

**ACT Alliance – Caritas Internationalis Joint Statement
on Sustainable Engagement with Migrants
as part of Sustainable Development**

Delivered at the Fourth Thematic Consultation on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: “Contributions of migrants and diasporas to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits”

New York, 25 July, 2017

Dear Co-Facilitators,

Thank you very much for this opportunity to contribute to the session.

We welcome this Consultation’s focus on the contributions of migrants and diasporas to all dimensions of sustainable development, as it provides an opportunity to emphasise the important role of migrants in both sending and receiving countries and communities, while also giving centre stage to migrants’ own agency not only as economic, but also as social actors in the process.

In light of the topics raised in the issue brief, as well as in reflection on discussions held so far, we would like to give the following recommendations:

We are concerned with the current discussion’s focus on temporary, circular migration, which presumes that this the only desirable and implementable model of migration. This not only ignores the individual aspirations and qualifications of migrants themselves, but also reifies unhelpful conceptual barriers between migrants as a temporary workforce and the diaspora as permanently settled, which should be overcome by offering **more regular pathways** into labour markets, and by including the possibility for migrants to return home and back to the country of employment on a more regular basis. As mentioned already during previous thematic consultations, **regularization** of undocumented migrants would form an additional useful tool in this regard, and would have the specific benefit of facilitating financial inclusion.

We note that, despite the remarkable total size of remittances globally, the expectations of many governments and IFIs for “harnessing the development potential of migration” have ignored the economic realities facing many migrants and their families on the ground. Large numbers of migrant jobs currently are found in high-risk, lower-skilled sectors, and do not produce sufficient returns to enable “productive investment”; many families use remittances simply to survive. Therefore, the first step for truly enhancing the development potential of migration would have to be to ensure **equal treatment of migrant workers with nationals** in destination countries – as a necessary precondition for *sustainable engagement*, not just instrumentalisation, of migrant workers to in the development processes.

It is particularly important to highlight the **situation of migrant women** in this regard, many of whom work in exploitative sectors which have not been sufficiently regulated by states. Domestic workers in particular



are often excluded from national labour laws, severely limiting the access to rights and protection. This needs to be addressed urgently.

We would also like to emphasize the importance of **freedom of association**. Many destination countries prevent foreign nationals from forming and/or joining associations, including trade unions. Although migrant workers' associations exist in many countries of origin, their ability to support fellow nationals abroad in their quest for dignified working conditions is severely hampered by these restrictions. **Associations** should thus be seen not only as important participants in the social dialogue between employers and employees in destination countries, but also as contributors to social cohesion in host countries, as well as bridge builders between migrant communities on both sides, and they should thus be promoted in the context of a Global Compact. Improved **consular services** can also serve useful bridging functions for migrants, but they should be a complement to and cannot be a substitute for migrants' own self-organization.

As acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda (Goal 10.7), **lowering remittance costs** is essential for achieving sustainable development. However, we are concerned that the main proposed tool for this in the issue brief appears to be fostering competition through private market mechanisms; while this may have a positive effect, the role of the state in **regulating financial markets and the practices of financial service providers** should not be ignored in this regard. Similarly, the application of new innovative technologies for fostering financial inclusion, especially in remote rural areas, is something we have been actively exploring in many of our programmes, but it cannot serve as a substitute for more proactive state policies holding the financial sector accountable for its responsibilities vis-à-vis all citizens, and not only high net worth investors. **Financial inclusion of women** needs to be urgently prioritized as part of such policies.

Thank you very much for your attention.