

The Role of Cities in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
Submission to the
Special Representative of the Secretary General for International Migration

2 November 2017

Honorable Ms. Louise Arbour,

We wish to thank you for this opportunity to provide our input to the United Nations Secretary-General's report on the global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration (GCM). Our submission focuses on the inherent role cities will play in implementing the promises of the GCM and in moving the migration agenda forward in the coming decades.

The trend of people moving to urban centers is on a steep incline, expected to almost double to 6.4 billion by 2050 from 3.9 billion today and as compared to 746 million in 1950. Cities in developing regions will grow most.ⁱ In Africa alone, between 2015 and 2030, the projected urban population growth is 63 percent.ⁱⁱ

With regard to migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, cities are responsible for immediate humanitarian imperatives, for supporting safe transit, and for longer-term social and economic integration. Failures in reception and integration have repercussions that extend beyond the communities in which migrants and refugees reside.

Thoughtful urban planning and development are essential for social and economic integration, and for the attainment of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements as called for in Sustainable Development Goal 11.

Moreover, local authorities and mayors in particular play a crucial role in framing greater diversity as a complex but fundamentally fruitful outcome of globalization.ⁱⁱⁱ

Honorable Ms. Arbour, in your statement dated 18 September 2017 during the Global Mayors Summit, you rightly stated that as national governments grapple with issues related to irregular entry of migrants, local authorities are more likely to extend essential services to all city residents. Putting in place "firewalls" between immigration enforcement and public services is increasingly seen as an effective way of facilitating access to justice, housing, health care, education, social protection and social and labor services for all migrants.

Innovative solutions to migration and protection challenges are being implemented by cities in diverse areas such as issuance of identity documents, to political representation and access to justice.

Cities must be recognized as partners and supported in their efforts, as they currently act without the adequate human and financial capacities.

While much attention is drawn to capitals and megacities, more attention should be directed towards the equitable economic development potential of secondary cities. Globally speaking, secondary cities are where population growth is happening but where capacities are weakest.

Furthermore, given the context of rapid urban growth and important internal and international migration, focus should go to supporting and building capacities of cities in the Global South where the challenges and needs are greatest.

In the GCM, States should acknowledge the fundamental role of cities as key policy-makers and policy-implementers on migration, including by:

- 1) Providing and/or facilitating operational support in building administrative capacities of cities to receive and to integrate;
- 2) Establishing different funding arrangements to support cities in their work;
- 3) Opening political access for city leaders to where national, regional and international policy is debated and shaped.

ⁱ UN DESA, “World Urbanization Prospects” (2014).

ⁱⁱ UN Economic and Social Affairs, “Population 2030 – Demographic challenges and opportunities for sustainable development planning” (2015).

ⁱⁱⁱ Elizabeth Collett & Ben Gidley, ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, “Attitudes to Migrants, Communication and Local Leadership (AMICALL) — Final Transnational Report” (2012), see: https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/media/PR-2012-AMICALL_Transnational.pdf