

Connecting with the GFMD Government Days and Beyond
CSD Tuesday, 13th May (Mässhallen)
Reflections by Eva Åkerman-Börje

Thank you for the opportunity to join you here this afternoon.

I have had the pleasure of attending some of the events over the past two civil society days, and I am feeling energised just by being here with you. What a wealth of important ideas and recommendations!

As I listened to the reports from the breakouts, **several thoughts** went through my mind. **The first** was the realisation of **how happy I am** to be part of a process that has blossomed into a genuine global dialogue about migration.

The fact that we can sit here together to have this conversation is a testament to the **commitment of civil society organisations** to prioritise, engage and advocate on migration related issues - **not in opposition** to, but **as partners with** governments over the long term.

There are no quick fixes on migration. There are many factors involved; not least the free will of migrants themselves to make choices that they hope will improve their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

The challenges that we face are as a result of the different starting points and perspectives that we have. I believe we **have** learned to respect that, and **that** is one of the reasons we have seen progress within the GFMD process.

The second thought that struck me was how much the core goals of civil society and those of governments are aligned - the convergence that was reported back - and I want to spend a few minutes to explain what I mean:

Let me start by voicing my appreciation for the fact that the Civil Society Days has so **clearly taken as its starting point** the inclusion of migration in the post-2015 development agenda.

This is also a key priority of the government meetings of the GFMD.

As has already been so eloquently stated, this is needed in order to **promote international partnerships and policies** that facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration. It is also a **necessary element** of our joint goals to **reduce the costs and increase the productivity for migrants themselves**, as well as **countries of origin and countries of destination**.

You have highlighted the importance of recognizing migrants and diaspora as agents of development, ensuring decent work, and avoiding violations of migrants' rights. These issues **feature regularly** in the government deliberations on migration in the post-2015 development agenda. Other issues that come up time and again are (a) reducing the costs of recruitment and remittances; (b) allowing migrants access to social security benefits that they have earned even as they move; and (c) ensuring proper recognition of the skills that they bring.

Let me go into **more detail** on some of the points that you have highlighted over the last couple of days:

For example, the work that civil society has done on labour migration with a focus on labour rights, decent work and safe migration, (reflecting points 5,

7 and 8 of your 5 year plan), is very much in line with the focus of the governments' work in RT2 on **inclusive economic development**.

It is a fact that **when workers' rights are protected, their skills validated** and the **recruitment process is ethically sound**, all parties stand to benefit.

Your concern about ethical recruitment is **mirrored** in the governments' roundtable discussions on **ethical recruitment practices** with the private sector. We have worked closely with IOM and the International Organisation of Employers to **explore** how an **informal, non-binding ethical recruitment system** (known as IRIS) can help governments and recruitment companies protect workers from abuse. IRIS could also help to reduce the space for unscrupulous recruiters to exploit gaps between countries legal jurisdictions. Listening to you here today, I am confident that we are on the same page.

The discussions you have had on the **need for special protection of migrant children and their families**, and guaranteeing access to basic services and human rights protection (points 3,4,5 in your 5 year plan) is an area that is **also addressed** within the context of the government days. Our choice to **focus on the empowerment of migrants** by highlighting policies and procedures that promote migrants' access to legal protection, education, health care, indicates to me that **civil society and governments are concerned about similar issues**. Namely, the special needs of the most vulnerable, including women and children, and how governments can implement **policies that don't violate** fundamental rights, even in the case of undocumented migrants.

The **third theme of migrants' empowerment** is very close to our hearts. Speaking from a Swedish perspective, we **cannot underestimate** migrants' contribution to our country. From a global perspective, it is **imperative to acknowledge** members of the diaspora as transnational development actors. They **contribute through skills, jobs and taxes** to their host countries and many **also are committed to development in countries of origin or heritage**.

Not only that; as we have heard, members of the diaspora are often entrepreneurs, creating jobs, trade and other economic opportunities across borders. (During the Swedish Chairmanship, we **devoted a full thematic GFMD meeting to migrant empowerment**, the diaspora's capacity to contribute to social and economic development in multiple locations, and also the value of including members of the diaspora in policy discussions and other strategic consultations).

Closer to home, the work that we have done with the diaspora within the context of our chairmanship of the GFMD has also **resulted in the formation of a new Nordic Working Group on Migration and Development** which was launched earlier today.

There is **definitely a need to promote a different public image of migration**. Who better to do this than members of the diaspora who **through their own empowerment** can articulate their views and influence change? We hope that the work we do with governments within the GFMD can pave the way for policies that support and **recognize the value** of diaspora contributions to development, - **Fatumo Farah spoke about this yesterday**.

I am excited that our **priorities are so closely aligned**. In fact the GFMD has participated in national and regional civil society events **throughout the year**. As John Bingham mentioned, “...we have Common Space year round,” **not only during the week of the GFMD**. **By working together**, we can align our complementary process and approaches towards the achievement of a common goal: **that mobility is a choice, not a necessity**.

At the same time, I think we must be humble in the face of people’s choices to make personal sacrifices for the sake of their families and the belief in a better future. We cannot pass judgement on others, but **what we can do is to continue to work together in the best way we can** to identify policies and practices that **do** work, that make life better for those who are faced with the choice of whether to stay or go.

In conclusion, that is also why the work we have done together to ensure that migration is included in the Post 2015 Development Agenda is so important. By including migration, we have a **chance to implement coherent development policies** that factor the multiple effects of people’s mobility into development planning. By **acknowledging the reality** of migration, **rather than ignoring it**, governments can develop **responsive policies** that positively impact on people’s health, education and life opportunities.

Increasingly, this is understood by governments and the broader international community around the world. It was also recognized by the UN Secretary- General when he acknowledged the importance of the GFMD process and called for migration to be included in the post 2015 development agenda at the UN High Level Dialogue in New York. This is

our **joint success**, and something that we can build on under the Turkish chairmanship of the GFMD.

During these 18 months we have built up momentum together. As 2015 draws closer, **now more than ever**, we have to stay focused and work together to advocate for what we believe is right. We have to join forces. **Only by standing united** on an ambitious, realistic and balanced approach will we be able to ensure that migration is in fact included in the post-2015 agenda.

Sweden will remain committed to this process. As we move forward, I draw inspiration from your 5 year, 8 point plan which remains a concrete roadmap, not only for civil society, but also for governments committed to **unlocking the potential of migration for inclusive development**.

I want to close by thanking you for these very exciting two days and to welcome you to the opening of Common Space tomorrow.