

GFMD 6
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Common Space Session

-- IOM Director General --

"COMMON GROUND AND PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION"

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world on the move. Ours is an era of unprecedented human mobility. Indeed, this reality is what has brought us here to Mauritius today. In our world of seven billion, one billion of us are in motion -- a quarter billion of us crossing international borders, and the rest churning around each within his or her own respective country. A common understanding of this phenomenon and finding common ground concerning it is the goal of this common space.

Migration in all its forms is an all-encompassing, all-embracing phenomenon --- a phenomenon as old as humankind -- one that ranges, for example, from refugees and IDPs, on the one hand, to transfer of professional skills and search for a better life, on the other -- a cross-cutting reality that touches virtually all spheres.

I would suggest, therefore, that to respond to this "mega-trend" of the 21st Century, responsibly and humanely, requires both (a) a "whole of government" and (b) a "whole of society" approach. A common agenda, no less. More than ever, we all need partners and a spirit of partnership. (On a personal note, this is why, from the outset of my mandate, I made partnerships one of my three top management priorities.)

Here at this year's Forum, the first to be held on African soil, I have been given the singular honour to introduce the "Common Space" segment of our proceedings. In these few brief minutes, I shall speak perhaps less about "Common Space" than about something much more substantive -- namely, the importance of finding "Common Ground" through partnership. In this era of large-scale migration -- both unprecedented volume and unprecedented complexity -- the concept of partnership becomes primordial to all that we do in the field of migration.

In this connection, I should like to make three points briefly.

I. COMMON GROUND ON MIGRATION REQUIRES INTER-STATE COOPERATION.

No single actor can -- or should even attempt to -- manage migration, or its linkage to development, alone. As a major transnational force of our time, for migration to make its historically positive contribution to our economies and societies demands inter-state cooperation and dialogue -- a reality about which more and more governments are aware. There is ample evidence of increasing partnerships. For example:

- a. The very existence of the GFMD itself is evidence of Governments recognition of the need to cooperate among themselves. That we are able today to speak of migration and development at this Global Forum is in part the culmination of years of dialogue and collaboration among countries across the migration spectrum. Thanks to the GFMD, and the various regional dialogues, countries from very differing

perspectives are now able and willing to sit down together to discuss migration issues without the emotion and rancor that sometimes characterized earlier exchanges. The GFMD has helped transform the dialogue on migration and development from conflictual to constructive.

b. There are now at least sixteen state-led processes known as "Regional Consultative Processes", formal dialogues that IOM supports appropriately.

c. Increasingly, it seems, states are becoming simultaneously both migrant sending and receiving countries; this in itself, of necessity, inclines governments to seek common ground.

II. COMMON GROUND ON MIGRATION REQUIRES STATE-CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION

Even linked together in the GFMD and Regional Consultative Processes as they are, Governments increasingly that, even so, they cannot, as Governments, handle migration alone, and, knowing this, they are reaching out to others with a stake in this noble enterprise. Although perhaps not as advanced, there has also been encouraging progress in building understanding, cooperation and partnerships between Civil Society members and Governments.

Government-CSO cooperation begins with mutual respect. Together we must all seek to conjugate (a) respect for national sovereignty, on the one hand, and (b) individual freedom of movement, on the other. This dialogue is

progressing, perhaps too rapidly for some in Government, and perhaps too slowly for some in Civil Society. But, progressing, this cooperation is. For example:

a. The Global Forum has promoted enhanced State-Civil Society Cooperation, in large part through the creation of the Common Space segment of the GFMD Agenda. We have all watched the Common Space segment grow, ever so hesitatingly from Brussels to Manila to Athens and then at a considerably quicker pace since Porto Vallarta and Switzerland and here today in Port Louis. The GFMD has proved itself to be a forum at which States and Civil Society organizations can come together and discuss their experiences on migration and development and to realize how much they actually share, quite apart from some of the differentiating viewpoints that remain.

b. The very complexity of migration today propels an active engagement, alongside Governments, of the full range of actors, including NGOs, INGOs, the private sector, trade unions, the academic world, UN agencies and international organizations.

c. I know, for example, that, in preparation for this week's GFMD, some states here have undertaken extensive consultations with civil society organizations. Governments do so because they wish to gain a better understanding of the complex variety of views -- often competing -- of various constituencies. For their part, CSOs are not special interest groups promoting their own agendas, but organizations which, similar to their Government counterparts, understand the need for constructive interaction with state political processes.

c. Such inter-action and enhanced partnerships are contributing, and will continue to contribute, to our ability to harness the full potential of migrants for broader human development of migrants and migration. The Common Space element provides a forum for different actors to exchange views on harnessing the opportunities of migration for broader, sustainable human development.

d. The growing role of Civil Society in migration is mirrored, for example, in the results of the Brussels and Manila Global Forum recommendations -- which by 2010 had been implemented as much as 50% by non-state actors. State-CSO interaction on migration and development is clearly not just talk.

III. COMMON GROUND ON MIGRATION REQUIRES COMMON ACTION

The Common Space segment has now become, and is likely to remain, a regular feature of the annual Global Forum gathering. Although the GFMD remains a state-led process, one no longer speaks of two parallel but separate GFMD processes: one for governments , and one for civil society. Ships that pass in the night. Paths that never meet. This Common Space feature in the GFMD Agenda, now a permanent fixture, in itself represents progress in creating Common Ground on the important issue of Migrants and Migration.

By keeping us formally in touch – Governments and Civil Society Organizations -- the Common Space has the potential to help us find or develop new, more flexible forms of cooperation across public, private, and civil society sectors. The Common Space concept has encouraged many, including myself, to expand CSO consultations at global, regional and country levels.

In doing so, it is important that none of us dwell on areas of past persistent disagreement in which there has been little realistic prospect for partnership; it is also important that we not simply pat ourselves on the back and tell ourselves how well these new partnerships are working.

Although still too few, there are already projects driven by existing partnerships between diaspora associations, private enterprises, and public institutions to enhance development in countries of origin. For example:

-- One International Organization assumed the role of money transfer organization when a ban was placed on a major Somali MTO and did so in order that poor families could continue to receive their remittances.

-- Private-Public Partnerships are being established to regularize and facilitate migration procedures. IOM has just signed a major PPP agreement to create Visa Application Centers in West Africa and other places in which there is limited consular representation. Similar arrangements exist for low-cost passport systems. There are similar Private-Public partnerships in the field of circular migration.

-- Some governments and CSO organizations are working together to educate and inform migrants and potential migrants about legal opportunities, basic use of financial services, their rights and responsibilities, and to protect them against unscrupulous recruitment agencies and others that engage in human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

There are other areas in which there are no partnerships at present but which offer feasible possibilities for fruitful cooperation. For example:

-- Potential NGO-diaspora partnership to create jobs with decent working conditions in countries of origin. (In this optic, IOM is organizing a "Diaspora Ministerial Forum" at Geneva in the first half of 2013.)

-- Potential NGO-Diaspora-local Government cooperation in providing educational services to support the integration of migrants, including access to public schools.

-- Potential NGO-Diaspora-Local Associations cooperation to help migrant workers understand the country's social protection system and benefits, as well as their own obligations.

CONCLUSION.

Quite apart from collaborative projects that require additional funding, our focus should be on projects that benefit migrants by creating new relationships.

In doing so, we help to counter the xenophobic myths and stereotypes that harm and endanger migrants and prevent them from making their historic positive contributions to societies and economies.

Now is the time for partnerships to show that we can promote migration and development by safeguarding migrant rights and, at the same time, reassuring host populations through concrete measures that migration is a positive force.

In conclusion, in keeping with the theme for this Common Space of "Common Ground and Partnerships in Action", let us lead through action and partnership to meet the challenges of this era of large-scale mobility and to promote safe and dignified migration that benefits us all.