and his team towards this goal.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Turning to the global compact on migration, the membership has engaged in a series of consultations, which my office has been supporting with excellent cooperation from both IOM and the Global Migration Group. I am grateful to both Director-General Swing and Mr. Malone of the UNU for their collaboration.

These consultations have served to educate us as to the reality of migration: its overwhelming benefits, its many dimensions, its truly global nature, and its complex challenges. The stewardship of the co-facilitators – the Permanent Representatives of Mexico and Switzerland – has been pivotal in ensuring the discussions have been open and wide-ranging.

In early December, Mexico will host a stocktaking meeting. This will seek to distil the views raised in the preceding months and drill down to the central issues. Following this, you – the member states – will have the vital task of negotiating the global compact. My office will support you however best we can and contribute to your efforts, in particular through preparing the Secretary-General's report on migration, in close consultation with IOM, and which will serve as his input to the global compact. We aim to have that report before you by the end of this year.

I have four brief observations on what I believe will need to be central components of a successful outcome to this exercise.

First, it must be people-centred. Our collective values and the framework of national, regional and international protections that has been established to promote and protect the human rights of all must be at the centre of the global compact: they cannot be undermined by the process, only enhanced.

Secondly, and by definition, international migration involves more than one state. The movement of people across borders highlights the connection between state sovereignty and state interdependence. A successful global compact will need to reflect this: its success will rest on maximum state buy-in and willingness to enhance cooperation at the regional and international levels.

This will require that all aspects of this complex subject be integrated into the negotiations: not only foreign affairs and immigration ministries will need to be involved, but also labour, security, health and education. The pursuit of single-issue national agendas will be counter-productive. In today's world, most states are at once states of origin, transit and destination and there is more commonality of interest than may appear on the surface.

Thirdly, and to echo the Secretary-General, the global compact will need to stand the test of time While the compact will need to provide avenues by which to address today's challenges it must be sufficiently flexible to provide a framework by which to address tomorrow's opportunities and challenges. Migration is here to stay but its configuration will evolve. Demographics, climate change, opportunities offered by modern communications, changes in the nature of work, other economic factors and human aspirations for self-fulfilment are likely to lead to an increase in cross-border movements in the years ahead.

And, finally, I would urge that the global compact be grounded in reality. The overwhelming majority of migrants move in a well-regulated fashion. Migration is a net positive to migrants and the communities from which they come and in which they settle: this is recognised in migration's explicit place in the 2030 Agenda. Equally, for too many of our fellow citizens the context in which they migrate exposes them to unconscionable suffering. This is migration's reality.

Discourse which is detached from this reality, grounded in stereotypes and predicated on fear, a discourse which demonises migrants or disparages their contributions not only risks fuelling intolerance but it also obscures the very real challenges we face today. Our current policies are clearly inadequate to deal with irregular migration and large sudden flows of people. Better policy responses must rest on a sober understanding of reality and on the existing imperatives of international law.

Member states have undertaken an important challenge in seeking to develop a global compact which will bring security and wellbeing to many millions of people the world over. I offer my continued support to you in this critical endeavour.

Thank you.