



Ms. Louise Arbour
Secretary-General of the Intergovernmental Conference

**UNLOCKING THE POWER OF DIASPORA: NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR
DEVELOPMENT**

**organized by the Governments of Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco and Serbia
IOM and UNDP**

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Dear Excellencies, esteemed colleagues and friends,

It's a pleasure to be here today, and I thank the organizers – IOM, UNDP, and the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco and Serbia – for inviting me to participate.

When the New York Declaration was adopted by all Heads of State and Government last September, it recognized the contributions of migrants and diaspora communities to sustainable development, and the need to strengthen cooperation with diaspora groups. The Declaration also invited transnational communities to be involved in the development towards the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, and I am glad to see representatives of diasporas and their respective governments participating today.

Diasporas are bridge-builders amongst countries. They reside outside of their countries of birth, yet they often maintain strong links to these countries. Their experience reminds us that migration is a complex issue, not a trend, with an overwhelmingly positive story, despite the stresses. It brings with it added prosperity, innovation and progress. It is a potent motor of development and a life changing experience for generations, for both migrants and host communities.

Indeed, when individuals and families move from one country, they not only transform their lives, they transform the lives of their immediate communities and their origin communities. And so, they can also be transformational agents for better international cooperation amongst countries on migration.

This event on diaspora is a timely one given the current informal thematic session this week on the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development. However, such discussions usually focus on diaspora as remittance senders. There is, of course, nothing wrong with this, but we should acknowledge the many contributions of diasporas beyond the financial: they can be the catalysts for philanthropy, investments and innovation in their countries of origin. Those who return to their country of origin either permanently or temporarily bring with them the skills, ideas, attitudes and behaviours acquired abroad, both positive and negative.



I should, however, highlight one caveat to this: that if the diaspora remain disconnected and static in their view of their country of origin, their contributions could oppose any efforts of progress in their country of origin, or for example, the political positioning of the diaspora could run counter to that of the country of origin, especially in cases of conflict. I should also acknowledge that a diaspora should not be seen as a homogenous group; they are individuals who have diverse and nuanced experiences and ideas as migrants.

The global compact provides us with an excellent opportunity to improve international cooperation on migration, including on engaging diaspora. For example, the global compact could address practical obstacles for diaspora involvement in their countries of origin including access to dual citizenship, visa costs and procedures, access to public services, consular support, hurdles to investment and conducting business and banking services in both host and home countries.

This would encourage countries of origin and destination to find commonalities in migration through the migrants themselves – that they “share” the same people, the same actors who create development opportunities in different ways for different communities. Diaspora can be the key conduit to countries better understanding the opportunities and challenges of migration, and finding ways in which migration can be a benefit for all – governments, migrants, and home and host communities. Finding ways to gauge the possibility of diaspora engagement in particular countries could also help influence policy makers to address any obstacles.

Currently though, there is little awareness amongst diaspora and migrant communities of the global compact and how it might be relevant for them. The launch of the iDiaspora Forum today, which is a moderated online platform, can help provide a channel for diaspora to contribute their thoughts and opinions towards what a global compact should encompass. I invite you all to visit the iDiaspora stand in the hallway next to the Vienna café and learn more about this platform.

Thank you.