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**Statement by Louise Arbour, Special Representative  
of the Secretary-General for International Migration**

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**Opening remarks at the High-Level Panel  
on Strengthening migration statistics:  
the 2030 Agenda and the New York Declaration**

5 March 2018, New York

**Excellencies,  
Delegates of national statistical offices,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I want to thank the Department for Economic and Social Affairs for organizing this timely event. More than ever, the necessity for scientific collection and analysis of information is critical to sound policy-making, as it often competes with myths and stereotypes which can sway public opinion often in the wrong directions.**

**I am therefore delighted to have this opportunity to address you, if only to stress the significance of your work for the important project undertaken by UN member states in developing a Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.**

**In September 2016, the General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. This was in part a response to large mixed movements of refugees and migrants, which had created a sense of acute crisis, particularly in Europe, but which are also recurrent, although less visibly so, elsewhere in the world. In this Declaration, the UN Member States committed to adopting a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.**

**An intergovernmental conference is scheduled to adopt this compact, which is currently being negotiated between member states, in Morocco on 10 and 11 December 2018.**

**At the heart of the proposed global compact is the necessity for enhanced cooperation on virtually all aspects of international migration. This is true not only for inter-state cooperation but also for cooperative work between policy makers, statisticians, civil society, the private sector and international organizations.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Discussions on international migration were started in the United Nations decades ago, but it's only in the Agenda 2030 adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015 that migration found a center place in the UN system.**

**The Sustainable Development Goals contain a migration-specific target that calls on governments to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.**

**The SDGs also include 10 migration-related targets, covering issues such as the emigration of health workers, education abroad, the rights of migrant workers, human trafficking and migrant remittances.**

**The SDGs also call for data that are disaggregated according to various characteristics, including migratory status. The insights provided by disaggregated data will be critical to fulfill the over-arching pledge of the SDGs that no one will be left behind.**

**Subsequently, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, came in to complement the 2030 Agenda, and lists concrete commitments to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to development. These include (a) lowering the costs of recruiting migrant workers, (b) promoting cheaper, faster and safer transfer of remittances, (c) enhancing the productive use of remittances, and (d) facilitating the portability of earned benefits and the recognition of qualifications.**

**The General Assembly has emphasized the strong connections between the global compact for migration, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.**

**Since April of last year, I have attended numerous thematic and regional consultations and multi-stakeholder hearings as part of the process of developing the global compact. If there was a common thread in those deliberations, it concerned the need for better data and evidence.**

**The report of the Secretary-General that was prepared as a contribution to this process also highlights the need for a more realistic policy debate underpinned by better data.**

**Dear delegates,**

**The preparations for the global compact have exposed the serious deficiencies both in basic migration statistics and in our understanding about the drivers and impacts of migration.**

**Let me highlight three points in that regard where the international statistical community can contribute.**

**First, existing data sources for migration such as the population censuses, household surveys and administrative sources must be strengthened. The 2020 census round is an opportunity to establish a credible baseline for all countries. We must press for the inclusion of core migration-related questions, the deployment of properly trained enumerators, and adequately disaggregate results. And we should recognize the challenge that this poses for data collectors especially in the Global South and engage immediately in building the needed capacity in that regard. Many statistical offices struggle with limited resources, both financially and technically. The Global compact process presents a unique opportunity to mobilize resources for data collection, training and research.**

**Accurate, timely and comparable data on migration require strong collaboration. Within countries, statistical offices must work together with, and pool data from ministries and agencies working on migration. Across borders, we need to exchange and share migration data. The implementation of the Global compact will rely on investments in building capacities, facilitation of knowledge transfer and enhancement of international cooperation.**

**Second, we should also be prepared to think outside the box by integrating information from multiple sources and by tapping innovative data streams. This may prove particularly helpful in capturing information that is otherwise elusive as it relates to irregular migratory flows, existing stocks of irregular migrants, human trafficking and people trapped in modern forms of slavery and more generally on informal labour markets in which migrants are often overrepresented.**

**And finally, our actions must be guided by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Let me highlight in particular Principle 6, which stipulates that data on individuals that are collected by statistical agencies must be strictly confidential and used exclusively for statistical purposes. This is fundamental to maintaining public trust in the integrity of official information collection.**

**Dear friends,**

**Statisticians are often asked to monitor the implementation of agreements once they have been concluded. Given the very challenging situation in which we find ourselves in the field of migration, we are calling on you to get involved from the start, and to help make the case for a better world, made so by better informed choices about the future.**

**I wish you the best in your work and hope to have the pleasure of interacting with you again in the near future.**

**Thank you.**