



Global Forum on Migration and Development

Friends of the Forum

Geneva, 21 February 2019

Civil Society Statement delivered by Stéphane Jaquemet, Director of Policy, ICMC

Check against delivery

I first would like to thank the 2018 GFMD Moroccan Co-Chair, Secretary General El Habib Nadir, his team and indeed the Moroccan Government, for hosting us with incredible generosity, a profound sense of hospitality and a true open-door policy towards civil society, by, in particular, and here I am only giving one example, inviting us to attend the entirety of the Government Days. I will come back later to what we, together, achieved in Marrakech in December 2018. Germany, as the second Co-Chair, was also incredibly supportive and was the living proof that when there is good attitude, synergy and complementarity, the Co-Chair system is effective and yield positive results.

Secondly, our gratitude to the governments which funded civil society participation. Morocco, Switzerland, Germany, the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Bangladesh and Canada's generous support made this essential dialogue possible. Above all, civil society would have not been able to be fairly and diversely represented by some 300 participants, with over 45% of the participants attending their first GFMD and 47% being migrants, refugees or diaspora representatives. All regions and sub-regions (58 countries) were represented and one of our Co-Chairs was, for the first time ever, a Youth representative. 102 participants from developing countries received either total or partial funding.

Thirdly, let me emphasize how happy civil society is to work with the new Chair, Vice-Minister Santiago Chavez Pareja and his team. With an organic law and a national plan on human mobility, but also being directly impacted by a mixed migration crisis, Ecuador, is uniquely placed to assume leadership at a crucial moment, during the first year of the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration.

My short intervention will be divided into two parts, first the recent past with Marrakech and the adoption of the Global Compact, and secondly the immediate future with the GFMD Summit in Ecuador.

Let's start with Marrakech. There, civil society identified several needs, agreed on a number of [commitments](#), which, taken together, represent our common vision, and indeed decided on concrete and immediate actions, we would like to move forward with in 2019. As you can already see, Marrakech was not about the past. Interestingly, civil society in Marrakech talked very little about the Global Compact negotiations and what was achieved in New York, but spontaneously agreed to focus on implementation. We were not in a stoke taking mood, but resolutely forward looking and united in our determination to turn the Compact into a living document, prioritizing implementation at the national and local level. The bottom line is that civil society in Marrakech was incredibly energetic, motivated and constructive. Our underlying message was straightforward and simple: let's work together! Let's engage all governments, including governments withdrawing from the Compact, though we would remain critical and not compromise on international standards. I am not going to read you or summarize our [report](#), since the Support Unit has just shared it with you. This gives me the opportunity to express our gratitude to the Support Unit, Estrella and her team, who have been such dedicated and professional partners for civil society.

We will now be focusing on the 2019 GFMD Summit. We have done our homework and read carefully the draft Concept Paper prepared by the Ecuadorian Chair. We will send more details comments in writing, but we need broader civil society consultations before finalizing those comments. So, what I am going to say now are just initial and preliminary remarks. We can already say that the document is principled, has a rights-based approach and identify key priorities, which largely coincide with our own civil society priorities. We particularly appreciate the recognition of the centrality of migrants as agents of positive change and development and - of course - that both Compacts must be seen as complementing each other. A few essential needs are also highlighted, such as the necessity to have a stronger evidence base, and the responsibility of governments to explain their policies to the public. The strong reference to the SDG's and the emphasis on the fact that the GFMD is not only about migration but also development, are important benchmarks. Finally, we very much welcome the political will to strengthen the dialogue among all stakeholders.

Regarding the three substantive priorities, the second theme, about "migration narratives and communication", is, in our view, both central and fundamental, since losing the battle against xenophobia and hatred is something none of us can afford. We particularly appreciate the sub-focus on communicating effectively with migrants, a recognition that migration is not a concept, but a reality impacting human beings, their life and their dignity. We are also pleased that the Ecuadorian Chair goes back to one of the premises and *raison d'être* of the New York Declaration, a premise that almost disappeared during the negotiations of the Global Compacts, i.e. how to provide a principled response to mixed migration flows, and how to do it, building on enhanced partnership and a better interface between both Compacts. Though important, the third substantive priority - "Addressing human mobility as part of urban and rural development strategies" - is not identified by civil society as one of the top issues for 2019, with the exception of roundtable 3.1. - "Supporting arrival cities through policy coherence and multi-stakeholder

partnerships” – which, in our view, could possibly become, rather than just a roundtable, the central thematic dialogue among the four actors of the GFMD, the governments in the driving seat, the Business Mechanism, the Mayoral Mechanism and Civil Society. I seize this opportunity to inform you that the Business Mechanism, the Mayoral Mechanism and civil society have already started consulting among themselves to ensure a better synergy and a well-coordinated contribution to the process. This is exactly the spirit of some of the proposals made in the last part of the Ecuadorian draft paper, focusing not on thematic priorities, but on procedural changes. Among many good suggestions, the reintroduction of the market place is particularly welcomed. We also believe that civil society, as well as the two other mechanisms, should be represented as observers in the Steering Group.

My last point is to highlight some of the issues that civil society would like to see prioritized and which are, in our views, insufficiently addressed in the draft concept paper. The first one is bridging the gap between regular and irregular migrants, and in particular improving access to basic services by vulnerable migrants, regardless of status. The second one is to give a proper place to climate-induced displacement. Most civil society participants in Marrakech identified this central issue, as one of the few, which should be systematically and repeatedly addressed in the GFMD. The third one is a clear focus on child protection (particularly for separated or unaccompanied minors), either as a stand-alone theme (including putting an end to child detention) or through giving it more prominence in each of the priorities identified by the Ecuadorian Chair. The fourth one would be to fully recognize the role of women as “leaders”. Our fifth and sixth priorities are already reflected in the Ecuadorian draft, but, in our view, in a too narrow and limiting manner. “Providing legal pathways” cannot be restricted to crisis situations. It should be a top priority, by itself, for the international community as a whole. This is a conversation we can no longer postpone. There is legitimacy in State willingness to combat irregular migration - though we don’t necessarily agree on the way it is done and we disagree that vulnerable migrants should be the ones to pay the price -, but that can only be done if regular migration pathways are being identified and implemented in good faith, through a multi-stakeholder approach and a honest dialogue among origin, transit and destination countries. As to “facilitating social and economic inclusion”, the theme of roundtable 1.2., here again we are talking about a central theme, the very foundation of any migration policy, and not a sub-theme of the responses provided to mixed migration flows.

Finally, I would like to conclude by expressing some very serious concern regarding the budget and donor interest. Based on realistic projections and initial informal discussions with some governments, we are currently contemplating a deficit of 150’000 US\$, the kind of deficit no NGO can afford. Almost every year since 2011, ICMC did take a certain level of financial risks. We went through difficult times and had to advance the money almost every year, but in the end we would generally have a balanced exercise, though for 2018 we may have a small deficit. We are still paying some bills, so we are not able to present yet a final financial report. The bottom line is that last year the civil society budget was absorbed by seven donors, Morocco, Switzerland, Germany, the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Bangladesh and Canada. It was great to

have such a true generosity from the seven of them, but it also shows the limits of the GFMD financial model, relying on such a very limited number of donor countries. So, in short, today, - and I am so profoundly sorry to make such a strong statement for the first time since 2011 -, we cannot offer any guarantee that the Civil Society Days will take place and that governments will be able to have a dialogue with us. It would be a major drawback. It would be sending the completely wrong message, after all the steps forward taken by the GFMD and realizing how both, governments and civil society, have benefitted from this dialogue. It would be a disastrous move, on the first year of the implementation of the Global Forum, and precisely at the moment when the Mayoral Forum becomes fully integrated and we all work together towards creating synergies and exploring possibilities to significantly reduce the costs. We are submitting to you a provisional budget, which is slightly lower than the previous ones, in spite of anticipating higher transportation costs. It is a minimum to be able to operate, but also ensure proper civil society participation, which is truly diverse, inclusive and representative. We cannot compromise on the latter. We can have a cheaper meeting, but that would mean only having Western or South American (in the latter case because of geographical proximity with Ecuador) civil society representatives, with virtually no one from Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East or African countries. That would be betraying the spirit and the wonderful legacy of the GFMD. ICMC remains fully engaged, but we do not have the financial flexibility to absorb a deficit this year. We are indeed more than happy to explore any alternative which could ensure the viability of civil society participation. We truly cherish the rich dialogue with governments, but also with the mayors and the business mechanism. The GFMD has so far offered a unique and indispensable platform where a true dialogue has taken place, where good practices have been shared and where a new era for migration governance was inaugurated. The GFMD is above all a process, which helps create an antidote to xenophobia and the degrading anti-migrant discourse. We do have a collective responsibility to ensure its viability.