

## 12TH GFMD CIVIL SOCIETY CO-CHAIR REPORT COMMON SPACE

Quito, 23 January 2020

**Stella Opoku-Owusu, Civil Society co-Chair**

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is important to provide a context and some brief reflections of Civil Society discussions yesterday. We recognize our space as partners in this GFMD process. Over the course of one day, 300 or so delegates from civil society held rich, meaningful and passionate discussions on collective action, remembering to put migrants at the heart of these deliberations.

Civil society commits to work in partnership with governments – both national and local actors – and other stakeholders as is relevant, to move forward the GFMD agenda on development through partnerships and collective action.

We highlight here some recommendations on partnerships and we also provide some more context to these recommendations:

### **On Climate-Related migration and displacement:**

1. Civil Society recognizes that the **effects of climate change is often borderless**: therefore collective action on climate-related migration and displacement requires not only national and local state actors, climate change practitioners, academics, but also regional blocs.

In our discussions, Civil Society acknowledged the complexities in linking climate change with human mobility. There was a clear message to all stakeholders to be mindful of the data discourse between climate change and migration. Noting in particular that reliance on quantitative data alone risks feeding a ‘narrative of invasion’, as the focus then shifts from climate change to migration.

By recognizing that **the focus needs to be on climate change** – governments and partners – will be encouraged to work collaboratively on the development and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

## On Criminalization of migrants and those assisting them, we acknowledged the importance of upholding shared human values:

2. **Cities can play a major role** in keeping migrants 'safe'. **Collective action** could involve national and local state actors, cities, private sector, legal assistance providers, and the wider public sector.

As an alternative to returning migrants to 'safe third countries', which are very often far from safe and where they may face human rights violations, we urge Governments to strongly consider '**Sanctuary cities**' where one's immigration status is not a determinant of access to services.

In discussions, there was a **strong sense of a violation of shared human values**, and a plea for a stop to interference of humanitarian Search and Rescue (SAR) missions.

Governments must **be mindful of language** that perpetuates this idea that migrants in themselves are 'illegal' and therefore not deserving, or simplified narratives of migrants being responsible for the lack of jobs. These not only **exacerbate negative public opinion** but also provide the **basis for discriminatory policies**.

## On remaining themes:

3. We make a strong call for '**access to rights with a focus on dignity and humanity**' as opposed to 'access to services' and a **partnership** between national and local governments, migrant communities, civil society, public and private sector that guarantees a **set of rights regardless of migration status**.
4. We acknowledge the application of principles **of effective partnership to labour migration** at the national and local levels and across borders, where governments, employers, trade unions, civil society organisations, and migrant workers collaborate through social dialogue - the **GCM** provided an opportunity for trade unions and civil society organisations in Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka to engage more effectively together and with governments on labour migration.
5. Through partnerships across all front-line agencies, civil society organisations, governments (origin, transit, destination), local state actors, must support the **application of humanitarian principles** in responding to the needs of all migrants moving in mixed flows, regardless of status.

Civil Society also acknowledged the role and initiatives of other actors across the themes we discussed:

6. **Youth**, both migrants and from host communities, are active, engaged citizens creating innovative solutions to provide services and support for the integration of migrants.
7. We recognized the agency and leadership of **women and girls** and the need to build their capacity while avoiding tokenism.

8. **Diaspora and migrant organisations** contribute significantly to development and through their link with origin and residence countries, are natural partners. The power of diaspora contributions are also important in countering misinformation and challenging negative stereotypes.

Across all these different actors there are **good practices and innovative initiatives** that need **support** with replicating or scaling up through partnerships to help achieve development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, civil society delegates here are excited for the future and look forward to engaging with national and local governments, private sector and other stakeholders to take forward these concrete steps towards **collective action**.