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**Statement by Louise Arbour, Special Representative
of the Secretary-General for International Migration**

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GFMD Opening Plenary Session

5 December 2018, Marrakesh

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you to the co-chairs of the GFMD, Director-General Nadir and ambassador Schmidt-Bremme, for inviting me to this inaugural session of the Eleventh GFMD Summit Meeting. May I take this opportunity to congratulate you for your extraordinary commitment to the global debate and cooperation on migration and development over the course of your joint chairmanship?

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ecuador for its willingness to take up the chairmanship of the GFMD next year. I would like to thank you for stepping up and assuming this responsibility during an important period of migration challenges, not least in your own region. I wish you the best of luck.

These passed two years have been truly remarkable. We have seen a phenomenal culmination of effort and energy to put migration at the center of the global agenda – to recognize its multilateral dimension as a cross border phenomenon. Governments and other stakeholders have sought to define the common challenges and find common solutions to one of humanity’s most central issues, realizing that the gains of better cooperation are enormous.

We have come a long way since the first High-Level Dialogue in the General Assembly in 2006 – in which member states of the

UN highlighted many of the same issues, across regions and independent of being perceived of as countries of origin, transit and destination. Looking back, it might be surprising that we could already find a remarkably comprehensive approach to many aspects of migration and a strong willingness to debate and cooperate at that time. This willingness manifested itself in the creation of the GFMD in 2007. Member States have now further refined their understanding of migration and have reached a historic agreement in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Migration has finally found its home in the United Nations.

The compact considers the complex realities of why people make the decision to move across borders. It is a comprehensive framework, that deals with all aspects and phases of the migratory process. It is anchored in the fundamental interlinkage between state sovereignty and state interdependence and aims at improving state cooperation as its key organizing principle. It seeks to maximize the benefits of migration for all – migrants, communities and states - while reducing the negative aspects of migration, particularly those linked to irregular, chaotic and dangerous practices.

The compact is legally non-binding and its goal is neither to stop nor to increase migration. It is designed to allow countries to better manage migration in a safe, orderly and regular fashion on a voluntary basis. It is meant to be truly global and does not favor any particular region. Rather, it reflects a global need for evidence-based policies and greater international cooperation on migration to better harness its undoubted benefits and mitigate its challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The historic July 13 agreement on the text of the Global Compact for Migration was reached after some 18 months of consultations and negotiations, involving both governments and multi-stakeholders, in which most of you were intimately involved.

Not surprisingly, the GCM recognizes the contributions of the GFMD to the process leading to the adoption of the Compact. The GFMD has indeed served as one of the key venues in which professional expertise as well as political goodwill were developed over a decade. I would be amiss not to mention in this context the formidable contribution of Peter Sutherland in establishing the GFMD and forcefully setting migration on the global agenda. His work has led to a more constructive global dialogue and created an atmosphere of trust between stakeholders, leading us to where we are today – to an environment in which this issue could finally find a proper home in the United Nations.

In light of that, it seems appropriate that the GCM expressly invites the GFMD to engage in the implementation of its objectives through its tested working methods, namely to provide a platform to exchange experiences on implementation, share good practices on policies and cooperation, promote innovative approaches, and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships around specific policy issues. The GCM, however, leaves ample of room for this Forum to decide how best to include discussions on CGM implementation, follow-up and review, in its agenda.

The GFMD's greatest asset is the many dedicated colleagues, from states, civil society and private sector, and its most recent addition of the Mayoral Mechanism, who have tirelessly worked to advance these efforts. We will continue to count on your support as we now move into what the Secretary-General has called the era of implementation.

As Member States and other participants gather for the Intergovernmental Conference for the adoption of the Global Compact in just a few days we will have the opportunity to launch an unprecedented process of cooperation to harness the benefits of human mobility and reduce the human and economic costs of poorly managed, chaotic and disorderly international migration. Roles and mandates will need to be clarified, resources need to be allocated, but most importantly, we must make the GCM come to life by generating ideas, projects and action. The GFMD will be an important component in making it happen.