

UAE STATEMENT: FIRST THEMATIC CONSULTATION, GLOBAL COMPACT ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

PANEL 2: SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COHESION

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We are grateful to the Moderator of this session for providing the United Arab Emirates with the opportunity to contribute to this valuable discussion.

As many of you may be aware, the UAE has the largest per capita foreign born population in the world: approximately 80% of the UAE's population was born outside of the UAE, and have made the choice, over the course of their lives, to make the Emirates their home. Since unification in 1971, the UAE has peacefully managed a change in its demographic make-up that would be considered unimaginable in many parts of the world.

The consequence is a highly diverse, multicultural population, which underpins the UAE's ongoing social and economic development. Moreover, the UAE's expatriate communities contribute significantly, through remittance flows, to the development of their own countries, particularly in Asia. According to the World Bank, total remittances from the UAE in 2014 amounted to \$19.28 billion. Today, Indian households with a family member working in the UAE are 30% more likely to own a business.

It is, perhaps, therefore instructive to reflect on how the UAE has managed this demographic shift, and how it maintains such high levels of support for such a multicultural society.

Firstly, the UAE's leadership has continuously emphasised importance of developing a society that is open and welcoming. Rather than employ the rhetoric of division and discord, they have highlighted the importance of unity and cohesion. From a top-down perspective, there has been a continued commitment to valuing expatriates as contributors, rather than as a threat. Today, uniquely, we have a Ministry of Tolerance, and last year the Government launched a National Tolerance Programme as part of the UAE's Vision 2021.

The programme aims to:

- a) strengthen the Government's role as an incubator of tolerance;
- b) promote tolerance among youth and steer them away from extremism;
- c) integrate international efforts to promote tolerance

Secondly, the demographic changes in the UAE have not come at the expense of the local population. Mandating Emirati co-ownership in onshore foreign businesses has helped enable a generation of entrepreneurs. Looking ahead, as the UAE moves towards a post-oil economy, one third of the total federal budget is expended on education and the UAE is home to campuses from 37 international universities. The importance of equipping Emiratis to compete in a globalised world is the government's number one priority.

Finally, the government has worked to ensure that expatriate communities retain autonomy over personal prerogatives. Freedom of religion is enshrined within the Constitution and today the UAE is home to over one hundred and twenty churches, alongside Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu temples. Returning again to education, Arabic, British, American, French, Indian curricula are taught in schools, meaning Emirati children benefit from a world-class education and foreign residents benefit by being able to learn in an environment aligned to the one in their respective home countries.

These three pillars – the promotion of tolerance, continual investments in the local population, and well-defined spaces for expatriate communities to exercise personal prerogatives – have enabled the UAE to manage a demographic shift of almost unprecedented scale. Looking to the future, the UAE remains committed to maintaining an open, welcoming and tolerant society that attracts expatriates from around the world, long into the foreseeable future.

Thank you.