

**GLOBAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
Thematic Workshop on GFMD Contribution  
to the Global Compact on Migration

**OPENING REMARKS**

**HON. SARAH LOU Y. ARRIOLA**  
Foreign Affairs Undersecretary  
Office of Migrant Workers' Affairs  
Department of Foreign Affairs  
Philippines

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Ambassador Gotz Schmidt-Bremme,

Director General Ola Henrikson,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Friends of the GFMD,

Good morning.

Two Thousand Seventeen (2017) signals a role-defining moment for States and governments to contribute to, and enrich, the migration discourse. Never has there been a more opportune time to acknowledge the need to deal with migration issues from a global cooperation angle than now.

Today, the world sees the largest cross border migration of people since the Second World War. Data show that the number of international migrants has grown faster than the world's population. In 2015, the share of migrants in the global population reached 3.3%, up from 2.8% in 2000. The number of international migrants increased 41% for the same period, reaching 244 million. Of this figure, 20 million are refugees.

Indeed, the cross-border flow of people to seek work, the movement of families to escape crisis situations or natural disasters, and the diaspora of countless individuals who are compelled to uproot themselves in search of better opportunities, are just a few of the enduring realities that foreground our understanding of migration.

Recent years have also seen the adoption of key outcome documents which recognize the relevance of the migration phenomenon in explaining and addressing concrete, real-world challenges. These products of thoughtful deliberation have thus allowed migration to make inroads in, among others, (1) the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, (2) the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and (3) the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. Perhaps the most ambitious in scale and undoubtedly the most important, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has managed to frame the migration discourse in at least five approaches --

*first*, by highlighting the adverse impact of humanitarian crises and resulting displacement of people on development progress;

*second*, by calling for empowerment of vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees;

*third*, by championing access by all to lifelong learning opportunities;

*fourth*, by committing to eradicate forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor; and

*last*, but certainly not the least, **by recognizing the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development.**

That migration continues to loom large in our collective consciousness is evident in its recurrence, directly or tangentially, in the international community's clarion call to "**leave no one behind**" – a directive that assumes greater significance in the light of a sizeable number of migrants who resort to "irregular" pathways and who consequently find themselves in less than ideal situations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) has long stood out at the forefront of the migration discourse. Ten years since its inception, the GFMD continues to derive its strength from its **voluntary, informal, and non-binding State-led initiatives**. Through time, it has provided an avenue for discussing policies and for sharing best practices that effectively leverage migration for development. Most important, today, the GFMD process **remains relevant and necessary**.

Far from being a proverbial talking shop, the GFMD **fosters practical and action-oriented outcomes**. GFMD does not stop at encouraging governments and other stakeholders to explore how public policies can enhance, or undermine, the development impact of migration. It also advances a coordination mechanism for policy coherence.

Friends,

Allow me to drive the idea closer to home by sharing a fragment of the constantly evolving Philippine migration landscape. Today, there is a distinctive shift in governance in the Philippines which may be credited to sustained attempts to establish the nexus between migration policies and development strategies. Thanks in no small measure to our country's engagement with the GFMD, migration has now been brought into the mainstream.

Our Medium-Term and Long-Term Development Plans have integrated migration-specific indicators that favor inclusive growth – my country's very own version of "leaving no one behind." Our key planning government agency<sup>1</sup> has also established a subcommittee- the Sub-Committee on Migration and Development of the National Economic Development Authority- that meets quarterly to improve coordination among government agencies whose mandates touch upon any stage of the migration cycle.

Moreover, in keeping with the conviction that migration is not just a concern and responsibility of the national government, we are in the process of laying the groundwork for incorporating migration and development initiatives at the local government level.

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<sup>1</sup> National Economic Development Agency.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The GFMD does not stop at efforts to build a consensus. It goes one further by seeking the **establishment of an evidence-based and human rights-centric “accountability framework.”** With patient surefootedness, the negative and misguided perception of migration is slowly giving way to the narrative that migrants contribute positively to countries of origin, transit, and destination. Migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries have also turned to disaggregated data on migration for policy formulation, operational planning, and program execution.

From this standpoint, the principle of “shared responsibility” has been strengthened. Countries of origin, transit, and destination come to realize and are slowly but surely accepting the fact that necessity and appropriateness of binding themselves to protect the rights and promote the welfare of migrants regardless of immigration status and to treat them no less favorably than its nationals.

Though our countries’ circumstances differ and though we find ourselves in varying stages of development, it is important to note that it is only through the holistic “whole of society” approach that we can begin to “flesh out” the aspirations we have earlier set out to achieve.

As mirrored in the Philippine experience, the GFMD continues to broaden its network to engage each and every sector as a partner for change.

Friends,

This brings me to my final point.

We wish to stress the importance of heeding the call to go beyond and just restate the commitments and obligations enshrined in international human rights and labor treaties and related agreements that touch on migration such as the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, the ILO Fundamental Conventions, and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and accompanying Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and on Smuggling of Migrants.

Efforts to build a consensus on the “rules of the game” are important. These provide evidence of how far we have come, while pushing us further to the even greater tasks ahead. We can thus accept the status quo and treat “migration,” “development,” “human rights” as mere abstract constructs, or we can seize this historic opportunity of utilizing the ongoing process of formulation of the global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration to act – urgently and decisively – and include in it doable action oriented commitments with clear means and timetable of implementation and methods of review.

In our discussion today, we will be suggesting a set of commitment framework where every single stakeholder accepts its role as either as duty bearer, responsibility enforcer, governance reformer, and partner for change in the local, national, regional, and global arena. I say “commitment framework” because it is not set of commands. Moreover, it does not require obedience but allegiance. Obedience may be commanded but allegiance is an act of choice.

It is in this light that I urge you to seriously consider and adopt the following advocacies:

- (1) The commitment to fostering better coordination and cooperation among countries of origin and destination in abiding by and implementing ethical recruitment principles and practices, provision of decent work opportunities, fostering migrants health and making available access to public health services and institutions, and social and financial inclusion policies and programs,
- (2) The commitment to vigorously pursue victims centered approach on programs of action for the prevention and prosecution of human trafficking and migrant smuggling;
- (3) The commitment to promote labor mobility, including mutual recognition of skills and academic qualifications and expanded legal pathways to migration such as student visa and family reunification visa;
- (4) The commitment of host governments to work with sending countries to provide effective and accessible avenues for redress of grievance

and access to legal remedies and social services, such as education and healthcare facilities;

(5)The commitment to allow social insurance coverage, portability of benefits,

(6)The commitment to lowering of cost of remittances; and

(7)The commitment of governments to respect the rights of migrant workers, including the non-confiscation of passports, decent work and working conditions and reasonable wages.

I am confident that with your commitments, the aforementioned non exhaustive list shall form part not only for our collective aspirations but also of our common actionable commitments.

Friends, we let us seize the day and help shape the future of the international migration governance. We owe to our migrants, to the host communities, and to our respective countries.

My friends, may you have a productive discussion. Thank you