

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION IS COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE THAT HUMANE No.30 AND ORDERLY INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION DIALOGUE BENEFITS MIGRANTS AND ON MIGRATION SOCIETY IOM ASSISTS IN MEETING THE GROWING OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF COVID-19 CRISIS: MIGRATION REIMAGINING THE ROLE MANAGEMENT OF MIGRANTS AND ADVANCES HUMAN MOBILITY FOR THE UNDERSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT OF OF MIGRATION THE SUSTAINABLE ISSUES ENCOURAGES DEVELOPMENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GOALS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MIGRATION UPHOLDS THE HUMAN DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING OF MIGRANTS.

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No. 30

INTERNATIONAL
DIALOGUE
ON MIGRATION

COVID-19 CRISIS:
REIMAGINING THE ROLE
OF MIGRANTS AND HUMAN
MOBILITY FOR THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS

The primary goal of IOM is to facilitate the orderly and humane management of international migration... To achieve that goal, IOM will focus on the following activities, acting at the request of or in agreement with Member States:...

7. To promote, facilitate and support regional and global debate and dialogue on migration, including through the International Dialogue on Migration, so as to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges it presents, the identification and development of effective policies for addressing those challenges and to identify comprehensive approaches and measures for advancing international cooperation... (IOM Strategy, adopted by the IOM Council in 2007).

IOM launched its International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) at the fiftieth anniversary session of the IOM Council in 2001, at the request of the Organization's membership. The purpose of the IDM, consistent with the mandate in IOM's constitution, is to provide a forum for Member States and Observers to identify and discuss major issues and challenges in the field of international migration, to contribute to a better understanding of migration and to strengthen cooperation on migration issues between governments and with other actors.

The IDM is a platform for the Organization to listen and learn from its Member States and partners, and build evidence base for projects worldwide. The discussions also contribute to the overall implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly goal 10.7. The inclusive, informal and constructive format of the IDM has helped to create a more open climate for migration policy debate and has served to build confidence among the various migration stakeholders. In combination with targeted research and policy analysis, the IDM is providing an open forum for debate and exchanges between all relevant stakeholders and has contributed to a better understanding of topical and emerging migration issues and their linkages with other policy domains. It has also facilitated the exchange of policy options and approaches among policymakers and practitioners, with a view towards more effective and humane governance of international migration. The IDM is organized by the IDM Unit of IOM's Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships.

The International Dialogue on Migration Publication Series (or “Red Book Series”) is designed to capture and review the results of the events and research carried out within the framework of the IDM. The Red Book Series is prepared and coordinated by the IDM Unit. More information on the IDM can be found at www.iom.int/idm or you can contact idmworkshop@iom.int.

The publication presents a summary report of the deliberations at the IDM session held on 15 and 16 October 2020. It offers a collection of experiences and best practices for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for migrants, migration, and mobility. It also contains a set of recommendations for promoting migrant inclusive socioeconomic recovery plans.

Elizabeth Ferris, Katharine Donato, and Maria Fernanda Estrada Ornelas of the Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM) at Georgetown University are the authors of this report. Paula Benea, Migration Policy Officer in the IDM Unit, coordinated the report’s drafting and the general production of this publication. Dejan Keserovic, Head of the Governing Bodies Division, provided overall guidance. Special thanks go to Hannah Emerson, Intern, Governing Bodies Division, who provided valuable assistance during the review and editing process.

Thanks for their contribution to the 2020 IDM session are owed particularly to colleagues in IOM national and regional offices, the Migration Health Division, the Migration Policy Research Division, the Meetings Secretariat, the Media and Communications Unit, the French and Spanish Translation Units, and the Publications Unit.

FOREWORD

2020 has proved to be a grueling year. The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis with devastating socioeconomic and humanitarian impact, varying across regions but leaving no one untouched. It has presented unparalleled challenges for the society as a whole, and left the most vulnerable communities in particular distress, while border closures and lockdowns have separated families and loved ones. It has exacerbated the deepest inequalities within our global society. But it is abundantly clear that, as the United Nations Secretary-General has stated: “no one is safe until everyone is safe”.

At the beginning of 2020, the international community was preparing to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, alongside the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, and launching an ambitious Decade of Action for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through multilateral cooperation. At the end of 2020, while these celebrations have been disrupted, we have reconfirmed the importance of international coordination and leadership. Recovery from the pandemic, and returning to the path of sustainable development, will require renewed effort and investment.

The International Dialogue on Migration (IDM), convened on 15 and 16 October 2020, was an extremely timely exchange of best practices and recommendations regarding how we can respond to the immediate and longer-term challenges of the pandemic for migrants and human mobility. It brought together governments, health experts, civil society, the private sector and youth representatives, and reinforced the critical role played by the IDM in offering a venue for discussion of the key migration issues of the day.

It is a pleasure to present the official report of the 2020 IDM session, entitled *COVID-19 crisis: Reimagining the role of migrants and human mobility for the achievement of the Sustainable Development*

Goals. Participants addressed a wide array of topics relating to COVID-19 and its challenges for migrants and human mobility. These included: tackling the needs of migrant populations already in vulnerable situations, specifically women, youth, children and victims of abuses; ensuring access to basic services including healthcare regardless of status and the protection of their human rights; addressing xenophobia and promoting social cohesion and resilience; enabling migrants' contribution to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts and to the SDGs; and strengthening COVID-19 response and recovery efforts through the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the SDGs.

We believe the discussions at the 2020 IDM session, as in previous years, have contributed to a more balanced discourse on – and more accurate picture of – migration. In particular, the discussion emphasized the importance of including migrants in all aspects of crisis preparedness, response and recovery efforts, the need to maintain opportunities for safe, orderly and regular migration, and the positive role that migrants can play in today's world even at a time of pandemic.

In addition to the valuable recommendations and best practices contained in this publication, the series of “Red Books” – drawing on discussions from previous IDM meetings – captures key messages, lessons learned and examples of effective policy and practice on a broad range of migration issues.

I am grateful to all the ministers, ambassadors, and other senior officials, as well as to the many experts and representatives from international organizations and civil society – including young people and migrants themselves – who participated in this meeting. I recognize the many efforts that have been taken to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued efforts to realize the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration, to build a stronger, more resilient future for migrants and all of society.

I hope this publication will provide you with valuable insight to guide inclusive and comprehensive responses to this, and future, crises.

António Vitorino
Director General

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADEPT	Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization
LBGTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

REPORT OF THE 2020
INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE
ON MIGRATION SESSION

COVID-19 crisis: Reimagining the role
of migrants and human mobility for
the achievement of the Sustainable
Development Goals

15 and 16 October 2020

INTRODUCTION

The 2020 International Dialogue on Migration was held at the International Conference Center in Geneva, Switzerland, and online, on the theme COVID-19 crisis: Reimagining the role of migrants and human mobility for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing travel restrictions, only one session was organized in 2020 and many participants attended online rather than in person. The 2020 session was the twentieth anniversary edition of the Dialogue, IOM's principal forum for policy dialogue with States and other stakeholders. Despite the global pandemic and occasional technical difficulties, participants welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences of responding to the migration challenges caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and affirmed the importance of restoring human mobility as key to recovery.

The session was predicated on the understanding that human mobility can be part of the solution to the economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic if the movement of people takes place in a safe, coordinated and inclusive manner.

The 2020 Dialogue occurred in concert with broader initiatives designed to encourage greater international action on development and migration. These include the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, a framework enabling governments around the world to work together on inclusive policies that protect migrants' rights and leverage their positive contributions to sustainable development. The Global Compact thus constitutes a directive for how to include and approach migrants during the pandemic response and recovery, in line with the SDGs and their call to leave no one behind. Together, the Global Compact and the

SDGs reinforce efforts to protect migrants and ensure that they have equal access to health care. They draw attention to the need to assist migrants in vulnerable and high-risk situations. They emphasize climate change, decent work, gender equality and youth – cross-cutting topics that affirm the imperative of shared responsibility for migration, including the challenges arising from the pandemic.

The participants confirmed that progress towards attaining the SDGs depended on restoring human mobility. Recovery had to encompass the socioeconomic inclusion and safety of migrants – both those returning to their countries of origin and those remaining in destination countries – so as to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration in the future.

Ministers, ambassadors and other State representatives, migrant groups, and international and civil society organizations participated in the 2020 Dialogue. The session featured six panels led by 39 speakers: government officials and policymakers from countries of origin, transit and destination, representatives of partner United Nations agencies, health experts, academic experts in migration and human rights, civil society organizations, and migrant and diaspora groups.

THE PROCEEDINGS IN BRIEF

During the two days of the Dialogue, the participants addressed many issues related to migration during the COVID-19 pandemic over the course of six panel sessions:

- Safe, coordinated and inclusive human mobility is key to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Protection of vulnerable migrants during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis;
- Enhancing migrants' agency and contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- The role of women in the COVID-19 response and recovery;
- Social cohesion and community resilience: countering discrimination and xenophobia against migrants;
- Applying the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

The session also featured a segment entitled Migrants' Stories.

Opening of the session

The session was opened by the IOM Director General, who welcomed the participants and asked them to discuss the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for migrants, migration and mobility, and to consider their role in the pandemic response and recovery. He also specifically asked that participants put

forward recommendations for immediate action and urged them to work together, despite the challenges, to mitigate the immediate impact of the pandemic. They should remain focused on important long-term goals, such as the SDGs.

Many migrants had found themselves in difficulty in 2020. They had been left stranded by border closures and lost jobs, housing and other means of material support. Too often, migrants were an afterthought for those responding to the pandemic or scapegoats blamed for it. In the event of a global recession, their plight might deteriorate even further.

It was only through cooperation between countries of destination, transit and origin that protection could be afforded to the most vulnerable migrants, such as unaccompanied children and victims of various forms of exploitation and violence. For example, although it was true that men experienced higher COVID-19 fatality rates, the pandemic could have a worse effect on women, girls and LGBTQ people, including migrants, because of the increase in gender-based violence, domestic violence and other harms. According to UN-Women, up to 8.5 million migrant women employed in domestic work could be disproportionately affected by recession, with serious socioeconomic consequences for them and their families. The pandemic's potential to thus widen gender inequalities made a gender-rights approach to migration more necessary than ever. In addition, the pandemic had dimmed prospects for advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as the progress made up to January 2020 might be reversed.

The Dialogue had several aims: to improve knowledge about the global impact of the pandemic and its social and economic consequences for diverse migrant populations; to identify best practices and lessons learned; and to make recommendations relating to migrants and their needs and skills in recovery efforts. In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General,¹ “No one is safe until everyone is safe.” In order to ensure that no one was left behind – a core objective of the 2030 Agenda – action had

¹ United Nations, *COVID-19 and People on the Move*, Policy Brief (June 2020). Available at www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_people_on_the_move.pdf.

to be taken at all levels (local and national governments, civil society and the private sector) to include migrants in planning and response. Such a reimagining of migrants and migration called for a reaffirmation of global commitments to existing frameworks, so that migrants could contribute fully to future socioeconomic recovery and preparedness, and societies could become more resilient.

Panel 1 – Safe, coordinated and inclusive human mobility is key to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

The panellists acknowledged that mobility and migrants were key to recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. In line with the principles advanced in the United Nations Policy Brief,² they offered specific examples of responses to and management of the pandemic-related challenges faced by migrants. Indeed, States had included migrants in pandemic policies and programmes in ways that aimed to protect their human rights, keep everyone safe and make migrants part of on-the-ground solutions.

The panel had four speakers: Malek Deng Dau Deng, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, South Sudan, who described the formulation of a migration policy to establish a system of policies and institutions to manage migration and the launch of a national awareness programme on human trafficking; Cláudia Pereira, Secretary of State for Integration and Migration, Portugal, where the pandemic response offered temporary legal relief to migrant adults, social protection to children in schools and access for all migrants to health care; Stefano Sannino, Deputy Secretary General for Economic and Global Issues, European External Action Service, European Union, who talked about the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and its emphasis on partnerships and joint ownership of the management of migrants by sending and host countries; and Ahmed M. Saleheen, Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladesh, who described

² Ibid.

his country's extensive set of measures aimed at repatriating, supporting and reintegrating returning migrants. The panel was moderated by Aissata Kane, Senior Regional Adviser for sub-Saharan Africa, IOM.

Panel 2 – Protection of vulnerable migrants during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis

The second panel addressed the plight of migrants facing heightened risks during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis. It focused on the new vulnerabilities resulting from the pandemic, the consequent challenges, and the policy changes needed to include and empower vulnerable migrants during recovery. According to the panellists, migrants, especially those who were marginalized, were especially vulnerable and faced high risks of exploitation that were further magnified in fragile States and States convulsed by conflict and humanitarian emergencies. COVID-19 had exacerbated that state of affairs, leaving many migrants and displaced persons stranded outside their countries of birth, often in precarious situations. The panellists urged the international community to implement an inclusive approach during and after the COVID-19 crisis, so that no one was left behind.

The panel had five speakers: Sarah Arriola, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Philippines, who described the four core components of her country's COVID-19 policy (relief, repatriation, return and reintegration); Nick Grono, CEO, Freedom Fund, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and André Silva, Coordinator, Migrant Smuggling Unit, INTERPOL, who discussed efforts to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on trafficking and trafficked persons; Isabela Atanasiu, Legal Officer, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission, who highlighted specific challenges related to the protection of migrant children; and Trang Hong Vu, United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, co-founder of STEP Forward Education, Viet Nam, who emphasized the pandemic's effects on international students and internal migrant workers. In addition, Jean Ayoub, CEO and Secretary General, International Social

Service, participated by recorded message and sent a written input emphasizing the need to strengthen protection of children who faced particular challenges during the pandemic. The panel was moderated by Yitna Getachew, Head, IOM Migrant Protection and Assistance Division.

Panel 3 – Enhancing migrants’ agency and contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

The third panel focused on how to enhance migrants’ agency and how migrants could support achievement of the SDGs. The panellists described efforts to foster resilience by providing different forms of economic support to migrants and to countries of origin and transit to enhance health and development in areas of return. Those examples illustrated the ways in which governments were working together in response to COVID-19 to advance the SDGs. Remittances being a significant share of many economies and remittance decline threatening achievement of the SDGs, the panellists also discussed the importance of financial literacy, remittances and alternative employment opportunities as States recovered from the pandemic.

The panel had four speakers: Viorica Dumbraveanu, Minister of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova, who described negotiations to help Moldovans in other countries, and diaspora networks; Pauline Tamesis, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Cambodia, who spoke about the importance of remittances to fund productive investments and the need to improve transparency in remittance services; Felipe Muñoz, Chief, Migration Unit and Social Sector, Inter-American Development Bank, who emphasized that migration was central to the Bank’s agenda and the importance of shoring up identification processes and improving information systems; and Boubou Camara, Support Pillar Manager for COVID-19, WHO, who described the role of the diaspora in the fight against the pandemic in Mauritania. The panel was moderated by Bettina Etter, Senior Advisor on Global Migration Governance, Switzerland, who called for action to keep remittances flowing to cover the cost of basic necessities.

Panel 4 – The role of women in the COVID-19 response and recovery

The fourth panel emphasized both the challenges that women and girls faced as a result of COVID-19 and the positive roles they played in the pandemic response and recovery. The impacts of the pandemic appeared to be exacerbated for women and girls, across every sector, from health to the economy, from security to social protection. In contrast, their involvement in global health efforts as front-line workers required a different set of responses to ensure their well-being.

The panel had four speakers: Maya Morsy, President, National Council for Women, Egypt, who described Egypt's policy response towards women during the pandemic, including the launch of a new project on domestic violence; Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director-General, WHO, who emphasized the importance of health care, including gender-sensitive health care, for migrant women; Christine Loew, Director, UN-Women Liaison Office in Geneva, who described responses aimed at making migrant women part of the COVID-19 response and recovery effort; and María Corina Muskus Toro, United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, co-founder and Director of Venezolanas Globales, who focused on her organization's work to connect and train Venezuelan women in the diaspora. The panel was moderated by Jacqueline Weekers, Migration Health Director, IOM.

Migrants' stories

Sandwiched between Panels 4 and 5, the segment entitled Migrants' Stories highlighted migrants' contributions to the pandemic recovery and response. It featured presentations on two initiatives by three speakers: Communication response to COVID-19: Tackling misinformation, xenophobia and building network of trusted messengers, by Chylian Azuh, a writer, public speaker and founder of the Female Returnee Forum in Nigeria; and Innovation, digital development and youth leadership in COVID-19 response, by Beyleh Daher, manager, Creative Spaces, Djibouti, and Houssein Mohammed, Senior Project Assistant, IOM Djibouti.

Panel 5 – Social cohesion and community resilience: countering discrimination and xenophobia against migrants

The fifth panel emphasized the importance of reframing the migration narrative in positive terms during the pandemic. The panellists described acts of discrimination and xenophobia towards migrants, how they had emerged during the pandemic, and how to combat them to ensure social cohesion and community resilience.

The panel had four speakers: Glen Linder, Director General, International and Intergovernmental Affairs, Canada, who spoke about the essential role assigned to migrants in Canada's economic recovery plan; Ulvi Aliyev, Chief, International Cooperation Department, State Migration Service, Azerbaijan, who emphasized the need to focus on the root causes of xenophobia and discrimination; Robinson Sathekge, Head, Migration Unit, Johannesburg, South Africa, who described the Johannesburg Council's proactive role in managing migration issues in the city; and Mónica Trigos Padilla, North America Regional Focal Point and Shaping Narratives Lead of the Migration Group, United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, who reported on the efforts of a self-organized group of young people and children to generate narratives that humanized migrants. The panel was moderated by Leonard Doyle, Spokesperson, Head, Media and Communications, IOM.

Panel 6 – Applying the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts

The final, sixth, panel highlighted the ways in which States were leveraging the Global Compact in their COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. It started with a presentation by Cécile Riallant, Head, Migration and Sustainable Development Unit, IOM, and David Khoudour, Human Mobility Advisor, UNDP, on a United Nations Network on Migration policy brief on the Global

Compact.³ They were followed by five panellists: Mohammed Adjei Sowah, Mayor of Accra, Ghana, who highlighted the key role played by municipal authorities in protecting migrants and drawing on their contributions; Mohamed Sadiki, Mayor of Rabat, Morocco, who noted that city government involvement with migrants was a manifestation of the “whole-of-society” approach to migration; Socorro Flores Liera, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations in Geneva, who outlined her country’s actions under the follow-up mechanism to the Global Compact; Rui Macieira, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations in Geneva, who noted that Portugal had been the first country to produce a national plan to implement the Global Compact; and Christian Wolff, Programme Manager, Migration and Displacement, ACT Alliance, who remarked that the Global Compact could serve as a blueprint for a successful and inclusive COVID-19 response. The panel was moderated by Maurizio Busatti, Head, Multilateral Processes Division, IOM.

Closing remarks

The session ended with closing remarks by Eugenio Ambrosi, IOM Chief of Staff. He affirmed the need to work together and to develop policies that governed migration and moved it beyond the pandemic and its socioeconomic impacts. Targeted migrant protection policies were needed to achieve the SDGs and to make migration work for all.

³ United Nations Network on Migration, *The Global Compact for Migration (GCM): Well Governed Migration as an Essential Element of Effective COVID-19 Response*, Policy Brief. Available at https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/default/files/docs/policy_brief-gcm_and_well_governed_migration_as_an_essential_element_of_effective_covid-19_response.pdf.

KEY MESSAGES OF THE 2020 INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION

During the Dialogue, the participants discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration and migrants in depth, with many sharing the ways in which their governments and organizations were responding to the increased needs of migrants. They remarked on how international cooperation stemming from the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration had facilitated the safe return of migrants, protected host communities and ensured that those in especially vulnerable situations were included and safe. They shared experiences and lessons learned about specific actions by States and non-governmental players to protect migrants and host communities and to ensure their safety during the pandemic.

Six messages emerged from the two days of discussion, as set out below.

Recognize mobility and migrants as key to recovery after COVID-19. While the pandemic has had many negative effects, it presents the international community with an opportunity to rethink human mobility for the benefit of all. Socioeconomic inclusion of people on the move is essential for the post-pandemic world because such people are key to global financial recovery. Safe and inclusive mobility pays off for everyone over the long run, and “no one is safe until everyone is safe”.

Support women’s needs and resources. Women are part of the migrant flows severely impacted by the pandemic and also key protagonists in the front-line response, in countries of both

origin and destination. They are agents of change, but they may also be targets of violence in their homes and lose their jobs while having to care for their children, the sick and the elderly. Targeted policies are needed to support women, to improve their access to education and health care, and to provide protection to those who are essential workers or victims of domestic violence.

Change the narrative to counter discrimination and xenophobia while building social cohesion and community resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated migrant-related stigma, racism and xenophobia, and there is concern that the longer-term global recession will only worsen the situation. Countering these messages must involve the media and press, given their influence on local and international perceptions of migrants and migration.

Protect migrants facing heightened risks because of the pandemic. Although COVID-19 has affected all migrants, some are at particular risk. The pandemic has worsened existing inequities and pushed more people into poverty, threatening attainment of the SDGs. Women, children, victims of trafficking, irregular migrants and other groups face risks that make them particularly vulnerable in the current situation.

Mitigate the effects of economic hardship on migrant workers and returned migrants. Many migrants have lost their jobs or experienced sharp reductions in income. Although many have returned to their countries of origin, others lack the resources not only to return but also to survive in their countries of destination without employment. Countries of origin and destination have provided assistance to current and returned migrants. For example, many countries have helped migrants to return home and, together with civil society, offered migrants assistance to facilitate their initial integration.

Strengthen the response to and collaboration on COVID-19 through the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Global Compact is a core instrument for strengthening protection of migrants' rights and working together on border management. It is anchored in and aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. In the face of the serious challenges facing migrants and governments because of COVID-19, convergence between the SDGs and the Global Compact will enhance international cooperation between and among countries of origin, transit and destination. Migrants and diaspora communities will strengthen Global Compact implementation and promote achievement of the SDGs.

THE KEY MESSAGES IN THE WORDS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

1. Recognize mobility and migrants as key to recovery after COVID-19

Overview

While many of the participants spoke of the negative effects of the pandemic, the associated restrictions and their efforts to counter them, there was also recognition that the COVID-19 crisis presented the international community with an opportunity to rethink human mobility for the benefit of all. The socioeconomic inclusion of people on the move was essential both during the response phase and for the post-pandemic world. Several participants echoed the principles put forward by the United Nations Secretary-General to advance safe and inclusive human mobility during and after the pandemic:

- Exclusion is costly in the long run while inclusion pays off for everyone;
- Responding to the spread of COVID-19 and protecting the human rights of people on the move are not mutually exclusive;
- No one is safe until everyone is safe;
- People on the move are part of the solution.

Although they faced heightened risks, migrant women had essential roles to play in the pandemic recovery. Women had been the backbone of health and emergency care during the crisis. Participants speaking from the floor shared specific examples of government programming being redirected to protect and support women through policies that addressed their current and particular needs. Many governments were also strengthening their cooperation with international organizations, including IOM, to better respond to migrant women's needs; and migrant and diaspora women had organized to provide assistance to migrants facing heightened risks because of the pandemic, to reunite families and to restore communities.

Discussion

Several speakers on Panel 1 echoed the principles put forward by the United Nations Secretary-General and the IOM Director General. **Malek Deng Dau Deng** (South Sudan) described his country's travel restrictions and limits on labour migration as immediate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the restrictions had economic effects, the pandemic's impact was likely to be catastrophic. At the same time, however, the pandemic had led to shifts in the country's capacity to deal with migration-related challenges.

South Sudan's migration strategy focused on four areas that had proven to be especially important in a crisis situation: (a) developing a comprehensive framework for border management and governance of free movement; (b) promoting regular labour migration for the socioeconomic development of all; (c) managing forced migration and providing support to victims of forced migration; and (d) promoting migration and the development of South Sudan by mobilizing the diaspora, which meant facilitating remittances and the reintegration of returnee labour migrants. It was crucial to improve the country's migration management capacity in all four areas. In the wake of the pandemic, it would be important to acknowledge migrants' contribution to the health-care system and ensure equal access to health care for migrants.

Stefano Sannino (European Union) emphasized that migration was a global phenomenon that called for global solutions and responsibility-sharing. The EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum was based on the need for partnerships to advance shared interests. Working together was the best way to save lives, fight criminal networks, promote migration management and develop capacity-building. Legal pathways for migration existed, but return, readmission and sustainable reintegration had to be improved. In response to the particular challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU had adopted a recovery plan⁴ and was working on three priority areas of action: the emergency response to the health/humanitarian crisis; strengthening of health, hygiene and sanitation systems by working with partners to boost research capacities; and responding to the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. The aim was to address not only the short-term but also the medium- and long-term impact of the crisis and its structural effects on partner countries. The 2021–2027 EU budget earmarked the equivalent of nine billion euros to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, and to support migration management and governance, in order to promote a more coherent support framework for origin and transit countries, among other things.

Cláudia Pereira (Portugal) said that, in recognition of the particular challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed for migrants, her country had acted in a number of sectors to promote their inclusion, including in terms of documentation and regularization, social protection, health and access to information. For example, in March 2020 the Portuguese Government had decreed that all immigrants and asylum seekers waiting for residence permits would be regarded as having regularized their status, entitling them to the same social support as Portuguese citizens and securing their rights to unemployment and housing benefits. That measure had benefited over 70,000 migrants since the start of the pandemic. Another example was the Programa

⁴ European Commission, Europe's moment: Repair and prepare for the next generation, press release (Brussels, 27 May 2020). Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_940.

Escolhas,⁵ which focused on the particular vulnerabilities of migrant children and their digital access to education during a pandemic that had forced schools to transition largely to virtual or hybrid learning. To ensure that migrant children without access to devices or the Internet continued to receive schooling, the programme arranged for homework and educational materials to be picked up and dropped off weekly. Over 4,000 children had benefited so far.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of the **Philippines** applauded Portugal's forward-looking stance and agreed on the need to promote legal pathways to migration. Consideration should be given to existing shortfalls and difficulties, and to how the members of the international community could work together, through the Dialogue and other international platforms, to strengthen cooperation for the sake of migrants, their families and countries of origin, transit and destination.

The representative of **Chile** remarked that migration could help overcome the damage, and assist in the recovery, from the pandemic. The migrant population was important, and the Chilean Government had taken steps to ensure that migrants, no matter what their migratory status, had equal access to basic services, health care and the other assistance afforded to Chilean nationals, including food and financial assistance. It had also come to the aid of migrants stranded at the border, providing shelter and health care for those who tested positive for COVID-19 in collaboration with local governments, civil society and IOM. In addition, 60,000 Chileans stranded abroad had been repatriated with the financial support and assistance of the private sector and others.

The representative of **Tunisia** emphasized that many displaced people faced particular risks to their rights and well-being, and that those risks undermined the collective response to the pandemic and recovery. The present health crisis gave the international community an opportunity to improve migration management for the good of all. Human mobility was essential for the pandemic response, which would be successful only if

⁵ High Commission for Migration, Programa Escolhas (Portugal). Available at www.acm.gov.pt/-/escolhas.

migrants, who had an important role to play in host countries, were included in response plans.

The representative of **Algeria** noted that all migrants on Algerian territory were included in the national pandemic response and thus had access to free health care. The Algerian Government had taken urgent measures to build tracing capacity and had worked with IOM to develop awareness-raising campaigns accessible to migrants.

The representative of the **International Organization of Employers** highlighted the growing recognition of the fundamental role played by workers. The pandemic had led to deeper respect for essential workers, many of whom were migrants doing indispensable work in agriculture, health, food processing, transport and tourism. Those migrant workers were essential during both the crisis and the recovery – as were remittances. Employers – both private and public – were essential, too. Sustaining decent work was key for a healthy society; without decent work, society would not recover. Employers were also essential to build back better. Transparent frameworks were needed for labour mobility and skills development programmes, and skills recognition and matching had to correspond to labour market realities. In addition, because migrants were essential to recovery and response, their temporary status must lead to permanent residence.

Several speakers on Panel 3 observed that migrant and diaspora communities were an integral part of the COVID-19 response and recovery. **Boubou Camara** (Mauritania) described the important role of the diaspora in the COVID-19 response and recovery in his country. He himself was one of five Mauritanian diaspora doctors mobilized through IOM and the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to return to Mauritania temporarily to fight COVID-19. After his experience with IOM, he had been recruited by WHO to continue his critical work in Mauritania. Clinicians like him helped to reduce mistrust in the health-care system and to convince Mauritians to seek the health care they needed. They had also helped develop a case-management system and improved treatment protocols.

Viorica Dumbraveanu (Republic of Moldova) said that support had been leveraged from the Moldovan diaspora to provide assistance to migrant returnees and to those remaining abroad during recovery.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Ireland** said that a partnership with the Sudanese Government had resulted in Sudanese migrants living in Ireland being recruited by WHO to support the health system in the Sudan through education and training. The partnership was also intended to improve the quality of health care in both Ireland and the Sudan, to maximize health workforce mobility and to promote the rights, welfare and development of individual health workers.

During the Migrants' Stories segment of the Dialogue, several migrants talked about innovative ways that migrants were serving their communities during the pandemic and about their potential role in the recovery process to come. **Chylian Azuh** (Female Returnee Forum, Nigeria) spoke about the important role of migrant women returnees, who provided accurate information about the risks of dangerous migration routes, countered the recruitment of women as traffickers, and afforded personal and psychological support to others. **Beyleh Daher** (Creative Spaces, Djibouti) and **Houssein Mohammed** (IOM, Djibouti) spoke about a Djibouti Fablab that provided opportunities for migrants and local residents to develop creative ways of supporting the COVID-19 response. For example, Creative Spaces was using 3D printers to build ventilators, which were in short supply throughout the region. From the longer-term perspective, it allowed young migrants to acquire new digital skills and build community with citizens in their country of destination or transit. The initiative, which had played an important role in the COVID-19 response, could also contribute to long-term recovery.

The Migrants' Stories segment also reinforced the assertion made by many participants that migrants needed to be recognized as agents of change.

During Panel 5, **Glen Linder** (Canada) said that migrants would play an important role in both the short- and long-term economic recovery from the COVID-19-induced recession. Migrants were an integral part of Canada's economic recovery plans, which included

admitting more migrants and refugees over the coming three years, focusing on innovative, community-driven approaches and on economic growth, a commitment to capacity-building and digitization of the immigration system, and creating a pathway to permanent residency for eligible asylum seekers who helped provide front-line health care.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Angola** stressed that the crisis was an opportune time to analyse the contribution of human mobility to achieving the SDGs. In that regard, the IOM Continental Strategy for Africa 2020–2024⁶ was a strong framework showing how migrants could contribute to the economic and social integration of African countries under the African Continental Free Trade Area. In order to promote that integration, efforts had been made to update Angola’s national digital database for refugees and asylum seekers seeking to renew and receive identity documents.

The representative of the **Niger** said that the African Union’s 2063 Agenda, African Continental Free Trade Area and Revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018–2030)⁷ marked a new phase in migration management.

Recommendations

- In planning their recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, governments and other stakeholders should move to re-establish existing migration pathways, for the benefit of both countries of origin and destination, as soon as possible.

⁶ See IOM, *IOM Continental Strategy for Africa 2020–2024* (Geneva, 2020). Available at https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom-continental-strategy-for-africa_2020-2024.pdf.

⁷ African Union, 2063 Agenda, available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf; Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (21 March 2018), available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36437-treaty-consolidated_text_on_cfta_-_en.pdf; The Revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018–2030) (draft), available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/32718-wd-english_revised_au_migration_policy_framework_for_africa.pdf.

- Governments and other stakeholders should engage with diaspora communities, including migrant youth, to explore how their talents and resources could be used to support migrants in countries of destination and returned and potential migrants in countries of origin.
- Governments and other stakeholders should examine how technology and digital innovation could be used to support migration in the post-COVID-19 period, including in terms of recruitment and the transfer of remittances.
- Governments and other stakeholders, particularly the private sector, should consider ways of streamlining and digitizing remittance flows, with a view to reducing transfer costs and preparing for the re-establishment of migration pathways.

2. Support women's needs and resources

Overview

Panel 4 focused on the role of women in the COVID-19 response and recovery. The participants observed that, although women were playing and would continue to play a major role in both response and recovery, the widening of gender inequalities caused by the pandemic was a source of particular hardships for them.

Gender-based and intrafamily violence had spiked during the many months of confinement, which had left many women with no means of escaping dangerous situations – particularly as many of the services available to survivors of gender-based violence had been closed or curtailed by the pandemic. Confinement had also placed added burdens on women in terms of childcare, at-home instruction and household management. Migrant women domestic workers unable to return home may have been confined with their employers, unpaid and thus unable to support their families.

As the COVID-19 death rate was higher for men, more women were left as single heads of household responsible for supporting their families. At the same time, compared to men, migrant women generally earned less, had less stable jobs and were usually the first to lose their jobs, all of which increased their vulnerability. Yet women were central to global health efforts: many were employed as essential health-care workers and were the primary caregivers in their families. As a result, women faced a greater risk of virus infection. They might also face serious health risks because their access to health services was limited. LGBTQ migrant women and girls were especially vulnerable.

The plight of migrant girls should be similarly stressed. They were often the first to be forced to leave school by financial constraints. According to UNESCO, some 11 million girls around the world were at risk of not returning to school.⁸ In addition, UNICEF, medical experts and human rights groups had reported that the pandemic had increased the rate of early marriage for girls.⁹

The participants also emphasized the need for good data. At present, less than half of the globally reported cases of COVID-19 had been disaggregated on the basis of age and sex, yet such data were essential to assess the effects of the pandemic on women and men and to ensure adequate testing, treatment and care.

Discussion

Panel 4 focused on the implications of the pandemic for women and girls, the challenges to which they were exposed, and their empowerment in and contributions to response and recovery efforts. The panellists addressed four questions raised by the Moderator: What vulnerabilities had the COVID-19 pandemic revealed? How could women and girls be involved in the recovery? What was the role of women as front-line and other essential workers? How could governments better ensure protection for them?

⁸ UNESCO, COVID-19: UNESCO and partners in education launch global campaign to keep girls in the picture (28 August 2020). Available at <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-unesco-and-partners-education-launch-global-campaign-keep-girls-picture>.

⁹ UNICEF, Migrant and displaced children in the age of COVID-19. How the pandemic is impacting them and what can we do to help, Journal article (May 2020), available at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/migrant-and-displaced-children-in-the-age-of-covid-19/>; S. Cousins, 2.5 million more child marriages due to COVID-19 pandemic, *The Lancet*, 396:1059 (10 October 2020), available at www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2932112-7; S. Bergsten, Child Marriage, Pregnancies Soar During Pandemic. Covid-19 Threatens Global Progress on Girls' Rights, Dispatches (Human Rights Watch, 12 October 2020), available at www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/12/child-marriage-pregnancies-soar-during-pandemic.

Maya Morsy (Egypt) said that her country had been the first to respond to women's pandemic-related demands, focusing on four pillars: the impact in terms of health, protection, psychological support and domestic violence; women's voice and agency; economic opportunities; and promoting knowledge. It offered family planning, medication, cash transfers, cash allowances for both formal and informal workers, funds to support microfinance projects, online mental health services, and electronic and financial services to all women. This was important because rates of violence against women were very high. Despite the pandemic, migrant women had access to services, including those related to violence against women, which were supported by IOM. The Government also provided job training to women refugees.

Many essential workers in Egypt were women. For example, 73 per cent of nurses were women, as were 40 per cent of doctors, and many of them headed their households. As attested by the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, which monitored policy measures enacted by governments worldwide to tackle the COVID-19 crisis and highlighted responses that had integrated a gender lens, the Government had adopted 106 policies, measures or decisions to address women's needs between March and June 2020. These included exceptional leave for mothers, measures for nursing homes and shelters, psychological support, increased income for women in rural areas, exceptional soft loans and funds to support micro and small-scale projects, and digitized financial training for women, including migrants and refugees. Together with the Ministry of International Cooperation and the World Economic Forum, the National Council for Women had launched the Closing Gender Gap Accelerator, which would help create economic opportunities and promote data and knowledge. Moreover, Egypt with other like-minded countries had led the process resulting in the United Nations General Assembly resolution¹⁰ on strengthening the international response to COVID-19 for women and girls.

Zsuzsanna Jakab (WHO) described WHO action to address issues related to women and migrant women in the pandemic.

¹⁰ United Nations General Assembly resolution A/C.3/75/L.6/Rev.1 (3 November 2020). Available at <http://undocs.org/A/C.3/75/L.6/Rev.1>.

Migrant women had higher health vulnerabilities, but they were also a driving force in health care, accounting for 70 per cent of the global health workforce and thus highly exposed to the virus. More than half of all health-care workers affected by COVID-19 were women. Women, especially migrant women, bore the brunt in terms of health and well-being. They also experienced increased stigma and discrimination, which could hamper the pandemic response. Shelter-in-place policies affected women's livelihoods, reduced their social networks and added more stress to households. As a result, intimate partner and domestic violence had increased.

Because women were key in the global health workforce, they would play a significant role in the move toward resilience and recovery. Migrants, and migrant women, needed equitable and non-discriminatory access to health services during the epidemic, something that all countries had to ensure. All migrants had the right to access services, including testing, diagnosis and referral for treatment, but it was difficult to ensure better health care for women given the lack of data. WHO would soon present the findings of the Apart Together Survey, which would shed light on the impact of the pandemic on refugees and migrants and on access to health services, especially for migrant women.

Christine Loew (UN-Women), noting that plans had originally been to celebrate major anniversaries for gender equality in 2020, including Beijing+25, said that COVID-19 had radically affected women, rolling back some of the gains made in terms of gender equality. As a result of the pandemic, women were earning less, saving less and holding more insecure jobs. Not only were many women employed as essential health-care workers, their work was often invisible – both factors led to heightened risks of infection. In addition, their plight was compounded by a shadow pandemic: a rise in domestic violence. The risks were especially high for migrant women domestic workers who could not return home as they were locked in with their employers. Practical solutions existed. Partnerships with local organizations were central. Universal health coverage was vital, as were essential services for victims of gender-based violence. In addition, governments must provide community-based alternatives to detention for all migrant women.

During a side event organized jointly by UN-Women, IOM and others, and entitled COVID-19: The importance of ensuring universal health coverage for all migrant women and girls, representatives of Member States, United Nations organizations and civil society had discussed how better to ensure that the needs of migrant women and girls were addressed during and after the pandemic. Their conclusions included the following:

- Migrant women and girls needed recognition. Many women migrant workers around the world doing essential jobs were not covered by social insurance and thus had no social safety net to fall back on during the pandemic. It was more critical than ever to ensure that women and girls did not fall further behind during the crisis.
- Universal health care, strong public health systems and gender equality were needed for the well-being of all.
- Gender-targeted policies played an essential role in enabling migration governance to address the needs of migrant women and girls during the pandemic.
- Pre-existing inequalities had been deepened in 2020, and many countries still failed to include migrants in their health system coverage.
- Digital tools, including online applications, were important in that they enabled outreach on mental health and the prevention of stress and gender-based violence. They also allowed young people to share experiences, helping them get through a difficult time and address underlying issues that the pandemic had exacerbated.
- Women's grassroots organizations and gender-based risk mitigation had to be enabled as a means of working across silos and empowering women to rethink and rewrite their story.
- Four crucial messages had emerged from the pandemic: (a) universal health care should be accessible for everyone, including women migrants; (b) there was an urgent need to either provide cash assistance allowing people to access

services or to make those services free or affordable; (c) safe outreach strategies were needed in all languages (e.g. through WhatsApp); (d) options had to be explored for safe housing, shelter and protection facilities.

- Humanitarian interventions had to provide comprehensive, as opposed to minimum, health services and take a more evidence-based approach.
- Health-care workers, including migrant workers, were central to policy formulation.
- It was crucial to strengthen health systems, international cooperation and universal health care during the pandemic, to ensure that no migrant women or children were left behind.

María Corina Muskus Toro (United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth / Venezolanas Globales) said that it was important to take account of women's experiences because they were more likely to encounter discrimination. The Malala Fund estimated that about 20 million more secondary school girls could be out of school after the pandemic. Migrant women and girls had specific needs, and States must take steps to regularize their legal status and/or give them access to health care regardless of their status. Migrant women were also important agents of change. Her organization, the first ever network of Venezuelan women, promoted discussions between its more than 2,000 members and women from the diaspora. It supported women- and girl-led initiatives related to affordable and universal health care and education.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of the **Holy See** said that religious sisters were among the women and girls facing new challenges as a result of the pandemic, as they supported the sick and offered humanitarian services. Although everyone should feel safe in their homes, lockdowns had seen a surge in domestic violence. The crisis was an excellent opportunity to concentrate on the rights of women and girls.

The representative of the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean** agreed that the pandemic had exposed women's vulnerabilities and that many women and girls were at risk because

their jobs were unstable or essential. LBGTQ migrant women and girls were especially vulnerable. She recommended that steps be taken to ensure the implementation of anti-discriminatory policies and that alternative forms of service provision be found that effectively met every women's needs. She further recommended that the international community adopt a shared definition of domestic violence, to facilitate its criminalization and prosecution. Support must be comprehensive, targeting women as beneficiaries and as a force. It was important to adopt policies involving a multisectoral approach to the protection of women and girls as part of the COVID-19 response, in order to address structural inequalities and accelerate progress towards a more resilient socioeconomic situation for everyone.

The representative of the **Philippines** said that his country had a heavily feminized migrant outflow, with women concentrated in "3D" jobs – dirty, demeaning and dangerous – that the pandemic had nonetheless revealed to be essential. In addition, the Philippines was increasingly filling essential needs for health staff in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. It also had a bilateral agreement with Germany to supply nurses, which it had continued to do during the pandemic. That being said, how would women contribute to the new normal after the pandemic? Referring to a recent statement by the ILO, FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and WHO¹¹ on the need to build back better, he stressed the importance of pooling expertise and experience to support migrant women and the SDGs.

The representative of **Tunisia** emphasized that women must receive special consideration because COVID-19 had made them particularly vulnerable. It was important that no one be left behind. In Tunisia, 50 per cent of doctors, 72 per cent of pharmacists and 64 per cent of nurses were women. In some regions, most paramedics were women and were working at the centre of the pandemic. However, as a result of the pandemic, Tunisia had also experienced an increase in gender-based violence, women faced heavier workloads and intrafamily violence had become more common. Tunisia had legislation to fight violence against women

¹¹ See 'Time for global solidarity' to overcome COVID's health, social and economic challenges, news.un.org, 13 October 2020. Available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1075322>.

and had set up institutional mechanisms to protect women, raise awareness and follow-up with women who had experienced violence in the past. Family judges had been ordered to better protect women against violence, and women in jail received special treatment. It was a sign of progress that the United Nations Security Council had adopted a resolution¹² acknowledging the critical role that women were playing in COVID-19 response efforts.

The representative of **Global Policy Insights** said that it was essential to close the gender gap during the pandemic response. Rising gender-based violence, declines in education and the lack of financial support for small businesses put women, especially migrant women, at risk despite their dominant role in the health response. The situation of women in migrant refugee camps had also worsened as a result of COVID-19. Ugandan refugee camps, for example, had seen a rise in domestic violence against women. However, new reporting mechanisms had been introduced that enabled people to report incidents. Rapid response units made up of traditional leaders, health workers and police officers also helped reduce domestic violence. Women-friendly spaces had become more restricted. Education was important but schools were rarely a safe space. She recommended doing better by improving sanitation, providing gender-specific health rights, offering safer ways of travelling to school, partnering with teachers and families to ensure women's access to education, and enhancing women's economic integration and financial security.

The representative of **Mexico** noted that the pandemic might reverse gender parity gains. Migrant women in his country faced many difficulties but had access to health care, and the Government was working with civil society centres to prevent violence, including gender-based violence. It had designated all services to prevent violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, as key activities during the pandemic. It had also designated all refugee services as essential, to ensure that women and girls with protection needs were not returned to their countries of origin if doing so placed them in danger and that they could

¹² United Nations Security Council resolution 2532 (1 July 2020). Available at [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2532\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2532(2020)).

exercise their right to seek asylum. Under Mexico's foreign policy, it was a priority to empower women and girls and to eradicate all discrimination against them.

The representative of the **International Federation of Medical Students Associations** reported that the pandemic had weakened some gender-focused initiatives and led to a rise in gender disparities. Women made up 70 per cent of the health workforce but accounted for only 20 per cent of its leaders. Job insecurity, exploitation and mounting domestic violence placed them at greater risk of exposure to the virus. Migrant women faced an additional set of challenges. The international community had to recognize the contribution women made and the need for gender sensitivity and an intersectoral response.

The representative of **ADEPT** agreed that women were playing a major role in pandemic response and recovery. ADEPT assisted the more vulnerable and worked with other programmes that had produced food, for example, distributed masks or established a health desk for migrant women in the Netherlands. It had also helped to create a media campaign – African Diaspora Heroes (UN)MASKED¹³ – to support and highlight the work done by African organizations and individuals in recent months.

The representative of **Oxfam** noted that, even in developed countries, gender inequalities persisted during the pandemic. Women were caring for and homeschooling children; women who were essential workers faced additional risks; women lacked access to stable health care. In the United States of America, when they did go to hospital, women encountered immigration enforcement officers as well as doctors and nurses. The presence of those officers impeded access to health care.

The representative of **Norway** expressed support for the SDGs as a means to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls and for a gender perspective in the multilateral response to COVID-19 so that women participated on an equal footing with

¹³ See ADEPT, African Diaspora Heroes (UN)MASKED Campaign. Available at www.adept-platform.org/what-we-do/multimedia-campaigns/african-diaspora-heroes-unmasked-campaign/.

men. Health services in Norway had focused on socioeconomic resources and made successful use of a multi-partner trust fund. Education was a priority because it promoted gender equality, better health and more inclusive economic growth. Work on education had to involve partners from countries across the globe, and efforts to end child labour and slavery had to be strengthened. In addition, 13 million child marriages were expected over the next 10 years, and efforts to overcome female genital mutilation practices had been delayed by COVID-19.

In her closing remarks, **Maya Morsy** (Egypt) said that prevention of domestic violence must integrate women's voices on the ground so as to influence policymakers. Listening was a basic way to amplify their voices. Awareness-raising was also essential. Women received a great deal of misinformation and it made them more vulnerable. It was important to offer psychological support in cases of domestic violence for both men and women. Women needed to be aware of hotlines for domestic violence and child protection. Quick responses were needed.

Zsuzsanna Jakab (WHO) noted that women would play a crucial role in rebuilding the new normal. They therefore needed more training and education, and more women were needed in leadership positions. Policy dialogues, and more data and research, were also needed. Policy responses had to implement a whole-of-government/society approach and parliamentarians had to be involved in the process as well as local governments and NGOs. The code of conduct for international recruitment of nursing and midwives¹⁴ was also very important. The COVID-19 pandemic had led to setbacks, but that was no reason to give up on the SDGs. The international community had to bring the pandemic to an end but also to cooperate on implementation of the SDGs. The pandemic had also led to an increase in substance and alcohol abuse, which in turn had led to more violence and deteriorating mental health. Building back better must involve investing more in mental health. It was urgent to end the pandemic with strategies that worked, including public health measures, physical distancing and masks. When vaccines became available,

¹⁴ WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. Available at https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_9-en.pdf.

attention should turn to equitable access and fair allocation. It was very concerning that many essential services had been disrupted, including reproductive health care and immunizations. WHO had initiated a programme to restart those activities, in which women played a crucial role. Women were also essential when it came to communicating on issues related to vaccine hesitancy. If women supported vaccines as mothers, vaccines were more likely to be accepted. She recommended using women's voices to the maximum.

Christine Loew (UN-Women) noted that the United Nations decade of action to deliver the SDGs was at risk due to the pandemic, and that migrant women risked being left behind. Domestic violence case numbers were very troubling, but it was unclear how Member States were addressing the issue. UN-Women called for rapid assessments of domestic violence. In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, women migrant workers who had lost their jobs were at high risk of domestic violence. Access to shelters and services was very limited, since the organizations providing them were either closed or had restricted their activities. One result was that women were locked in with perpetrators. As the representative of the Philippines had said, stimulus packages had to serve women and girls who lived in different countries. Pandemic-affected sectors that employed many women, such as tourism, offered training to women in business on how to access stimulus packages. Migrant women must have a place at the table as people took steps to redesign the way they wanted to live.

Recommendations

- As women, particularly migrant women, are at greater danger of domestic violence, governments and other stakeholders should take steps to prevent and respond to this risk, initiating rapid assessments of vulnerable migrant women and developing rapid response mechanisms. Governments should consider services to protect women at risk, such as shelters and hotlines, as essential services and provide the support they needed to continue responding to gender-based violence.

- Governments and other stakeholders should ensure the collection of sex-disaggregated data on COVID-19, as without adequate data and evidence it is difficult to address the needs of women and girls.
- As undocumented migrant women and domestic workers are often both “invisible” and at heightened risk, governments should ensure that they have access to accurate information and are able to access health services, education and social protection measures.
- In the longer term, and in the light of the lessons learned from the pandemic, governments should consider ways of ensuring that services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence remain available to women during emergencies and that women’s health services, such as reproductive health care, are maintained.
- Governments and other stakeholders should address the particular risks facing women and girls in education and social protection programmes, to ensure that such programmes are fully inclusive.
- In planning the pandemic recovery, governments and other stakeholders should ensure that women, including migrant women, have a seat at the table and are involved in all phases of decision-making.

3. Change the narrative to counter discrimination and xenophobia while building social cohesion and community resilience

Overview

During the Dialogue, many participants referred to the growing number of racist and xenophobic acts directed at migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic, and expressed fear that the number would continue to rise during a longer-term recession. As part of that conversation, Panel 5 focused on the primary role played by the media in shaping perceptions of migrants locally and internationally. A positive view of migrants was crucial to their integration, development and – in the current context – health. During the pandemic, migrants had been directly responsible for providing not only a significant percentage of health care but also the essential services that had enabled societies and economies to function. Migrants had always been a positive force for development and prosperity; however, positive information was not always shared or remembered, which was why evidence of migrants’ contributions must be promoted. Proactive measures were needed to ensure the protection of migrants, and they included developing positive narratives on migrants.

Participants observed that the pandemic was an opportunity for governments, the media and civil society organizations to change the narrative about migrants. Now was the time to fight mounting discrimination with an empowering, devictimized and evidence-based narrative. As a crucial ally in that endeavor, the media needed to be made more aware of the contributions that migrants made, or they would be unable to communicate accurately and

effectively about migration. They knew how messages were received and could set the tone, delivering positive messages about migrants. It was imperative that the language and manner of communication shift away from xenophobic scapegoating of migrants to more balanced and positive assessments of their contributions. IOM and other migrant-focused international organizations had spearheaded efforts to change the message on migration, fighting stereotypes and incorporating migrants' perspectives; publicizing human-driven stories that focused on migrants more as individuals than a collective; and including migrants in the dialogue and decisions on public messages about migration and migrants.

Community engagement also played a key role in shifting the migration narrative, especially in encouraging positive host community–migrant interactions. Cities and local municipalities had to ensure that migrants' needs were addressed and social cohesion encouraged within the context of the pandemic. Again, migrants themselves could be important messengers in countering disinformation about migration.

Discussion

Panel 5 explicitly focused on the importance of changing the migration narrative in positive terms to advance social inclusion and cohesion. It also addressed how the media influenced local and global perceptions of migrants and migration. For example, **Glen Linder** (Canada) described a new communication campaign¹⁵ designed to tell the stories of migrants' contributions to their communities in Canada. The campaign used empirical evidence to describe the benefits of migration, balance the conversation, dispel myths and promote positive engagement between migrants and Canadians. It highlighted migrants' contribution to the COVID-19 response in Canada and their key roles in the health and other essential sectors.

¹⁵ See Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, #ImmigrationMatters to Canada. Available at www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/campaigns/immigration-matters.html.

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Public Narratives on Migration set up by the Canadian and Ecuadorian Governments as part of the Global Forum on Migration and Development included stakeholders from businesses, communities and municipalities. Its objective was to create a global communication campaign aimed at diverse audiences (not only those who supported migrants) and showcasing the positive impacts of migration in online messages and stories about migration. It would thus show how migrants helped communities to build back better after the pandemic. IOM would help produce the creative content.

Ulvi Aliyev (Azerbaijan) said that discrimination and xenophobia could be fought most effectively by enshrining the equality of all citizens, without any discrimination on the basis of ethnic group, religion or language, in the law. The focus should be on eliminating the root causes of those phenomena and encouraging joint action. As part of the government's whole-of-society approach to migration management and partnerships, the Azerbaijan State Migration Service had developed structured dialogue mechanisms with all relevant State and non-State actors for the exchange of best practices. The dialogues aimed to enhance civil society awareness of, and participation in, migration policymaking and migration management. They also acknowledged the need to mainstream gender equality and to act against gender-based violence.

Robinson Sathekge (South Africa) described the Johannesburg Council's proactive role in managing migration issues in the city. Its Migrant Help Desk provided advocacy, advisory and referral services and facilitated the Counter Xenophobia and Common Citizenship Programme, which was designed to build tolerance between migrants and locals and improve migrants' prospects for social inclusion. The programme collaborated with stakeholders and migrants to hold dialogues, workshops and training sessions on xenophobia and discrimination, human rights and human trafficking. In addition, the Mayoral Sub-Committee on Migration, established in 2008, explored immediate, medium- and long-term responses to issues of xenophobia and migrant integration. The Human Development Strategy adopted in 2004 addressed the issue of social exclusion in Johannesburg. It was now part of the

Joburg 2040 Growth and Development Strategy,¹⁶ which focused on creating and implementing a strategy to create the city its residents wanted by 2040.

Mónica Trigos Padilla (United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth) described an intervention designed to combat the pandemic's negative migration narratives and greater xenophobia, which included perceptions that migrants spread the virus and took jobs. Her self-organized group of children and young people in the United Nations system were leading an effort to generate narratives that humanized migrants and promoted inclusion, relying on young people to develop the content and deliver it through social media. Such narratives were all the more important at a time when the pandemic limited interaction in public spaces between migrants and host communities. Young people had a central role in the information-sharing initiative Youth for Migration,¹⁷ which shared the stories and perspectives of different young migrants and engaged young people in the Global Compact process. It also spread accurate information about COVID-19 through the COVID-19 Youth Platform.¹⁸

The campaign #MoreThanMigrants called on young people and children as essential bridges and agents of change. Data alone did not suffice: storytelling should be used to shift the narrative between host communities and migrants. To that end, collaborative initiatives should be formed among young people, civil society, the private sector and government. Such efforts were based on strengthening multilateralism, changing individual ways of communicating, knowing and appealing to the audience, creating public spaces for migrant–host community interaction, and ensuring that young people were well equipped to engage meaningfully in all levels of government.

¹⁶ City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, *A Promising Future. Joburg 2040: Growth and Development Strategy*. Available at www.joburg.org.za/about/Documents/joburg2040.pdf.

¹⁷ See United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, Youth for Migration. Available at www.unmgcy.org/youth4migration.

¹⁸ See United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, COVID-19 Youth Platform. Available at www.unmgcy.org/youth-initiatives.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Switzerland** said that the Global Mayors Solidarity Campaign for Inclusive Response and Recovery run by the Mayors Migration Council,¹⁹ of which Switzerland was an institutional donor, helped ensure that migrants were included in COVID-19 response and recovery policies. It was designed to strengthen community solidarity by combating misinformation, racism and xenophobia in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Cities needed not only reliable migration-related data, but also real localized data on public perceptions of migrants and migration to help them build positive narratives and combat dangerous rumors, misinformation, and xenophobia – before it was too late and those phenomena became the new normal. Her country was working to counter racism and xenophobia through programmes that were implemented in cities and municipalities and financially supported by both the Confederation and the cantons.

The representative of **Algeria** said that his country was committed to fighting all forms of hate speech and discrimination. Legislation enacted in April 2020 established a national observatory to detect and analyse all forms of discrimination and hate speech; identify the root causes thereof; propose preventive measures; formulate national policies against discrimination and hate speech with the participation of civil society and other stakeholders; periodically evaluate the effectiveness of legal instruments and administrative measures to prevent discrimination and hate speech; establish standards and methods for developing national expertise in the prevention of discrimination and hate speech; assist in the development of awareness-raising programmes; and collect and centralize data.

The representative of the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that national legislation to prevent hatred and promote tolerance constituted a platform that condemned discrimination and xenophobia. It was intended to promote and guarantee recognition of diversity, tolerance and mutual respect; prevent and eradicate hatred, contempt, harassment, discrimination and violence; take preventive action in the form of education, training and awareness-raising; develop legal and social welfare actions

¹⁹ See the Council's website. Available at www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/.

and programmes, including health care; help reformulate the rhetoric on migration in positive terms; and defend the positive aspects of migration.

The representative of the **Holy See** discussed the discrimination and xenophobia faced by migrants and refugees, who had been rendered more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic owing to their unequal access to health care. There was a regrettable contradiction between the higher demand for labour migration in emerging economies and the resentful attitudes faced by migrants in receiving countries. This had been especially evident during COVID-19 lockdowns, with many migrants defined as essential workers, and reflected the predominance of economic interests over the human person. It was important to see migrants as a source of positive opportunities for all people. As Pope Francis had stated in his encyclical letter, “All Brothers”, migrants were not seen as being entitled to participate in the life of society like others and it was forgotten that they possessed the same intrinsic dignity as any person. Inclusion was crucial, as no migration policy could be successful or sustainable without an integration strategy.

The representative of **Ireland** agreed that there had been a rise in pernicious rhetoric against migrants during the pandemic, along the lines “migrants are people who not only take jobs but also spread disease”. Yet, in most cases, migrants were the bedrock of society and did essential work during the pandemic. To combat the negative rhetoric, Ireland and IOM had established the Global Migration Media Academy to train media professionals to promote accurate narratives on migration and counter false narratives. A recent IOM publication²⁰ highlighted migrant contributions to health and social services, food security, local service support and many more essential functions in Ireland. The report also emphasized the importance of social cohesion for everyone in society: social cohesion and community resilience went hand in hand. Social cohesion was therefore everyone’s responsibility, and it was in everyone’s interests to enhance and strengthen it.

²⁰ IOM, *IOM Ireland Rapid Policy Survey Report: The Irish Government’s Policy Response to COVID-19 from a Migration Governance Lens, March 2020 – August 2020* (Dublin, 2020). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom-ireland-rapid-policy-survey-report.pdf>.

Relevant remarks were also made during other panel sessions. **Trang Hong Vu** (United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth/STEP Forward Education) said that both international students and irregular internal migrants had been targets of hate speech. International students had been accused, for example, of spreading the virus and irregular internal migrants had been called parasites.

Malek Deng Dan Deng (South Sudan) described how misinformation and fake news were stigmatizing migrants, increasing the risk of higher infection rates as migrants were hiding symptoms instead of seeking medical help because of the discrimination they experience. This situation was also entailing longer-term consequences for migrants' integration and social cohesion.

The representative of **Global Policy Insights** explained that his institute addressed social cohesion by using models of assimilation, multiculturalism and integration. It focused on the foundations of social cohesion and the need for a paradigm that celebrated diversity. Migration policies should be predicated on inclusion, social cohesion and community resilience to help ensure safe and orderly migration.

Recommendations

- Governments and other stakeholders should consider using some of the good practices reported during Panel 5, such as developing specific information campaigns to highlight the stories and contributions of migrant workers.
- Governments should also consider developing legislation against hate speech and should counter false narratives about migrants as carriers of the disease by providing evidence-based information on the means by which the virus spreads.
- Governments and other stakeholders should seek to counter disinformation about migrants by working with the media, including through training and awareness-raising sessions.

- Governments and other stakeholders should reach out to diaspora and migrants' groups, including women's groups, to obtain their input on effective messaging, to highlight specific contributions made by migrants and to develop strategies for disseminating such messages.
- Governments and other stakeholders should ensure that migrant youth voices are heard when countering disinformation about the migrant experience.

4. Protect migrants facing heightened risks because of the pandemic

Overview

As many participants noted, while all migrants had been affected by COVID-19 and efforts to stem the spread of the virus, certain groups of migrants faced heightened risks. The pandemic had worsened existing inequities and was likely to push more people into poverty, threatening attainment of the SDGs. According to the World Bank, the pandemic may force between 70 and 110 million people back into extreme poverty.

Participants also drew attention to the plight of children, young people, women, international students, victims of trafficking, irregular migrants and other groups who faced risks that made them particularly vulnerable in the current situation. The needs of migrant children especially should not be overlooked. Children required urgent responses that ensured that they had access to protection, education and other social services. In spite of the present difficulties of international travel, large numbers of migrant children continued to arrive, including in Europe. Some were unaccompanied, although many more arrived with their families. Because of the situation, and in some cases border restrictions, it was more difficult for them to apply for asylum.

The pandemic had increased the risk of trafficking. Lockdowns had left people in precarious situations. Many factories had closed, which meant that families had a hard time supporting their children and were sending them out to work as street vendors or at other jobs in the informal sector. The pandemic had fueled opportunities for abuse of the most vulnerable members of society

and put at risk hard-won child protection and labour rights. With the closing of schools, parents were often forced to leave children unattended, leading to more physical and sexual abuse and limited access to the essential services provided by school programmes, such as nutrition and health, on which families relied.

Discussion

During the discussion, participants emphasized the importance of the SDG call to leave no one behind and the need to protect migrants facing particular risks – children, trafficking victims, irregular migrants and other groups.

During Panel 2, which focused on the protection of migrants facing greater risks because of the pandemic, **Nick Grono** (Freedom Fund) underscored the devastating impact of the pandemic on people who had been, or were at risk of being, trafficked. Lockdowns had made people vulnerable to exploitation and forced labour.

In April 2020, the Freedom Fund had set up the COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund to help mitigate some of the worst effects of the crisis, disbursing nearly 200 flexible grants to front-line civil society groups in Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand. In reviewing its response to the crisis, the Freedom Fund had become aware of not only the short-term impact of the crisis but also that it was likely to persist into the long term. The crisis had not only opened opportunities for abuse and exploitation of the most vulnerable, it also put at risk many of the hard-won gains of recent years, including in labour rights, gender equality and child protection.

Two mutually reinforcing trends were putting pressure on labour rights. The first was that millions of labourers, and particularly migrant workers, were suffering increased deprivation. The second was that the global recession was driving down demand for workers, shifting the balance of bargaining power decidedly in favour of employers. In some areas, migrant

labourers were being sacked illegally, having their wages withheld or being forced to accept longer hours and lower pay.

Community-based initiatives were able to take life-saving action. Where governments failed to deliver swift assistance or identify the most vulnerable, front-line organizations already knew where help was most urgently needed and were able to mobilize quickly – at low cost. They were able to work with the authorities to help channel official aid to those on the margins and advocate for the rights of groups who might otherwise fall through the cracks or be taken advantage of. This was particularly important for migrants who were often otherwise not recognized by local authorities.

While it was inevitable that a pandemic would cause hardship, it was unacceptable that it be used as an excuse by governments and businesses to turn back the clock on human rights. All governments needed to uphold human rights and maintain pressure on business not to renege on their commitments to ethical practices.

André Silva (INTERPOL) agreed that the risk of trafficking had increased as a result of the pandemic. INTERPOL worked to provide reliable information on criminal groups undertaking such activities to law enforcement agencies, border management officials and other governmental entities working to curtail trafficking and exploitation. It also supported governments in areas such as police data management and criminal analysis, adapting to the current situation where countries were struggling with enforcing border controls. The scope of information-sharing should be widened to include lawmakers and the judicial sector as well as law enforcement. There should be inter-agency cooperation and stronger coordination with a range of agencies, including IOM, to prevent further exploitation of migrants by criminal networks.

Isabela Atanasiu (European Commission) made a number of recommendations for protecting migrant children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The principle of Best Interest Determinations needed to be operationalized and the right of the child to be heard in asylum and migration proceedings upheld. Unaccompanied

children should be appointed a guardian within 15 working days of arrival. On arrival, children – both those who were unaccompanied and those arriving with their families – should be exempted from mandatory border procedures. Effective alternatives should be developed to detention for children; the rules on the evidence needed for family reunification simplified; and the rights of children to adequate accommodation and assistance, prompt and non-discriminatory access to education, and early access to integration services upheld. The new EU Pact on Asylum and Migration, which included reform of EU rules on asylum and return, was an opportunity to strengthen safeguards and protection standards under EU law for migrant children. Specific, pandemic-related challenges nonetheless existed, such as the temporary disruption of migration and asylum procedures and of resettlement and return operations.

Trang Hong Vu (United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth/STEP Forward Education) highlighted two groups of migrants who were often excluded from discussions of migrant workers: international students and internal migrant workers. Both had experienced hardships because of COVID-19 restrictions. International students had found themselves uncertain about their prospects for graduation and faced difficulties in travelling back to their home countries. They were often afraid to return home or travel elsewhere, fearing they would be stranded and unable to return. Their educational experiences also suffered, as a result of the switch to online classes and the need to conduct field work digitally rather than in person. Governments should automatically renew visas for international students.

Irregular internal migrants, who often worked as street vendors or taxi drivers, faced particular difficulties. Government lockdowns had made it impossible for them to pursue their livelihoods and yet they often had little or no access to social services. Governments should develop policies to ensure that the needs of this vulnerable group were addressed. “Rice ATM” machines, which provided free rice to people who would not otherwise have access to food assistance, were an example of a useful philanthropic initiative.

In submitted remarks for Panel 2, **Jean Ayoub** (International Social Service) observed that disruptions to a child's environment affected his or her growth and development and undermined child protection strategies. When developing action plans for working with children and their families, it was important to understand child protection risks, implement child protection case management during the COVID-19 pandemic, work together across sectors to address the protection needs of children, and maintain the safety and well-being of all those involved in the protection and care of children. The International Social Service worked through an eight-step process: (1) arrival, detection and identification; (2) immediate support and care; (3) assessment of children on the move; (4) temporary integration and quality case management in the host country; (5) evaluation of the situation in the country of origin; (6) determination of a sustainable solution in the best interests of children on the move; (7) implementation of the sustainable solution; and (8) monitoring and follow-up.

During Panel 1, **Ahmed M. Saleheen** (Bangladesh) noted that there were various categories of migrants with particular needs: migrants remaining in their countries of destination; those who had returned since January 2020; families of migrants; stranded aspiring migrants; and new aspiring migrants. Bangladesh's interministerial committee for labour migration engaged in diplomatic initiatives to retrain migrants who lost jobs and provided funds for food, relief and medicines for migrants in destination countries. Bangladesh also offered cash transfers and other forms of support to returning migrant workers on their arrival. All categories of migrants needed to be considered, particularly in terms of the immediate challenges to human mobility and livelihoods posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. His Government's response embodied a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, and addressed migrants in the immediate response, reintegration and remigration phases with specific activities for their support.

The COVID-19 pandemic had short- and longer-term effects on migrants (see Figures 1 and 2 below).

Figure 1. Immediate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants

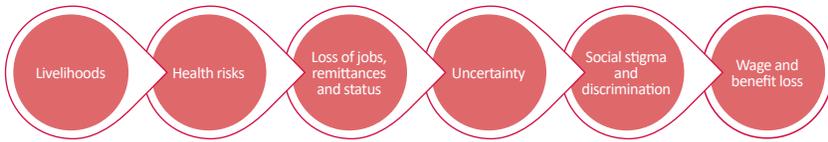


Figure 2. Longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants



Source: Panel 1: Safe, coordinated and inclusive human mobility is key to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic [slide presentation]. Presented by A.M. Saleheen at the 2020 International Dialogue on Migration, 15 October 2020. Available at www.iom.int/international-dialogue-migration-2020-covid-19-crisis-reimagining-role-migrants-and-human-mobility.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Afghanistan** highlighted the increased vulnerabilities of several migrant groups, including those in urban areas, those with an uncertain migratory status, those with pre-existing health conditions and/or special needs, child migrants, and irregular and undocumented migrants. Their vulnerabilities had been exacerbated by crumbling social cohesion in host communities unaided by the pandemic.

The representative of **Libya** emphasized the importance of regional and international cooperation to help curb irregular migration and ensure the safety of vulnerable individuals on their migration journey. In the June 2018 Niger Agreement, the Niger, Chad and the Sudan had agreed on a joint framework for border management and security.

The representative of **Global Policy Insights** expressed concern about the likelihood that workers in the informal economy would lose their jobs and livelihoods. Estimates suggested that 85 to 88 per cent of such workers would lose their jobs as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic, especially low-skilled workers who then sought opportunities to move to neighboring countries to explore new possibilities. Regional development frameworks were needed to help such workers and young people contribute to sustainable development. In that respect, partnerships would be crucial to pandemic response and recovery efforts.

The representative of **Ecuador** said that, in view of the pandemic, her country had extended the deadlines of all migration processes so that migrants in Ecuador would not lose their legal status. Venezuelans in Ecuador were still able to request humanitarian visas.

During Panel 5, **Ulvi Aliyev** (Azerbaijan) said that his Government protected migrants by allowing those who could not return to their countries of origin to remain without filing additional documents. It had created video instructions in different languages for those who had difficulties accessing e-services, opened a national call centre that provided information on social services round the clock in three languages, and offered that same service via social networks. The Government had developed a special mobile application that enabled migrants' access to call services and important pandemic information. It had partnered with various organizations to launch social assistance programmes for vulnerable migrants and refugees, and to assist migrants in the Caucasus. Legislative and institutional frameworks were needed to cope with any crisis situations that arose. One of the priorities for international migration governance in Azerbaijan was the adoption and implementation of the National Strategy on Migration, which would provide a roadmap for effective migration management in the country by establishing policies for the protection of migrants and their human rights, and for implementation of Global Compact objectives and principles.

Robinson Sathekge (South Africa) described the findings of Statistics South Africa²¹ web-based surveys to measure the impact of COVID-19 on individuals. Wave three of the survey had focused specifically on the effect of the pandemic on migrants

²¹ See the Statistics South Africa website. Available at www.statssa.gov.za/.

and education, and on specific ways to help migrants. The surveys showed that migrants were more vulnerable and had higher unemployment rates than non-migrant respondents.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Switzerland** said that cities needed reliable data on the population actually living within their limits in order to adopt targeted and inclusive COVID-19 measures that protected the most vulnerable, particularly in densely populated areas. An innovative project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported by IOM and their partner, the Flowminder Foundation, used anonymized mobile phone data to obtain people's mobility patterns and help the Government draw up pandemic response plans. The project would be scaled and replicated in other developing countries.

During Panel 3, **Pauline Tamesis** (United Nations) said that many migrants who had returned to Cambodia from Thailand after the borders closed now faced a heightened risk of poverty if they could not reintegrate into their communities of origin.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Bangladesh** also expressed concern about the sustainable reintegration of returnees and their livelihoods. The Bangladeshi Government had allocated funds and implemented a number of programmes to support migrant reintegration.

The representative of **Ireland** said that his country had decided automatically to renew immigration permits, to ensure that people did not lose their status during the pandemic and continued to enjoy the rights to which their status entitled them. This served to uphold the rights of migrants in particularly vulnerable situations.

The representative of **Algeria** discussed the legal frameworks adopted by his country to extend and institutionalize regular pathways for migrants. Steps had to be taken to address human trafficking, implement existing international agreements on the issue and draft new bilateral agreements. No matter what their status, migrants to Algeria had access to free health care and certain jobs. Measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic included assistance for the voluntary repatriation of

migrants residing in Algeria and a special provision automatically to validate expired visas, allowing the migrants concerned to enjoy the same benefits as nationals, including exceptional paid leave and access to health services. With the help of the Algerian Red Crescent Society, the Government offered vulnerable irregular migrants, especially women and children, shelter, food and access to free health care. It had also suspended repatriations during the health crisis, and allowed migrants to have access to IOM financial services.

The representative of **Colombia** said that her Government had included migrants in its pandemic response, granting them access to health-care services regardless of nationality. It had adapted cooperation programmes for migrants, paying special attention to the most vulnerable populations, targeting programmes at regions with the largest numbers of migrants and strengthening information flows. It had developed a specific response plan for Venezuelan migrants and refugees,²² to heighten awareness of the challenges they faced and to ensure a regional and multilateral response to the crisis.

The representative of the **United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth** highlighted the efforts of Spain in response to the pandemic and migrant vulnerability. The Spanish Government had adopted an order to guarantee work and residence permits for foreign workers in the agricultural sector. Under the order, the work and residence permits of young migrants working in that sector were valid for two years and renewable.

The representative of **FAO** highlighted the distinct risks that migrant agricultural workers faced during the pandemic, with what were often informal or casual employment agreements increasing their vulnerability to exploitation, poverty and food insecurity. Such workers also often lacked access to health care and social protection if their status was irregular or informal.

²² See RMRP 2020 for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (Response for Venezuelans, May 2020 revision). Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/76211_0.pdf.

The representative of **Sri Lanka** said that her Government had endeavoured to address the needs of vulnerable migrants by, for example, creating a web contact portal²³ to collect empirical data on their immediate needs, to provide information and guidance, and to assist in emergencies. It had released emergency funds to address the basic needs of vulnerable migrants, airlifting dry rations to selected destinations, providing temporary shelter and accommodation, and finding alternative employment for those who had lost their jobs during the pandemic. There were a number of major areas of concern when it came to addressing migrant vulnerabilities, including prioritizing the health of migrant workers as a key part of national response plans, facilitating temporary relief measures and amenities, providing redress for migrant workers, strengthening inter-agency coordination at national, regional and international level, and finding sustainable solutions for upskilling and re-migration.

The representative of the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** underscored the negative impact of the pandemic in terms of migrant smuggling and trafficking, to which increasingly vulnerable individuals and migrants were turning with growing frequency. The Office recommended stepping up disaggregated data collection and analysis, to help identify the risks and barriers faced by different groups; continuously monitoring pandemic responses to ensure that they were swiftly adapted to emerging trends and vulnerabilities; enhancing awareness-raising efforts to educate the general public about trafficking in persons and its risks; improving regional and international intergovernmental cooperation on the investigation and prosecution of crimes of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling; and prioritizing livelihood protections for those most at risk of being trafficked or exploited, especially those in the informal labour market, those in high-risk employment situations, those who were dependent on their jobs for residency status and those who lived with their employers.

The representative of **Brazil** recommended that the health authorities in neighbouring countries exchange more information, that hospitals and health professionals in such countries engage

²³ Contact Sri Lanka, www.contactsrilanka.mfa.gov.lk/.

in technical cooperation, and that regional efforts be made to repatriate migrants, provide medical treatment and cooperate on health action.

The representative of the **Niger** said that his Government had set up transit centres for unaccompanied minors and adopted a strategy to combat migration of at-risk children pursuant to the African Union's Revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018–2030).²⁴ It had adopted legislation to address the vulnerabilities of unaccompanied minors, granting civil status benefits and the Niger nationality to any child of unknown parents.

The representative of the **Netherlands**, referring to the psychosocial toll of the pandemic on migrants, said that her Government had provided mental health support in North Africa, West Africa and the Middle East in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Given that the pandemic had also heightened the vulnerabilities of LGBTQ+ populations, response efforts had to incorporate gender-specific aspects as well.

The representative of **Montenegro** said that vulnerable migrants should receive support during and after the pandemic. To that end, more reception centres should be opened for asylum seekers and those seeking protection, to ensure that international standards of non-refoulement were upheld.

The representative of **SOLIDAR**, referring to a recent INSERM study²⁵ on the greater vulnerability of migrants and low-income segments of the population to fall-out from the pandemic, said that SOLIDAR member organizations such as the Ligue de l'Enseignement were addressing those vulnerabilities, for example by making available their holiday centres to provide housing to

²⁴ African Union, *op. cit.*, note 7.

²⁵ See INSERM, *Premiers résultats des enquêtes de santé publique de l'Inserm sur la Covid-19 : facteurs de risque individuels et sociaux*, press release, 9 October 2020. Available at <https://presse.inserm.fr/en/premiers-resultats-des-enquetes-de-sante-publique-de-linserm-sur-la-covid-19-facteurs-de-risque-individuels-et-sociaux/41032/>.

homeless individuals and migrants, who were thus able to self-isolate and respect physical distancing measures.

The representative of **Morocco** said that the Kingdom was working in conjunction with other African countries to address the pandemic. To that end, it had launched an initiative to bolster the pandemic response of 15 other African countries. The initiative was based on solidarity and a citizen-centered approach. Its objectives were to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, improve health-care systems, help provide financial assistance and support national industries providing health and protective equipment. The Kingdom had also offered to host the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

Recommendations

- Governments and other stakeholders should ensure that policies put into place to uphold the rights of migrants during the pandemic and recovery take into consideration the needs of migrants who face particular risks, such as children, women, victims of trafficking and irregular migrants.
- As good data are essential for the development of sound and effective policies, governments and other stakeholders should ensure that they have the necessary data and information on migrants with particular vulnerabilities, recognizing that sometimes those who are most vulnerable are least likely to participate in surveys or are overlooked in needs assessments.
- Governments should consider adopting good practices for extending or renewing the visas of migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. In recognition of the principle that no one is safe until everyone is safe, they should also ensure that health and social protection services are made available to migrants whose status is irregular.
- Governments and other stakeholders should also consider how to address the long-term needs of migrants in vulnerable situations, especially during recovery efforts.

5. Mitigate the effects of economic hardship on migrant workers and returnees

Overview

As pointed out by the participants, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of migrants lost their jobs or had experienced severe reductions in income in countries of destination during the pandemic. While many had been able to return to their countries of origin, others lacked the resources either to return home or to survive in their countries of destination without employment. The participants provided many examples of support aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic and offered to migrants who remained and to those who returned.

In some cases, such as Portugal and Ecuador, steps were taken by governments in countries of destination to provide direct assistance to these migrants. In Portugal, the government issued a decree that all immigrants and asylum seekers who were waiting for residence permits would be regarded as having regularized their status. This entitled them to the same social support as Portuguese citizens and provided access to free treatment for COVID-19. Ecuador extended deadlines for all migration processes so that migrants would not lose their status and continued to issue humanitarian visas for Venezuelans. A number of governments reported on actions they have taken to facilitate the return of migrant workers and the life-saving role played by their consular missions abroad.

Discussion

Comments relating to the economic hardship suffered by migrants and returnees were made during several panel sessions. **Sarah Arriola** (Philippines) said that migrant workers repatriated to the Philippines were the first to be brought home by the Government with personal protective equipment. In some cases, migrant workers had been stranded in countries without embassies or commercial flights. Cruise ships, on which many Filipinos worked, were heavily hit by the virus. The Government had made a substantial effort to bring those migrants home, repatriating 17,000 seafarers from more than 100 cruise ships. In all, it had organized the repatriation of 200,000 Filipinos from overseas. All returnees were quarantined and tested, with meals and testing provided free of charge. The Government also paid for onward travel to the returnees' home communities. It worked with local governments to support migrant reintegration, providing capital for small businesses set up by returning migrants, scholarships, financial literacy programmes and cash assistance. Migrants were also being trained as contact tracers, enhancing their skills and training.

Ahmed M. Saleheen (Bangladesh) described what his Government had done to support the return of migrants. Bangladeshi consular offices had helped provide cash transfers to returning migrant workers. An online platform had been launched to provide information to returning migrants and enable them to join social welfare programmes. Cash support was provided to the families of deceased migrants. The Government had also set aside funds to support the reintegration of returned migrants, made soft loans available to returnees and monitored the welfare of all labour migrants. It had provided training for returned migrants, set up a database of returned migrant workers and established a reintegration support centre.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Guatemala** reported that 21,000 Guatemalan migrants had been repatriated. The Ministry of Health had ensured that health protocols were followed in return shelters, placing returning migrants under observation for up to ten days and providing returnees with food,

clothing, access to safe drinking water and assistance for onward travel to their communities. The country's consular officers had come to the aid of 1,000 Guatemalans who had COVID-19 in the United States of America, and had facilitated the return of the remains of more than 200 Guatemalan migrants who had died there. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had helped identify work opportunities for Guatemalans abroad, contributing to the cost of flights enabling 8,000 Guatemalans to take advantage of opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, construction and tourism, especially in Canada.

Bettina Etter (Switzerland) described a joint initiative by the Governments of Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to keep remittances flowing during the pandemic: Call to Action "Remittances in Crisis: How to Keep them Flowing". The objective of the initiative, whose multilateral partners included IOM, was to raise awareness about the potentially devastating effects of declining remittances on migrants and their families, and the threats this posed to economic stability in many low- and middle-income countries. Declining remittances would also threaten progress towards the SDGs if more people fell back or deeper into poverty. Various stakeholders should take measures to ease the impact of declining remittances or keep remittances flowing, for example by designating remittance service providers as essential services, promoting financial literacy and education among migrants, temporarily or permanently waiving and/or reducing transaction costs, and ensuring remittance services providers remained liquid.

Pauline Tamesis (United Nations) said that, before the pandemic, remittances had provided a livelihood for millions of households in Cambodia. She recommended improving the financial inclusion and literacy of migrants, to bring the "unbanked" into the formal banking system; reforming legal and regulatory frameworks to increase transparency and competition in the remittance market; and deploying digital technologies to ensure efficient, cost-effective and faster payment systems.

Viorica Dumbraveanu (Republic of Moldova) described the measures taken by her Government to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on returning migrants, notably providing them with monthly unemployment benefits and amplifying access to social services. With IOM support, the Government had also developed a method to validate and certify the informal skills migrants gained abroad.

Felipe Muñoz (Inter-American Development Bank), observing that 24 million jobs had been lost between February and July 2020 and that migrants experienced higher unemployment rates, said that the Bank was working with governments to offer migrants work permits and regularize their legal status; help employment agencies match migrant labour supply with demand; and develop ways to certify the qualifications that returning migrants had obtained in other countries. For example, it had launched a project²⁶ with the Government of Ecuador to improve the country's social services under the Bank's Migration Initiative.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **Ecuador** reported that her Government had negotiated with banking organizations to make remittances easier to send and receive. The negotiations had been part of the Swiss/United Kingdom Call to Action initiative, which aimed to reduce remittance transaction costs to less than 3 per cent by 2030. At the same time, the Government had approached chambers of commerce, financial corporations and private banks about using remittance programmes to promote development and migrant participation.

The representative of **Afghanistan** said that greater attention should be paid to issues such as stabilizing mobility regimes and remittance flows, to further sustainable development; human capital development and decent work conditions for migrants; the prohibition of involuntary returns and assistance for safe voluntary returns; and stepped-up reintegration efforts. He also underscored the need to transition from an aid model to self-reliance

²⁶ See Inter-American Development Bank, IDB approves project to improve social services in Ecuador, news release, 27 November 2019. Available at www.iadb.org/en/news/idb-approves-project-improve-social-services-ecuador.

in relation to migration governance and pandemic response and recovery efforts. All those concerns had been incorporated into the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Plan 2021–2025.²⁷

The representative of **Sri Lanka** said that her Government had offered emergency funds to help repatriated migrants meet their basic needs.

Rui Macieira (Portugal) described a variety of Portuguese programmes to help mitigate the negative impacts of the crisis on migrants, including securing migrant access to free health care with translation services, granting temporary residency rights to all migrants and asylum seekers with pending procedures, and implementing a new online platform for renewal of residence permits.

Christian Wolff (ACT Alliance) noted that many governments had released migrants from detention, regularized undocumented migrants (under certain conditions), facilitated access to health care, and offered migrants unemployment benefits and other forms of support regardless of their status.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of **ADEPT** emphasized the need to use diasporas to help mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. Countries of origin should develop supportive policies to encourage diaspora investment and entrepreneurship, and host countries should maximize their efforts to help migrants and diaspora communities build the capacity of migrants to contribute their skills to both host and origin communities.

The representative of **Ireland** also emphasized the importance of mobilizing diaspora communities. The Irish Government's commitment to diaspora policy was reflected in its creation of the position of Minister of State for Overseas Development Aid and Diaspora, to help harness diaspora contributions and address diaspora needs. In addition, migrants in Ireland had equal access

²⁷ Ministry of Finance, Afghanistan National Peace and Development Plan II (ANPDF II) 2021 to 2025: Forging our Transformation (Afghanistan). Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ANPDF%20II-%20Final%20Version-English.pdf>.

to health care and social support (including welfare payments, regardless of their status), immigration documents were renewed automatically to ensure that individuals did not lose their status, and migrants were central to pandemic recovery and response policies.

The representative of the **Niger** also emphasized the importance of the diaspora for communities of origin. To harness the benefits and meet the needs of the diaspora, the Government of the Niger had developed the National Migration Policy (2020–2035). The Policy aimed to facilitate migration and human mobility in a responsible and regulated way, and to ensure that both the diaspora and the local community benefited, by restructuring activities and investment funds for the diaspora; partnering with local and investment banks to assist the diaspora; and compiling data on the diaspora so as to obtain a better understanding of its needs.

The representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** said that his Government had acted to ensure migrant protection by, for example, providing universal health coverage and services to migrants, including hospitalization, treatment and testing.

The representative of **Qatar** stressed the need for coordinated responses aimed at all segments of society and providing universal access to information, health care, psychological and social support, and other measures of protection. Government measures to protect migrant workers included providing domestic workers, most of whom are migrant women, free and equal access to health care, regardless of their status; creating an SMS campaign targeting domestic workers and their employers (messages were translated into 13 languages in coordination with countries of origin and provided information updates); providing free transportation for those who wanted to return home; providing proper shelters for vulnerable expatriate workers; ensuring payment of wages and financial assistance for expatriate workers whose wages had been withheld or delayed; and offering online access to professional psychological services in ten languages for quarantined workers.

Recommendations

- Governments and other stakeholders should consider ways of effectively reintegrating returning migrants into their communities, such as immediate cash assistance, employment counseling, support for the re-establishment of livelihoods through training, access to capital to develop small business, and access to health and social welfare services.
- Governments and other stakeholders, especially the private sector, should seek ways to reduce the costs of remittances, including by designating remittance transfer services as essential services, reducing fees (even temporarily during the pandemic), promoting financial literacy and inclusion among migrants, and deploying digital technologies to increase the transparency and speed of remittance transfers.

6. Strengthen the response to and collaboration on COVID-19 through the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Sustainable Development Goals

Overview

One message made clear throughout the Dialogue was the need to enhance international cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination in the light of the serious challenges facing migrants and governments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Global Compact provided a framework for inclusive pandemic preparedness, prevention, response and recovery measures that protected migrants' rights and leveraged their positive contributions to sustainable development; such measures could and were being used by governments around the world. As the representative of the European Union observed, working together, for example under the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, was the best way to save lives, fight criminal networks taking advantage of the situation and promote good migration management.

One entire panel session was dedicated to discussing operationalization of the Global Compact for pandemic response and recovery, which provided an opportunity to reimagine human mobility and work on the basis of the Global Compact to strengthen protection of migrants' rights and work together on border management. The Global Compact was anchored in and aligned with the SDGs. It provided a framework for addressing migrants' needs and set out concrete applications and interventions

for programming in support of migrants. It could thus serve as a directive for how to include and approach migrants during the pandemic response and recovery process.

The current global crisis had proved that the cost of not integrating migrants was greater exclusion and vulnerability for migrants and slowing economies in countries of both origin and destination. It was critical to promote immigration with legal documentation, access to financial services and inclusion in health services. The need for new, safe migration pathways – a hallmark of the Global Compact – was echoed by many of the participants.

The Global Compact and the SDGs converged in several important ways. Both were aimed at reinforcing efforts to protect migrants and ensuring equal access to health-care services for all people on the move. Both drew attention to the need to assist migrants in vulnerable situations, advocating respect for migrants' rights across sectors and countries. Both focused on cross-cutting topics such as climate change, health, labour, gender equality and young people. Both were based on the imperative of shared responsibility for migration, including in the difficult situation caused by the pandemic.

While governments needed the Global Compact and the SDGs to strengthen international cooperation to respond to the challenges of the pandemic, migrant and diaspora communities could play significant roles in strengthening the Compact. They could contribute to the SDGs by reinvigorating social and economic development in a post-crisis environment. Migrants and diaspora communities must be given the opportunity to contribute their skills for the economic and social development of their communities.

Discussion

In their presentation during Panel 6, **Cécile Riallant** (IOM) and **David Khoudour** (UNDP) said that well-governed migration was a transformative way to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and help States build stronger, resilient communities. To that end, the Global Compact could guide State response and recovery efforts and help restore the positive developmental impact of migration. Its 23 objectives were directly applicable. No one should be excluded from basic and needed services, especially during a pandemic. Well-governed migration could enhance legal pathways for regular migration, and address and reduce migrant vulnerabilities. Consistent with the Global Compact objectives, resource centres had been established during the pandemic to offer direct support to migrant workers. In Canada, migrants had access to COVID-19 tests regardless of their status or whether they had insurance. In Greece, the registration of refugee and migrant children in schools was facilitated by the translation of online learning guidelines. The Global Compact thus offered not only a framework but also concrete applications for safe, orderly and regular migration, and was strongly supportive of progress towards the SDGs.

Mohammed Adjei Sowah (Ghana) expressed support for keeping migrants safe and working closely with them given their contributions to development, especially in cities. Indeed, growing attention was being paid to the key role played by municipal authorities – an issue emphasized in the Global Compact – in developing policies that not only protected migrants but also recognized and drew on their contributions to urban development.

Mohamed Sadiki (Morocco) spoke about existing migration programmes, some of which relied on global partnerships and bilateral agreements, that strengthened municipal projects in Rabat and created favorable contexts for successful migrant integration and social cohesion – in line with the whole-of-society approach advocated in the Global Compact. City and national governments, along with civil society, played an essential part in harnessing the contributions of migrants throughout society. Similarly, global partnerships with municipal leaders were essential to progress.

Socorro Flores Liera (Mexico) said that her Government strongly supported the Global Compact, which had helped guide pandemic response and recovery. In line with the Global Compact's objectives, the Government had established a follow-up mechanism for taking more than 100 different actions to assist migrants during the pandemic. Examples included setting up migrant centres for those who would otherwise be living on the street, opening temporary centres to enable migrants to quarantine and be tested, and developing campaigns to raise awareness about migrants' rights. The Government had also introduced mechanisms designed to empower migrants, including offering employment to migrants and refugees who were health professionals.

Rui Macieira (Portugal) said that applying the Compact's values and objectives had allowed his country to secure free access to health care for migrants; offer translation services to strengthen migrants' access to social services; grant temporary permits to migrants whose status was pending; promoted access to education through organized technical webinars; and cooperate with countries of origin to support migrants who wished to return.

Christian Wolff (ACT Alliance) agreed that the pandemic offered an opportunity to reimagine human mobility and that the Global Compact was an important tool for furthering international cooperation on migration. The Compact called specifically for improved migration governance systems to protect the rights of migrants, and this had led directly to the development of practices for migrants in precarious situations during the pandemic. The Global Compact thus served as a blueprint for a successful and inclusive pandemic response – if governments were willing.

Many comments were made from the floor during Panel 6 in support of the Global Compact. The representative of **Sweden** said that her Government had demonstrated its support by contributing generously to IOM's work to address short-term needs during the pandemic and the long-term strategic goals of Global Compact programmes. It had provided funding for the Migration Multi-partner Trust Fund and welcomed the Fund's focus on projects to ease the pandemic's impact on migrants. It used the Global Compact as a frame of reference when evaluating

potential beneficiaries of Ministry of Justice grants for migration projects, such as the grant awarded for the establishment and launch of the IOM Global Policy Network to promote ethical recruitment, which was itself anchored in IOM's flagship IRIS: Ethical Recruitment initiative.

The representative of **Azerbaijan** similarly observed that the Global Compact provided guiding principles and a vision for international migration. It was important to regulate migration flows during and after pandemic recovery.

The representative of **Ecuador** agreed that the Global Compact was the basis for government action and offered a roadmap for migration governance and coordination. Ecuador's own policy to implement the Compact, the National Agenda for Equality of Human Mobility 2017-2021, would underpin the development of migration policies enabling all stakeholders in the country to generate coordination mechanisms and take related action at all levels in line with the Global Compact, international commitments and the SDGs.

The representative of **Bangladesh** urged the international community to view the Global Compact as a global call to build an inclusive society and to adopt a 360-degree vision, mainstreaming Global Compact guidance in all migrant policies at local, national, regional and international level.

The representative of **Armenia** said that, if no one was to be left behind, urgent humanitarian assistance should be provided to all people in need, equally and without discrimination, regardless of their location and irrespective of the political status of the territory in which they lived. Responses to large movements of people should be grounded in humanity's common values of equitable responsibility-sharing, non-discrimination and respect for human rights.

The representative of **Turkey** said that the pandemic response and recovery made the Global Compact objectives and roadmap more relevant than ever. His country had contributed significantly to the Compact at all stages of its development and was determined to put it into practice and promote it worldwide.

The representative of **Save the Children** discussed several ways in which the Global Compact could help migrant children during the pandemic. For example, it contained recommendations on education, specifically that school plans should be inclusive of migrant children and their needs, which was important because of the pandemic's impact on education. It outlined how to support migrant children, which was relevant to the need for a greater emphasis on child protection and psychosocial support in the face of higher risks of violence during the pandemic. Lastly, it considered alternatives to the more dangerous migration pathways children were being forced into by the pandemic. Save the Children was planning to organize round tables in the run-up to the regional reviews, to help address those issues and involve young people in the dialogue.

Strong support for the Global Compact and the SDGs was also voiced at other times during the two-day session. **Ahmed M. Saleheen** (Bangladesh) said that the measures taken by his government to address the needs of migrants were all in line with the Global Compact, including enhancing safe human mobility through transparent job markets, working to ensure minimum standards of living and safe working environments, and advocating for benefit portability and greater recognition of migrants' skills.

Sarah Arriola (Philippines) said that her Government was committed to implementing the Global Compact, the key provisions of which were reflected in the country's development plans for 2017 to 2022 (e.g. establishment of data protocols, provision of health coverage and social security, financial inclusion of migrants, support for returnees). The international assistance received by the Philippines for repatriating Filipino migrants had breathed life into the Global Compact. The partnerships established through the Compact and bilateral labour agreements had paid dividends during the pandemic, facilitating repatriations, providing financial aid and giving rise to temporary residence permits at a time when the Philippines faced the challenge of bringing home and reintegrating its nationals.

Cláudia Pereira (Portugal), recalling that her Government was a Global Compact champion, said that its work with migrants was

guided by the SDGs, particularly SDG 10.7. Its policies to address the needs of migrants affected by the pandemic were based on the understanding that no one was safe until everyone was safe and ensured that immigrants had the same social rights as Portuguese citizens with respect to mitigating the pandemic's effects.

Speaking from the floor, the representative of the **Niger** said that his Government had developed many measures during the COVID-19 pandemic that were in line with the Global Compact, including implementing measures that covered everyone without distinction and addressed the needs of migrants in situations of particular vulnerability.

The representative of **Libya** called on all stakeholders to consolidate the various initiatives launched to address migration, such as the Global Compacts on migration and refugees, into a unified action plan aligned with the SDGs.

The representative of **Ecuador** affirmed the importance of the Global Compact, particularly when it came to confronting the difficult challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to incorporate migrants into development plans in order to meet the SDGs.

The representative of **Guatemala** said that it was important for governments to work together on economic recovery from the pandemic and to meet the SDGs.

The representative of **Afghanistan** said that the Afghan Government was committed to the Global Compact. The international community's response to mixed migration and commitment to managed and safe migration should be considered in the light of the risk that progress on development would be reversed; that risk required a multisectoral response, including in terms of migration governance. Governments also needed to reinforce their commitment to the SDG principle that no one should be left behind, especially migrants in vulnerable situations.

The representative of **Global Policy Insight** affirmed the importance of partnerships for a coordinated and inclusive approach to migration.

The representative of **Sri Lanka** stated that a comprehensive cross-sectoral approach involving governments, international humanitarian organizations, the private sector, including recruitment agencies and employers, and civil society was needed to provide both practical and sustained solutions. Those collective efforts must be guided by the Global Compact and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The pandemic had spotlighted the need for close coordination between national and international partners. She encouraged IOM, WHO and the ILO to work in close coordination with the regional consultative processes on migration in responding to the immediate and long-term challenges associated with labour migration during the pandemic.

The representative of Japan expressed appreciation and support for all IOM staff working every day under the Director General's "stay and deliver" initiative. The world's economic activities were underpinned by global migration; pandemic response and recovery measures should therefore also be global.

Recommendations

- Governments and other stakeholders should pursue their efforts to support the Global Compact throughout the pandemic and the eventual recovery. The fact that so many governments have reconfirmed their commitment to the Global Compact during a global pandemic, when most of them have imposed limits on mobility, is an indication of the important role it will play in the pandemic recovery.
- Governments and other stakeholders should pursue their efforts to implement the SDGs, particularly the targets relating to migration. The affirmation by participants that mobility is key to the recovery was coupled with a commitment to the SDGs as a way forward during a time of global crisis. In particular, governments are urged to incorporate migration into their development plans.

- IOM has a particularly important role to play, along with States and non-State partners, in restoring mobility after the pandemic. By enabling the sharing of best practices in forums such as the Dialogue and by offering technical advice to governments and other stakeholders, IOM has always served as a champion for global cooperation in managing migration for the good of all concerned: for migrants themselves as well as for countries of origin, destination and transit. This role is likely to become more important than ever as the world responds to and recovers from the global shock of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusions

In the short term, pandemic-induced challenges for human mobility are many, including threats to livelihoods and health, loss of employment, remittances and immigrant status, discrimination, and wage and benefit losses. At the same time, pandemic response efforts have given rise to new opportunities for improved migration governance, with increased possibilities for cooperative efforts to build more resilient societies for all. The Dialogue's conclusions include the following:

- The pandemic requires global cooperation of all countries and all stakeholders;
- Efforts to strengthen international collaboration must build on existing frameworks, such as the Global Compact and the SDGs, in order to advance the goals and commitments that will be key for a sustainable recovery;
- Recovery is predicated on expanded pathways for legal migration and on recognition of skills and certification;
- The vulnerabilities of certain migrant populations, such as women, children and young people, and victims of trafficking and smuggling, must be addressed;
- Migrants, including migrant women, and diaspora communities must play a key role in recovery;
- Combating xenophobia is key to pandemic recovery and must be a central component of economic and social recovery efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Mobility as key to recovery

Global recovery from the pandemic requires the restoration of mobility. Within recovery efforts, the role of women is key. Pandemic-response efforts must include targeted policies to empower migrant women as agents of change for a full and inclusive recovery, by:

- Improving educational opportunities for women and girls;
- Providing opportunities for migrant women to participate in policymaking on issues that affect their lives;
- Recognizing the key role that migrants and diaspora members play as agents of change, especially migrant women and young people;
- Provide opportunities for migrants to develop creative responses to the pandemic and its longer-term recovery, including through digital innovation and technology.

Changing the narrative and confronting xenophobia and discrimination

The pandemic has worsened discrimination and xenophobia against migrants. The majority of speakers recognized the rising prevalence of both phenomena and embraced the efforts being made by some States (together with IOM) to shift the narrative about migrants and migration onto positive terrain using diverse voices. They also recommended:

- Emphasizing that migrants must be included as key participants in post-pandemic recovery efforts;
- Recognizing the role played by migrants in enriching the societies they joined and contributing to the economic development of their countries of destination and origin;
- Considering the different challenges and needs of low- and high-income cities and taking account of regional and municipal needs in national policies;
- Establishing migrant-sensitive local health systems that not only helped migrants to address their health needs but also aided the larger community by making migrants part of those systems;
- Recognizing the particular contributions of migrant youth in countering disinformation about migration;
- Engaging with the press about how migrants are perceived and working with migrants to counter disinformation.

Protecting migrants at risk

Many speakers referred to the need to protect migrants at risk during the pandemic. While repatriation may be a form of protection, there are other forms that all States have not yet implemented. Moving forward, additional protections for migrants at heightened risk are needed. These include:

- Ensuring non-discriminatory access to health care, especially for migrant women;
- Increasing protection for migrant domestic and health workers, and further regulating these sectors;
- Creating more channels for reporting and responding to domestic violence;
- Working with law enforcement to prevent traffickers from exploiting migrants made vulnerable by the pandemic;
- Establishing global and regional pathways to enable migrant women, especially young migrant women, to contribute their skills and efforts to the global economic recovery;
- Given children's heightened vulnerability during the pandemic – resulting from food insecurity, declining standards of living, heightened risk of abuse and limited access to education – giving priority to mitigating the harm and to enabling children to grow up to realize their full potential.

Mitigating the effects of economic hardship on migrant workers and returnees

There is no doubt that the pandemic has created serious hardships for migrant workers and their families. Participants suggested that mitigating such hardship will involve:

- Strengthening international cooperation between countries of origin and destination to provide relief to migrant workers in difficult situations and to support the repatriation of migrant workers when necessary;
- Learning from government efforts to provide support to returning migrants in both the immediate term and during the longer-term recovery;

- Working with diaspora communities to mobilize support for both migrants who remain in countries of destination and those who have returned to their countries of origin, as diaspora support in the form of communication and guidance, investments, remittances and other forms of financial aid is a critical resource;
- Safeguarding the economic contributions of migrants and diaspora communities during and after the pandemic through targeted policies aimed at, for example:
 - Lowering remittance costs;
 - Introducing financial literacy programmes for migrants;
 - Introducing safer, global remittance mechanisms;
 - Increasing the capacity for reskilling and certification of migrants in the diaspora and for returning migrants;
 - Concluding agreements with countries of origin and destination to ensure greater access to social services.

Strengthening cooperation through the Global Compact and the SDGs

Many participants expressed strong support for the Global Compact and the SDGs. They gave examples of how the Global Compact provided concrete guidelines for migration governance during the pandemic and strongly recommended that it be built on in the future, in particular by:

- Strengthening implementing mechanisms to protect the rights of migrants, regardless of their status and particularly the most vulnerable migrants;
- Promoting the social and economic integration of migrants into host communities with the support of the international community;

- Combating all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance;
- Heightening awareness of and building capacity on migration issues.

FINAL AGENDA

COVID-19 crisis: Reimagining the role
of migrants and human mobility
for the achievement of the
Sustainable Development Goals

15 and 16 October 2020

International Conference Center, Geneva

Day 1	
10:00–10:15	Opening session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening remarks by António Vitorino, Director General, IOM
10:15–11:15	Panel 1: Safe, coordinated and inclusive human mobility is key to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
	<p>Human mobility can be part of the solution to the economic and social recovery from the COVID- 19 pandemic if the movement of people takes place in a safe, coordinated and inclusive manner. As noted in the United Nations Secretary-General’s policy brief on COVID-19 and People on the Move, the COVID-19 crisis presents the international community with an opportunity to rethink human mobility for the benefit of all and to recover better through the socioeconomic inclusion of people on the move, making use of their skills and positive contributions to societies. According to the Secretary-General, there are four principles to advancing safe and inclusive human mobility during and after the pandemic: a) exclusion is costly in the long run whereas inclusion pays off for everyone; b) responding to the spread of COVID-19 and protecting the human rights of people on the move are not mutually exclusive; c) no-one is safe until everyone is safe; and d) people on the move are part of the solution. This session will provide an opportunity to exchange views on the implications for and the future of migrants and human mobility during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <p>Moderator: Aissata Kane, Senior Regional Adviser for sub-Saharan Africa, IOM</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malek Deng Dau Deng, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, South Sudan • Cláudia Pereira, Secretary of State for Integration and Migration, Portugal

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stefano Sannino, Deputy Secretary General for Economic and Global Issues at the European External Action Service of the European Union • Ahmed M. Saleheen, Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladesh
11:15–13:00	Panel 2: Protection of vulnerable migrants during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis
	<p>Overcoming the current global health crisis requires migrants and other people on the move to be included in the overall COVID-19 responses, with a special attention to those populations that are marginalized or in situations of vulnerability and exploitation. The direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic appear to be exacerbated for migrants, especially for women, young girls and children, and further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict and emergencies²⁸. Migrant children may find themselves in a situation of double vulnerability during the pandemic, as children and migrants. The situation of vulnerability is further exacerbated in the case of migrant children who are unaccompanied and/or separated from their parents and relatives and thus lack protection.²⁹ Previous sessions of the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) have highlighted the need to protect and empower vulnerable migrant populations, particularly women, children and victims of trafficking and smuggling, and highlighted the disadvantages and multiple forms of marginalization that these categories of migrants may face, calling for specific actions to ensure their protection. Gender differences need to be factored into emergency responses. A discussion on this topic will also give due emphasis to the situation of stranded migrants around the world and displaced persons in need of assistance who are in often precarious situations. The impact of the pandemic has demonstrated that no one can be safe until we are all safe. Only through an inclusive approach – truly leaving no-one behind – can the safety and well-being of all be achieved.</p>

²⁸ IOM, 2020. *Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis*. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs-60.pdf>.

²⁹ IOM, 2020. COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #17: Impacts on migrant children and youth. Available at www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_17_impacts_on_migrant_children_and_youth_0.pdf.

	<p>Moderator: Yitna Getachew, Head, Migrant Protection and Assistance, IOM</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Arriola, Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs, the Philippines • Jean Ayoub, CEO and Secretary General, International Social Service - General Secretariat • Nick Grono, CEO Freedom Fund, United Kingdom • André Silva, Coordinator Migrant Smuggling Unit, INTERPOL • Isabela Atanasiu, Legal Officer, DG Migration and Home Affairs, Asylum, European Commission • Trang Hong Vu, United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, Co-founder of STEPFORWARD education, Vietnam
13:00–15:00	Break
15:00–17:00	Panel 3: Enhancing migrants’ agency and contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals
	<p>The pandemic not only endangers the prospects of advancing implementation of the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also threatens to reverse the progress achieved so far and further exacerbate existing challenges and vulnerabilities across every area. In working together to identify measures to respond to the pandemic, it is important that governments and the wider international community seize this crisis as an opportunity to reiterate their commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and use their implementation as a means to create more resilient societies and to ensure that they can better respond to future crises. In keeping with previous IDM discussions on the follow-up and review of the migration related Sustainable Development Goals, this session aims to foster greater cooperation and develop networks for future action on migration governance and achievement of Goals in the post-pandemic era. Ministers’ recommendations at the IDM 2013 highlighted the potential of diasporas to help reinvigorate and fuel social and economic development in the post-crisis environment and called for greater engagement with and empowerment of diasporas. Similarly, the IDM 2017 underlined the positive impact of remittances for countries of origin, with contributions of migrants going well beyond remittances, also including knowledge and skills transfer, entrepreneurship and innovation, trade and investment, as well as important social, cultural and other contributions. During the recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, migrants’ contributions will be essential for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>

	<p>Moreover, it is important to also look at how the economic contributions of migrants and diasporas are affected by the pandemic and at how they could be safeguarded in the future.</p> <p>This session will address, among others, remittance costs, safer remittances, financial literacy, alternative work and entrepreneurship opportunities, reskilling, and transnational elements of migrant workers.</p> <p>Moderator: Bettina Etter, Senior Advisor on Global Migration Governance, Switzerland</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viorica Dumbraveanu, Minister of Health, Labor, and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova • Pauline Tamesis, UN Resident Coordinator in Cambodia • Felipe Muñoz, Chief of the Migration Unit, Social Sector, Interamerican Development Bank • Boubou Camara, Support Pillar Manager- COVID-19, WHO
Day 2	
10:00–12:00	Panel 4: The role of women in the COVID-19 response and recovery
	<p>Building on previous discussions on empowering women and girls, this panel discussion will explore the challenges faced by girls and women due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the increase in domestic violence and situations of risk for domestic workers³⁰, and will aim to identify measures for both immediate responses and longer-term recovery efforts. In addition, women are not only vulnerable, but have also been the driving force behind the health efforts worldwide, as many of the health workers and other personnel taking care of sick people are migrant women. Now more than ever, the important role that women are playing in the response and recovery – not only as front-line health-care workers, but also other essential workers, such as those working at home, in grocery stores, as cleaners and teachers, etc. – needs to be emphasized. This panel will also be an occasion to present the conclusions and recommendations of a side event organized ahead of the IDM by IOM, United Nations partners and Member States on the importance of ensuring universal health coverage for all migrant women and girls.</p>

³⁰ IOM, 2020. *COVID-19 and women migrant workers: Impacts and Implications*. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/the-gender-dimensions-of-the-labour-migration.pdf>.

	<p>Moderator: Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General, IOM</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maya Morsy, President of National Council for Women in Egypt • Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director General, WHO • Christine Loew, Director UN-Women Liaison Office in Geneva • María Corina Muskus Toro, UN Major Group for Children and Youth, Co-founder, and Director of Venezolanas Globales
12:00–13:00	Migrants' Stories
	<p><i>Communication response to COVID-19: Tackling misinformation, xenophobia and building network of trusted messengers</i></p> <p>Speaker: Chylian Azuh, Writer and public speaker, Founder of 'Female Returnee Forum', Nigeria</p> <p><i>Innovation, digital development and youth leadership in COVID-19 response</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyleh Daher, Manager of Creative Spaces, Djibouti • Houssein Mohammed, Senior Project Assistant, IOM Djibouti
13:00–15:00	Break
15:00–16:15	Panel 5: Social cohesion and community resilience: countering discrimination and xenophobia against migrants
	<p>Participants at previous IDM discussions recommended that the migration narrative should be reframed in positive terms, in order to curtail racism and xenophobia and to champion the merits of migration. In the context of COVID-19 outbreak, racist and xenophobic incidents have been widespread³¹ and it is feared that – against a background of social tensions created by economic downturn – cases of xenophobia will further increase. It is therefore important that the fight against xenophobia continue and that it is included in economic and social recovery efforts, recognizing the rich contributions of migrants the world over, which will also be essential in the post-pandemic phase. Moreover, as also highlighted at the IDM 2015 High-level Conference on</p>

³¹ IOM, 2021. *Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis*. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs-60.pdf>.

	<p>Migrants and Cities, the particular needs and vulnerabilities of migrants in times of crisis need to be specifically addressed in urban emergency planning and responses. This session will respond to participants’ calls for IOM to use its convening power through the IDM to hold future conferences with local officials to discuss the different situations faced by low- and high-income cities and cities with more or less experience in managing migration, including in crisis situations. Furthermore, given IOM’s membership of the Mayors Mechanism, and its engagement with authorities at local level and partners, the panel will also consider the need for migrant-sensitive local health systems.</p> <p>Moderator: Leonard Doyle, Spokesperson, Head, Media and Communication, IOM</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glen Linder, Director General, International and Intergovernmental Affairs, Canada • Ulvi Aliyev, Chief of International Cooperation Department of the State Migration Service, Azerbaijan • Robinson Sathekge, Head of Migration Unit, City of Johannesburg, South Africa • Mónica Trigos Padilla, North America Regional Focal Point and Shaping Narratives Lead of the Migration Group, UN Major Group for Children and Youth
<p>16:15-17:45</p>	<p>Panel 6: Applying the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts</p>
	<p>The 23 objectives, commitments and subsequent actions – considered by Member States to be relevant policy instruments and best practices – outlined in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration provide governments and other actors with a practical framework to help craft inclusive COVID-19 preparedness, prevention, response and recovery measures that protect migrants’ rights and leverage migrants’ positive contributions to sustainable development. This panel discussion aims to provide Member States and other stakeholders with an opportunity to share their experiences and proposals in drawing on the Global Compact in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The United Nations Network on Migration policy brief, entitled The Global Compact for Migration (GCM): Well Governed Migration as an Essential Element of Effective COVID-19 Response, will also be presented during this panel discussion.</p>

	<p>This policy brief analyses the impact of COVID-19 on human mobility and suggests how the Global Compact can be leveraged for effective COVID-19 response and recovery by offering policy recommendations. It also showcases concrete examples of positive COVID-19 initiatives and responses enacted by Member States around the globe.</p> <p>Moderator: Maurizio Busatti, Head, Multilateral Processes Division, IOM</p> <p>Presentation:</p> <p>Cécile Riallant, Head, Migration and Sustainable Development, IOM and David Khoudour, Human Mobility Advisor, UNDP</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Honourable Mohammed Adjei Sowah, Mayor of Accra • The Honourable Mohamed Sadiki, Mayor of Rabat • Socorro Flores Liera, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations in Geneva • Rui Macieira, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations in Geneva • Christian Wolff, Programme Manager, Migration and Displacement, ACT Alliance
17:45– 18:00	Closing session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing remarks by Eugenio Ambrosi, Chief of Staff, IOM

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