



Global Forum on
MIGRATION & DEVELOPMENT

Civil Society

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Stella Opoku-Owusu, Civil Society co-Chair

Your excellencies, chair of GFMD Ecuador Ambassador Chavez, colleagues from civil society, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of civil society, my co-Chair and I would like to say thank you for this warm invite to Ecuador for the 12th (2019-20) Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Thank you to Amb. Chavez for the support in organising the GFMD CSDs and also to the city of Quito for hosting us. And on that I would like to say that we recognise and welcome that for the first time the Global Mayoral Forum forms a part of the three mechanisms of GFMD, together with Civil Society and the Business Mechanism.

Can I also extend our further gratitude to the governments who have financially contributed to ensure fair and diverse civil society representation – Germany, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sweden and Canada.

The last few years have seen many international processes and frameworks come into being – from the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015 (unanimously adopted by UN member states) to the New York Declaration for refugees and migrants, (unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly) in 2016, and then to the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration. The Global Compact for Migration itself, while non-binding, was endorsed by 152 member states. We can only hope that the ‘lukewarm’ response received by some 41 member states on the GCM is not permanent. The Global Compact represents a cooperative framework around which we can jointly develop partnerships and implement actions. We must also recognise the significant milestones achieved with these frameworks and the solutions embedded in them.

As civil society, we’ve been part of this journey and have contributed significantly to them. The next step of course is to act on them – in all our deliberations this week, I have 3 challenges for all of us:

1. The reality of the migrant’s life must inform our processes – from the bottom up - and not the other way round.

We are all leaders in our own right. Each and everyone of us has a vision – for ourselves and for those we serve. We all want better lives for ourselves, our children, our constituencies. Our need for a better life is not driven by national or international processes. It is driven, by an innate human need in the search for fulfilment.

2. Governments must take the lead, but we must all be visionary leaders and hold each other accountable.

There are real people at the centre of our migration frameworks. And they are no different from you and I. I, am a migrant myself. Regardless of differing motivations, origins, we face similar risks and dangers on perilous journeys while on the move in the search of a better life, seeking international protection but finding ourselves engulfed in complex matters that we cannot even comprehend, where our migratory status alone is the determinant of what kind of international protection we receive, if any.

As borders close on us, our vulnerability increases, as leaders and media increasingly influence the language on immigration and perpetuate a narrative of 'deserving refugees' vrs 'economic migrants' in the pursuit of self-interest, we see a rise in nationalism that fuels xenophobic sentiments and violence against the so-called 'bad migrant'.

In a search for a better life, we accept working conditions that are discriminatory, based on our migration status, nationality, or gender, and for women in particular, we face even more risks and exploitation.

In search of new horizons, we, and those who support us, are criminalised, separated from our families and access to basic human rights and services including legal protection are frequently violated ...and the list goes on.

Increasingly, we can anticipate new challenges too – climate change and environmental degradation leading to displacement; as well as rapid population growth in some parts of the world – Africa – in particular, and the inevitable impact on labour movement. With visionary leadership, we can be better prepared for these.

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this is the reality for many migrants the world over, and for each migrant, the reality changes from hour to hour, day to day, from month to month, for better or for worse. And so number 3

3. Let's put the migrant at the heart of our deliberations; and let us bring our hearts to the discussions too.

In our deliberations on enriching partnerships, consider also the vital role that migrants and diaspora communities play and the contributions they make here and there; as well as the role of local populations. As leaders, as we deliberate on implementation and collective action, we must be guided by the reality that migrants face in their search for better lives....