

Concluding Remarks from Civil Society

Civil Society Statement by Helena Olea, Associate Director, Programs, Alianza Americas

Excellencies, State representatives, Mayors and Local Authorities, Business leaders and Employers, and fellow Civil Society Representatives, Dear GFMD friends,

I would like to start by **congratulating and thanking the United Arab Emirates, for their strong leadership as the current Chair of the GFMD**. This was a very successful, participatory and substantive summit, in spite of the challenging circumstances that we are facing. As the 2020 GFMD Chair His Excellency Nasser Bin Thani Al Hamli indicated in his opening remarks.

We are all concluding our participation with new ideas. To the extent that we learned a great deal from one another through a genuine dialogue, we are keen to build new relationships with people or entities that we were able to meet during this year's GFMD, and appreciative of the relations that we have built in the past, and that we continue to foster in this space for open discussion and exchange of ideas. The GFMD continues to be the most relevant, collective migration and development platform, and the only one providing each of the stakeholders with a proper space, built through self-organizing.

We all worked hard. Participating remotely in the GFMD was a technical and personal challenge. Many of us took part in the evenings or early mornings, trying to carve space to be remotely present. Let's take a moment to acknowledge our collective and individual commitment and endurance to remain engaged in long hours of online participation, a testimony to a similar future engagement.

In preparation for this GFMD, the Chair organized for the first-time **regional consultations**. They were useful meetings to discuss our challenges and set priorities. We observe many positive elements in them and hope that they continue being part of the GFMD. However, it is necessary to address specific shortcomings to ensure full participation. In the case of the Americas, for example, hosting the regional consultation in the Regional Conference on Migration resulted in a very small participation from South America and the Caribbean. A subregional approach may facilitate greater engagement.

We would also like to recognize and thank the UAE for organizing the **first Summit which was entirely multi-stakeholders**. Full participation – of governments, civil society, local authorities, and the private sector - is essential in terms of opportunities for sharing ideas and taking part in discussions. It definitely made a difference and strengthened opportunities to engage in constructive dialogue. We were able to highlight our concerns, discuss best practices, and identify useful partnerships while acknowledging our strengths. We hope that this model continues, since it can definitely be recognized as a best practice to be replicated, as the GFMD Chair indicated in his opening remarks.

We want to unequivocally express our **total support to the GFMD and reiterate that it is essential it continues meeting and providing this unique space for a real and transparent dialogue among all – and, I insist, on “all” stakeholders, as it was the case this year.** The success of the GFMD depends on a clear agenda and prioritized activities. We would like to reiterate our **full support to the Steering Group and the Future Chairs.** As conversations continue, in terms of the GFMD’s future, we want to highlight four thematic priorities that we believe should be considered:

1. Xenophobia and discrimination against migrants

The criminalization of migration and racism, which may have unfortunately influenced some of the most restrictive immigration policies, must be challenged and addressed.

Particular forms of discrimination suffered by specific groups must be tackled through an intersectional approach.

The narratives on migrants and migration are essential and we welcome the work that the ad-hoc working group of the GFMD and their “It Takes A Community” campaign have been doing on this matter. The discussion yesterday reflects the importance of bringing it to the forefront.

2. Regular pathways, including regularization

Understanding the factors contributing to irregularity is essential in order to address them.

Most irregular migration is not the result of unauthorized entrance, but rather stem from the impossibility and inability to maintain regular status, and the limited regular pathways available.

Temporary labor migration programs are not the solution.

It is necessary to overhaul the regular migration network and ensure decent work as a key priority, addressing needs in various sectors, and not overlooking some sectors while favoring others in bilateral agreements.

It is critical to recognize different contributions made by migrants, not only economic contributions, or those made by high-skilled workers.

Finally, there needs to be an acknowledgement that regularization is part of the solution, and that pathways towards long-term residence are necessary.

This topic merits further discussion and the GFMD is uniquely positioned to host those exchanges.

3. Due process and access to justice

Due process rights are central in immigration proceedings and in all relationships between migrants and the state. Accessing justice is essential for migrants, particularly in labor and family matters, and when they have been victims of crime. Firewalls and minimum standards that ensure access to information, legal representation, and addressing language barriers are essential to guarantee access to justice.

We must address this important topic in this forum to consider different contributions and perspectives.

4. Social protection for all migrants

Migrants are being left out of social protection networks, having to fend for themselves. This enhances inequality and conditions of vulnerability.

The need to ensure access to services without the fear of immigration enforcement has become a pressing issue. The public health challenges of the pandemic reinforce the need to understand that our collective wellbeing depends on the inclusion of all.

We must find ways to include and rebuild together. We cannot continue leaving people behind.

We are indeed concerned that no new Chair has been identified yet. We wish to thank France for expressing its willingness to assume the Co-Chair as of mid-2022. We also want to convey our gratitude to the Steering Group for ensuring a meaningful transition so that the achievements of the UAE Chairmanship continue.

I would like to conclude by first, reiterating the commitment of civil society to the GFMD, and our willingness to continue contributing to it, in a true spirit of partnership. Secondly, on behalf of civil society, I would like to express our gratitude to our donors, Germany, the UAE, Switzerland and Canada. Your support made possible a very diverse and engaged civil society participation. And finally, we once again thank the UAE Chairmanship particularly Alex Zalami and his task team, and the Support Unit particularly Estrella Lajom and her team, for the commitment and support of civil society's full engagement in this year's GFMD process and the summit.

Thank you