

Civil Society Days

Opening remarks

**Mr. Tobias Billström,
Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Sweden**

May 12th 2014, 10:50-11:00 am

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this plenary.

As Sweden's *Chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development* draws to a close, it is an opportunity to recognize how far we have come **together**.

The GFMD is a unique state led platform for informal, non-binding exchange of experiences. A key feature is the consultative process that allows for exchanges of ideas between states and civil society stakeholders across geographic regions.

Through the GFMD, as the relationship between states and civil society has matured, we have **become partners** - often with **shared goals** -and many of these are echoed in civil society's **5 year -8 point action plan**.

I want to take a moment to **reflect on this partnership** and how it is manifested in what we have **achieved together** these past 18 months.

Sweden has had **three key priorities for our chairmanship**.

The **first** has been **greater policy coherence on migration**. During Sweden's chairmanship of the GFMD, states, civil society and international organisations collaborated to prepare for the *UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development*. We have also been involved in preparations for the *Cairo +20 International Conference on Population and Development*.

As partners, we have worked hard to ensure that the post 2015 international development agenda **recognizes migration as a driving force for inclusive, human development.**

Increasingly that **same message is echoed by governments and the broader international community around the world** – a fact acknowledged by the **UN Secretary General** when he recognized the importance of the GFMD process and called for migration to be included in the post 2015 development agenda at the High Level Dialogue in New York last year.

A second priority for the Swedish Chair has been to **harness migration for economic development** through better skills matching, engaging the private sector in discussions on migration policy and to acknowledge the economic contributions of the diaspora.

During the our chairmanship we have engaged civil society, governments, international organisations and the private sector to encourage an exchange of views, to appreciate what is working, and to understand what can be improved. Our ambition has been to use that knowledge to build **more trust, stronger processes and systems** that not only facilitate protection for vulnerable migrants but also to **create the synergies** necessary for inclusive development.

A third priority has been to harness migration for inclusive social development. As Chair of the GFMD, Sweden has actively reached out to diaspora organisations **globally** to ensure that migrants themselves have a voice and are empowered to act. It is important to give migrants an “expert voice” on issues that directly affect them. **Their input is needed and**

necessary as they have the added advantage of speaking from **both country of origin and destination perspective**.

In this respect it has been encouraging to see that the role and **importance of diasporas** was center stage at IOM's conference last year. Members of the diaspora have also been invited to address the UN High Level Dialogue and the GFMD Thematic Meetings.

As Chair, Sweden has seized the opportunity not only to engage globally on migration and development issues, which has been a priority for us for many years. **We have also seen this as an opportunity to discuss the development impact of migration at home.**

In Sweden we have collaborated with civil society in a seminar series in the capital, the far north and west of the country to inform and initiate a dialogue connecting discussions about migration and integration with the global debate on migration.

We have provided support to the African diaspora in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark to **form the first Nordic Working Group on Migration and Development** which will be launched tomorrow on May 13th. Their objective as members of the diaspora is to positively influence the migration debate in home and host countries by raising awareness about migrants as social and economic entrepreneurs.

In addition, **we felt the absence of a youth perspective** in our discussions about migration. Youth statistically are more likely to move than adults and with growing youth populations in emerging economies and the Global South we wanted to involve young people as partners in our dialogue. We joined forces with UNICEF, Fryshuset and the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, and **as a result the Sweden Youth Group on**

Migration and Development was formed. Of the 20 youths representing an ethnically diverse group, six have been selected to participate during the breakout sessions in Common Space. This pilot initiative has been a rewarding experience for us as we begin to see the world through **their** eyes and the opportunities that **they** see through mobility. At the same time, young people's engagement for human rights protection and solidarity with more vulnerable groups **reminds us all as governments, and as adults, of the responsibilities we share** to ensure that when people move, they should do so because they want to, and it should be without risk to their lives or to the lives of their loved ones.

We have worked to **strengthen the development focus** of the GFMD discussions by **encouraging the engagement of development practitioners**, both in the government part and in the civil society part of the GFMD process. As an example, we initiated an **expert network** globally made up of academics and policy practitioners to seek their input into our background papers. We launched an **online discussion with experts**. Our aim was to broaden the involvement of civil society and academia with policy practitioners at the national level. Our joint efforts resulted in a **greatly expanded database** as well as creating opportunities for national level dialogues between different sectors.

Cognizant of the importance of Common Space while being mindful of the need for states to have opportunities for interaction amongst themselves, we have **strengthened the format of Common Space** and increased the time allotted this year. We hope that this extended session will result in greater opportunities for interaction between states, civil society and private sector participants.

It is clear now, after 8 years of working together, that we all care greatly that migration and mobility is acknowledged as a driver of development. We may come at this from different angles, but we can all agree that mobility is important from the perspective of individuals, states and private sector interests.

Taking our different perspectives as a starting point, and acknowledging that as a strength, I believe that we now can move **forward together** nationally as well as internationally to address the challenges that remain.

This week of the Global Forum is the **culmination of months of work between civil society, international organisations and governments** to improve the global governance of migration, and to harness the economic and social development potential that migration offers. These are **important matters that must be given proper space** for a balanced discussion.

In this room we need to **stand together on the important issues**. We have come this far together because we have been able to develop a **shared vision**. Often we have **similar goals**. Even if our processes sometimes differ, they are **complementary and compelling enough to make change happen**. The clearest evidence of this is how our priorities aligned for the High Level Dialogue last year where the call for migration in the post 2015 international development agenda was echoed by governments and civil society alike.

This is our joint success.

After our chairmanship, Sweden will continue to work together with **all GFMD stakeholders** as part of the Troika and as a committed participant in the GFMD process.

I feel privileged that Sweden has had the opportunity to chair the GFMD at this defining moment in time. So many international processes have converged to shine a spotlight on human mobility and international development. It is an honour to have worked together with you all to **unlock the enabling effects of migration on development.**

Sweden welcomes a **continued close and constructive collaboration** with civil society to ensure that the gains we have made, the relationships we have built and the needs we have acknowledged remain the focus of our work going forward.

I wish you all the best for a fruitful discussion and look forward to welcoming you to the opening ceremony and Common Space on Wednesday.

Thank you.