

Working Session I: GCM Cluster 1- Human rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance – Salle XXIV

Working Session Chair's Opening Remarks by

**Amb. Mehmet Samsar
Director-General for Consular Affairs, Republic of Turkey**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me all welcome you and thank the 2017-2018 Co-Chairs of the GFMD for organizing another GFMD Dialogue on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

We believe that the Global Compact on migration provides the international community with the opportunity to create a more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the migration, as well as strengthening international cooperation among all stakeholders. It has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable people and inject the necessary hope to those, who are concerned for their future and may in end fall victim to the smugglers and traffickers.

To this end, I am very pleased to Chair this working session under the broad title of human rights of migrants. Through the years, GFMD has fostered the sharing of countless ideas, programs and policies. I am confident that our deliberations here today will distill these insights and will generate significant input by the GFMD to the consultations and negotiations processes of the Global Compact.

Today, we have Ambassador Rosemary McCarney, Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN Office in Geneva and Mr. William Gois, Regional Coordinator, Migrant Forum in Asia with us as input speakers. And, Ms. Carolina Hernandez, Human Rights Officer from the OHCHR is our Rapporteur. The IOM will also present the briefing paper on the Thematic Recollection of GFMD Discussions on the subject matter and introduce us with the guiding questions for discussion. I believe you have all received this paper.

Distinguished Colleagues,

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. These are the words that we have undersigned almost 70 years ago when we abided ourselves by the Universal Human Rights Declaration.

Therefore, the issue of migration needs a far more comprehensive, human-rights based approach. It is essential to instill the idea that migrants are not viewed as plain commodities or factors of production, but human beings with rights. In order to achieve this objective, we not only have to ensure a “whole of government” approach but also need a “whole of society” concept.

Turkey is of the opinion that efforts to ensure the dignity and well-being of migrants depend on international responsibility-sharing and cooperation among all stakeholders, as well as on effective integration of human rights into policies. This approach is essential for eliminating discrimination, racism and xenophobia in order to create an atmosphere of tolerance.

This vision involves opening more regular channels for migration, including facilitated and well-regulated mobility mechanisms, paving the way for economic growth, more employment opportunities and increased competitiveness. Let us not forget that the contribution of migrants to the inclusive growth and sustainable development that is also recognized in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, is a key point in harnessing the potential of migrants to contribute to the development efforts in home and host countries.

Another aspect of this vision is addressing the “root causes” of irregular migration. It is of utmost importance to support peace processes and promote peaceful settlement of disputes in conflict-affected areas, as well as to step up humanitarian aid and development assistance in the countries of transit and origin.

It is with this understanding that during our 2014-2015 Chairmanship of the GFMD, we attached utmost importance to the protection of rights of migrants. Let me remind you that during our Chairmanship “forced migration” was elaborated for the first time at the GFMD platform. Moreover, as you all will recall that we have organized two thematic workshops titled “The role of communications in promoting widespread recognition of the benefits of migration, improving public perception of

migrants, combating discrimination and promoting integration” and “Recognizing the contribution of women migrants to economic and social development in countries of origin and destination and addressing the specific needs, particularly concerning respect for their human rights”.

You will also recall that during our Chairmanship, the GFMD Business Mechanism that we believe is a unique platform was established. Its last thematic meeting that was held two days ago provided us with the opportunity to discuss in depth the contribution of business sector to the GCM.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Unfortunately, in times of turmoil and uncertainty, we observe that migrants and refugees become scapegoats. We see a rising trend of discrimination, xenophobia and racism. These dangerous trends are fueled by populist rhetoric of the extremist/populist parties and biased media portrayals, which represent a huge challenge to democracies everywhere. Fear and rejection of migrants and refugees are precisely the wrong answer to extremist threats. This is above all a battle of values. If you lose your values you lose the battle.

We can correct this negative stereotyping. We all need to push for a more forward-looking and positive understanding of migration and refugee flows. Protecting the human rights, dignity and well-being of migrants is directly linked with their capacity to take active part in economic and social life of the host countries. In this respect, protection against discrimination and equal treatment are crucial.

Excellencies,

Let me shortly dwell on Turkey’s experience with regard to protecting the rights of migrants.

Within the framework of strengthening human rights protection, including migrants’ rights, we have achieved a lot in the legislative field during the last decade. We have amended our Constitution, established the National Human Rights Institution and Ombudsman’s Institution, and have taken necessary steps to put the new legal and institutional framework into practice. We have organized various training programs for civil servants and realized awareness raising activities.

In 2013 we have enacted a landmark legislation, “The Law on Foreigners

and International Protection” following a transparent and participatory process together with all national and international stakeholders, including the IOM and the UNHCR. The Law sets the basis for the establishment of the Directorate General for Migration Management, as well as ensuring the legal basis for the principle of non-refoulement that has already been abided by Turkey. It also defines humanitarian residence permit, subsidiary protection mechanism and temporary protection. Now, we are aiming to strengthen our efforts in migration management and we hold regular meetings of the Migration Policy Board with the high level participation from all government institutions.

Indeed, Turkish society is an amalgamation of individuals from various backgrounds, who have found their home in this land throughout centuries. Turkey is hosting the largest refugee population in the world and today there are more than 2.9 million Syrians in Turkey. We not only provide Syrians with food, non-food items, medical and education services, but also enable them to contribute legally to our economy. For all these efforts, Turkish Government, together with NGOs and municipalities spent 26 billion USD.

Furthermore, in order to prevent loss of lives in the Aegean, break the migrant smuggling networks and replace irregular migration with legal migration, our cooperation with the EU culminated in the 18 March Agreement. Today, we witness that our endeavors have borne fruit. Since October 2016, daily average of irregular crossings decreased from 7.000 to less than 100. Last month, the number was just 39.

While protecting the lives and rights of migrants as a host country, Turkey also exerts every effort to safeguard the dignity and well-being of over 6 million Turks living as migrant workers mainly in Europe, but also in many other countries of the world. To this end, we have concluded bilateral social security agreements with 29 countries. We believe that portability of earned social benefits is a matter of fairness for migrants.

Furthermore, in the international fora we promote efforts towards lowering the costs of remittances, enhancing the financial literacy, ensuring the portability of social benefits and recognition of skills at all levels.

We also advocate for social cohesion based on rights and duties, as well as equal treatment, and also integration policies strongly counteracting discrimination, racism and xenophobia. It is our common responsibility to provide the necessary atmosphere for migrant workers to access the core

institutions of the society, the labour market, the education system, housing, health and many more. In this regard, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers represents an adequate and comprehensive framework. 27 years on from its adoption, it is simply disappointing to see that it has only 50 States parties. We call on all States to adhere to this Convention.

Distinguished Colleagues,

We believe that promoting and protecting the rights of all migrants require combined efforts at national and international level. What we need is honest and open discussions that will borne fruit in addressing and responding the challenges migrants face.

In this regard, we are of the opinion that GFMD can make meaningful contribution to the GCM. Let me remind you that in the modalities resolution, GFMD is invited to contribute to the preparatory process of the GCM.

Indeed, GFMD has enabled a constructive and progressive dialogue on the issue of migrants' rights throughout the years. As I have said, it has also fostered the sharing of countless ideas, programs and policies. GFMD has a significant experience in adding the voice of the civil society to the discussions, as well. This is an added-value it can bring in the GCM process. Furthermore, at the GFMD platform, we discussed nearly all the themes that are mentioned in the modalities resolution. In this respect, we can review our discussions, policy insights and recommendations and reflect them at the thematic discussions

With this, I would like to give the floor to the representative of the IOM for presenting the thematic recollection of GFMD Discussions on the subject matter.

Thank you.