



Restoring Dignity, Inspiring Change.

**International Dialogue on Migration in 2017
Strengthening international cooperation on and governance of migration towards the
adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018**

*Intersessional workshop 18-19 April 2017,
United Nations Headquarters, New York*

Panel discussion on
*“Implementing the SDGs and other major frameworks:
how the Global Compact on Migration can help meet
commitments made,”*

Intervention by
Msgr. Robert J. Vitillo
Secretary General,
International Catholic Migration Commission

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to begin by thanking His Excellency Ambassador Swing and the IOM for the kind invitation to contribute, on behalf of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and other civil society actors, to this urgently needed dialogue. Such joint and focused discussion is our only hope to arrive at consensus for an effective Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.

Given the limits of time, I will focus on strong recommendations and good practices that have emerged from dialogue between governments and civil society actors, including religious leaders and related faith-based organizations, in the context of the Global Forum for Migration and Development, the Civil Society Action Committee, and other fora, for which ICMC has enjoyed the privilege of serving in a coordination role to mobilize participation of civil society in these processes.

In preparation for the Summit on Refugees and Migrants, held in September 2016, the Action Committee, which included membership of 22 leading civil society organizations and networks from around the world developed its *New Deal for Refugees, Migrants and Societies*,

as an important advocacy tool to point out baseline actions that should form the core of commitments by States for better governance of migration while protecting the rights and dignity of all migrants and refugees. As soon as States adopted the *New York Declaration*, the Action Committee produced another document entitled, *Act Now Joint Statement and Scorecard*, which urged a timely implementation plan for the *Declaration* as well as strong multi-stakeholder participation in the development of the Compact. Other key recommendations included:

1. Review national border policies to uphold the human rights of all people at international borders, and commit to developing and implementing gender- and age-sensitive guidelines to protect migrants in vulnerable situations;
2. Commit to end the practice of child migrant detention in accord with the principle of the best interest of the child;
3. Implement policies and vigorous campaigns at national and local levels to counter xenophobia, discrimination, and racism;
4. Engage *all* governments in urgent responses to the challenges posed by large migration movements – not simply those that are receiving or transit countries, not simply those with significant financial resources – but the entire international community.¹

At the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in Bangladesh, held during December 2016, participants in the Civil Society sessions urged that the Compact be articulated within a multi-lateral and human rights-based framework. Their proposals included the following:

1. *On recruitment and employment:* Accelerate and *implement* reforms in migrant labour recruitment and employment policies and practices, in order to protect and empower migrant workers at every stage of the labour cycle;
2. *On migrants in crises, in transit and at borders:* Organize, and, when possible, consolidate existing rights, frameworks, practical tools, and partnerships to more consistently implement need-first, human rights-based and human development-driven protections and solutions for migrants of all kinds and in all crises ...;
3. *On forced migration:* Ensure human development-driven, immediate emergency responses and long-term sustainable solutions for forced migrants;

¹ *Contribution to the Fifteenth Coordination Meeting on International Migration by the International Civil Society Action Committee*, UN/POP/MIG-15CM/2017/18, 10 February 2017.

4. *On children*: Protect and empower children in all migration contexts to address their specific vulnerabilities and needs to ensure that their development and human rights are respected;
5. *On return*: Build and strengthen civil society focus and expression of “red lines” on return, both intra-nationally and trans-nationally.

ICMC has been collaborating with the GFMD Steering Committee to ensure that the Civil Society Days of the next session, to be held in Berlin during June 2017, will maintain an exclusive focus on the Global Compact on Migration. In this regard, civil society insists that, rather than simply re-stating existing rights or commitments, the Compact must focus on *implementation*: on concrete cooperation and mechanisms that bring the relevant rights and principles to life.

The Sutherland Report points to solid common ground and a set of practical next steps and mechanisms to be affirmed in the new Compact. We believe that the Compact must take an “SDG-like approach”: setting clear goals, targets and indicators, but on a graduated timeline—e.g., 2, 5 and 12 years (which would coincide with the 2030 end date for the SDGs.) Two years could be allocated for the goals and targets most urgent and immediately achievable, including more systematic implementation of best interest determinations for children, reform of migrant worker recruitment practices, alternatives to detention, and orderly departure programmes; 5 years for goals more difficult to be achieved, such as return and reintegration; and 12 years for full achievement. Indeed, a clear, graduated timeline of goals and targets was one of the strongest recommendations by civil society at the last GFMD in December.

In this same regard, more strategic attention and action will be required if we hope to eliminate obstacles to achievement of the SDGs among migrant communities. For example, many migrants are marginalized and may face considerable barriers in accessing equitable social and health care services. As a result, their ability to remain healthy and productive can be compromised. Thus, access to high quality health care, safe, effective and affordable essential medicines and vaccines, and cross-border continuity of health care, as well as financial risk protection schemes for migrants, regardless of legal status, will be necessary to achieve SDG Target 3.8, which calls for **Universal Health Coverage**.

I will conclude with the relation between the Compact and the overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda to “leave no one behind”. This theme is one that, from time immemorial, has motivated people of faith and action by religious organizations and other civil society

organizations founded by people of good will. Pope Francis has joined other religious leaders in appealing for better governance of migration and protection of those migrants who desperately need the solidarity of both governments and civil society. He recognizes, however, that such measures can only be achievable under the following condition: “a change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world.”²

² Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City, 5 August 2013.