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Opening Remarks at multi-stakeholder hearing

New York, 18 December 2017

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

Distinguished Co-facilitators,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**It is a great pleasure to be here with you on International
Migrants Day.**

**Today, we acclaim international migration as an integral
part of our globalized world. We celebrate the 258 million
international migrants, their human rights and their social,
cultural and economic contributions to host and origin
communities.**

**As you know, the enormous potential of migration is
explicitly recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals,
acknowledging that safe, orderly and regular migration can
contribute to reducing inequalities within and between
countries.**

Yet, the positive impact of migration cannot be harnessed without adequate migration policies in place that protect migrants' rights, regardless of their status. This is why a whole-of-society approach at the local and national levels is so pertinent.

Among the main obstacles to migrants maximising their contributions to our societies are restrictive or ineffectual labour policies and laws which limit employment options abroad.

Migrants also face financial and practical barriers which make sending remittances home unconscionably costly, or regulations which do not allow migrant workers to transfer their earned pension to other countries.

Often, and particularly true for migrants living in irregular situations, such obstacles are coupled with legal and practical barriers that prevent migrants from accessing fundamental rights and services, which place them at greater risk of marginalization and abuse.

It is in the spirit of cooperation to address many of those obstacles that we have embarked on this process towards a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. This increased cooperation needs to be at all levels: amongst Member States, with different levels of government, but also, and most importantly for today's hearing, through cooperation with stakeholders at the national and local levels.

Today's meeting comes at an important juncture in the process towards the global compact for migration, as Member States will begin their negotiations in February.

Many of you gathered with us at the preparatory (stocktaking) meeting held in Mexico at the beginning of this month, concluding the extensive and rich consultation phase of this process and which gave us the opportunity to learn and exchange views on the many various aspects of human mobility.

Let me highlight a few key issues emerging from the stocktaking meeting which are particularly relevant for today's discussion.

First, the global compact must aim to reinforce the pillars of multilateralism including respect for state sovereignty and enhanced interstate cooperation. The compact must be grounded in a strong cooperative framework which is inclusive and people-centered.

A whole-of-society approach to migration requires all branches and levels of government and all stakeholders to be involved in policy-making, implementation and follow-up and review. Most importantly, I encourage you to bring the voices of migrants themselves, including women migrants, to the table.

Second, the global compact should foster an era of implementation where many long-standing commitments on migration can be realized and where real progress can be made to the tangible benefit of migrants the world over.

In this regard, in particular, the potential for advancement of the global compact agenda is apparent at the local level.

Local authorities are crucial for fostering people-centered policies to promote successful integration including access to public services, such as health, housing, education and language training. Such efforts should be partnered with those in communities of origin where information campaigns for prospective migrants should inform about both legal pathways and the dangers associated with moving through irregular channels.

Policy coherence and partnerships amongst national and local governments are crucial for the integration of migrants, and such best practices should be shared amongst Member States so that they might be replicated in other contexts.

Finally, I count on all of you to support our endeavours to correct the narrative on international migration. Despite its overwhelmingly positive nature, too much of the discussion around migration remains mired in misperception bordering on, even becoming, xenophobic.

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 through our partners here today, to anchor the debate in fact and ground it in reality. Far too often, we have witnessed that negative rhetoric, and misguided policies create, in effect, a mutually reinforcing loop whereby the positives of migration are obscured if not in fact eroded.

In closing, let me reiterate that your partnership and work can help Member States in targeting gaps and shortcomings in their discussions and frame issues where progress can be made. I count on you to support Member States as they enter the negotiations next year.

I am looking forward to listening to your exchanges today.

Thank you.