

UNITED NATIONS



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**Ms. Louise Arbour
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International Migration**

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Opening Remarks at Multi-stakeholder Hearings

Geneva, 11 October 2017

H.E. 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 today at the second multi-stakeholder hearing – and the first one taking place in Geneva, as part of the preparatory process towards the global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration.

I would like to thank the new President of the General Assembly for his commitment and support in the continuation of this important process. I am grateful to count on his constructive engagement with Member States as we will move from the consultations to the negotiations phase next year.

Over the past months, the thematic sessions have served to educate us as to the reality of migration. Beyond the Member States input and the able stewardship of the Permanent Representatives of Mexico and Switzerland, the voice of civil society has been pivotal in ensuring the discussions have been enriching and based on the expertise of organizations working on the ground as well as those focusing on policies and norms. Indeed, civil society is best placed to target gaps or shortcomings in Member States' discussions and frame issues where real progress can be made.

I have participated in two of the regional meetings organized thus far by the UN Regional Commissions. These discussions have greatly contributed to grounding the global debate in regional and sub-regional specificities. The analysis of context-based trends, challenges and opportunities will be critical for a proper understanding of the complexity of the many aspects of migration and the development of evidence-based policies.

I also wish to commend the civil society regional networks that have been in the lead in organizing the seven Regional Civil Society Consultations from which we will hear more later today.

As you know, in early December, we will gather in Mexico for a stocktaking meeting. This will seek to distil the views raised in the consultation phase of the past months and highlight central issues. Following this, the Member States will have the vital task of negotiating the global compact. In this context, I know I can count on all of you to frame your advocacy around key issues identified by Member States, and to formulate principled and action-oriented proposals that will, in a sustainable way, facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.

The consultation phase which we will have completed by the end of the year is one avenue of input for the global compact, a second one is the Secretary-General's report which will constitute his contribution to this process and which my office is preparing. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to those Member States and stakeholders who have submitted written inputs to the report and drafting process. Please rest assured that we are carefully reviewing these and are finding them very useful.

Dear colleagues,

I wish to share a few considerations which I think will be crucial for the global compact and which have been reinforced by many of you.

First, if we don't want to fail people on the move and the communities that they leave behind and in which they settle, we should strive to place the safety and dignity of all people at the center of our deliberations. This means that the global compact must be people-centered and underpinned by those frameworks that have been established to promote and protect the human rights of all people, including those on the move.

Secondly, a successful global compact will rest on Member States willingness to enhance cooperation at the regional and international levels and most importantly, will require political buy-in. The investment and political support of all stakeholders is fundamental to ensure a successful global compact and its effective implementation. Equally, civil society partners will be key to the implementation of the global compact. Only in a spirit of cooperation among governments and between governments and stakeholders will we be able to achieve meaningful and operational outcomes.

Thirdly, the global compact will need to stand the test of time and therefore address migration in a comprehensive and forward-looking manner. Changes in population structures, climate change, opportunities offered by modern communications, changes in the nature of jobs and workplace, other economic factors, and human aspirations for self-fulfillment, will shape much of the future nature of migration. As a consequence, we have to expect, not only, that migration is here to stay but that it is also likely to increase in the future, at least in absolute numbers if not in relative terms.

While Member States have the sovereign prerogative to manage their borders and decide who enters and stays in their territories, the current inadequacy of accessible and attractive legal pathways, including to fill existing labour market gaps in destination countries, inevitably encourages irregular migration. Increasing the variety of legal avenues will not only reduce the number of people who feel compelled to use irregular channels to pursue opportunities abroad but also, at the same time, reduce the current pressures on asylum determination procedures by providing alternatives to those who advance such claims for lack of an alternative.

Similarly, many countries will need to find solutions for existing populations of irregular migrants who often have long contributed to the local –often informal- economy. There, again, a spectrum of regularisation options presents itself, when return is neither feasible nor desirable.

Finally, the global compact has to be grounded in reality. The majority of migrants move in a well-regulated fashion and international migration does have a positive social, economic and cultural impact on millions of people in host and home communities and on migrants themselves. Civil society are uniquely positioned to attest to this – often with first-hand evidence and should remain committed to improving all aspects of international migration. At the same time, we must take seriously concerns about migration and migrants even if, and particularly if, they are based on false assumptions and misguided perceptions. These concerns are best addressed by an accurate narrative about migrants and migration and by a willingness to tackle constructively the most difficult issues.

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 count on all of you to support this critical endeavor towards a common goal.

I am looking forward to listening to your exchanges today.

Thank you.