

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Louise Arbour
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
for International Migration and
Secretary-General of the Intergovernmental Conference
on Global Migration

--

Preparatory (stocktaking) meeting 4-6 December 2017
Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, 4 December 2017

Excellency Dr. Luis Videgaray, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico,

Dear Mr. Jorge Aristóteles Sandoval Díaz, Governor of the State of Jalisco,

Dear Ambassador Gómez Camacho,

Ambassador Lauber,

Excellencies, esteemed colleagues and friends,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today at this preparatory meeting in this beautiful city, Puerto Vallarta. Let me start by thanking our Mexican colleagues for hosting this important gathering.

Please allow me to go back to where this process started. In September last year, Heads of State and Governments came together in September 2016 and, through the New York Declaration, committed to govern mobility in a humane, sensitive and people-centred manner. They further called for an intergovernmental process which would culminate in the planned adoption of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Over the past months, we all – Member States and other stakeholders – have been engaged in an intensive preparatory process to inform the development of the global compact. During this consultation phase, we have exchanged views and experiences on six thematic issues at the global level which have served to educate us as to the reality of migration.

Five regional meetings have also been organized 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.

Two multi-stakeholder hearings, seven Regional Civil Society Consultations and numerous national consultations have taken place. The voices of civil society have 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.

All these meetings have contributed by sharing a wide range of views, best practices and innovative proposals aimed at facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration. They have brought home the variety and complexity of the ways in which migration issues present themselves on the global scene.

We are now here for the next three days to take stock, to share what we have learned over the past months, and to jointly shape a vision for the path ahead.

This process is one avenue of input into the global compact, a second one is the Secretary-General's report which will constitute his contribution to this process and which is being finalized at this moment. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to those Member States and stakeholders who have submitted written inputs to the report and drafting process.

Dear colleagues,

I wish to share with you some thoughts on the opportunities and challenges emerging from all our activities so far.

Migration is an expanding global reality. Changes in population structures, climate change, changes in the nature of jobs and other economic factors, alongside fundamental human aspirations for self-fulfilment 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.

Policy decisions need to be made on the basis of fact, not perception, fiction, and myth. Yet there is a lot of misperception in the migration field that needs to be addressed.

There is the use of language, through which we often perpetuate unhelpful stereotypes, if not worse. We need to avoid dehumanizing language - pejorative talk of “illegal immigrants” will block reasoned discussions about the motives and needs of individuals. Much language might not do so intentionally but it can have the effect of obscuring that migrants are, above all, human beings. We should always aim to discuss migrants in terms that respect their dignity and rights, just as we must respect the needs and views of the communities that host them.

The global compact for migration is an opportunity to reorient the often-toxic narrative against migrants towards a more accurate narrative on migration that recognizes its overwhelmingly positive impact and is prepared to address its challenges in a sober, realistic way.

The months ahead provide us with a unique opportunity to change the narrative further, mobilizing open-minded citizens everywhere towards harnessing the benefits of human mobility for the greater good.

We also need to be realistic about how migration happens and how migration policies work. We cannot reduce such a complex phenomenon to simple, binary categories: refugees or economic migrants; security or human rights; or legal pathways versus returns. Nor can we see migrations as being divided on geographical lines, even while respecting the regional particularities that do exist. Migration is a truly global phenomenon, neither a unique gift nor burden on any one set of countries.

And it is on this point that I would like to conclude. It is the global nature of migration that brings us here today. Migration demands a global response. The movement of people across borders is, by definition, an international reality; there is nothing in that to contradict a state's sovereign right – subject to international and domestic law – to manage who enters and stays within its borders. A successful global compact will need to reflect this: its success will rest on maximum state political and moral buy-in and willingness to enhance cooperation at the regional and international levels.

Our ability to better manage human mobility rests on the global compact being as strong as possible: widely-supported; and human rights-centred, with the needs of those most vulnerable firmly at its heart. I offer my continued support to you in this critical endeavour.

Thank you.