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Civil Society presentation of the “Stockholm Agenda”

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Introduction

In Roman mythology there is a god named Janus with one face looking backward and another looking forward.

As the world moves from the original Millennium Development Goals to new Sustainable Development Goals, it's a good time to look backwards and forwards—and to what a difference 15 years makes.

Looking back, there has been so much achievement of the first 8 MDGs. None of them however, made any reference to migrants or migration.

But what a difference 8 years makes, among other things, since the start of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Is there a link between migration and development? That question is answered, once and for all. The latest proof: the consensus declaration that UN member states achieved at the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2013.

And what a difference 1 ½ years makes: in May 2013, the report of the UN Secretary General's “Eminent Persons Panel” on the SDGs said nothing on migrants or migration. But today, there are more than 8 direct references under the 17 goals in the outcome document of the states' Open Working Group, which the states are using as the basis for their negotiation of the new SDGs.

The negotiations and SDGs need to look forward now: to these next 15 years of goals, commitment and achievement. 15 years.

1. Civil society starting points in this:

The goals are worth it. First, for themselves, as shared global ambition and achievement. Also obviously for how development commitments and investment will go forward—on the whole planet.

Civil society always refers to *human* development: not just economic but also individual, social, political, cultural and spiritual development. People-centered, rights-based development, as also increasingly insist in positions of the African Union, the European Union, and the South American Conference on Migration, among so many others.

Indeed, for the particular place of migrants and migration in these global goals, this time *the case has been made and there is actionable consensus*: migration holds enormous positives for development. A few quick snapshots:

- of course, the *number of migrants* itself, but together with their children and grandchildren (e.g., including diaspora) is much higher
- migrant *remittances*—just officially recorded as ½ a trillion US dollars per year, and to developing countries, more than three times Official Development Assistance).
 - What are remittances used for? Classic human and economic development expenses, at household level: to fight poverty; for food, health, education, housing and some investment. *These are MDG goals.*
 - Sometimes too much is made of remittances that migrants send “home”, because that is only one side of the “coin”: Migrant *savings and spending* in the countries where they reside is 4 times that—contributing to significant human and economic development there, too. This is an under-reported and undervalued aspect of migrant development.
- migrant *labour = essential workers*. Workers making a straight-line contribution to development of all kinds. It would be interesting to ask governments in the room to raise your hands where your own country’s labour market, economy as a whole or whole sectors of it, including universities, rely on foreigners all skills levels?
- migrant *business and job creation*: The *Financial Times* has reported that migrants have created 1 in 7 of the businesses in the United Kingdom, and a similar proportion in the United States. Again, contributing straight-line to development of all kinds.
- The phenomenal *rise of diaspora* and two-country investments all kinds
- The inexorable converging of virtually *all states as countries of immigration, emigration, transit, return and diaspora*

Fair, clear and measurable goals and commitments can make this even more “overwhelmingly positive” (as IOM Director General William Swing puts it) for migrants and their countries—provided that they also address tremendous negatives of brain drain, family breakup, unsafe migration, discrimination and xenophobia.

As co-actor and co-responsible, representatives of Civil society organizations active in migration and development—half of us migrants and diaspora ourselves—came together on one set of goals, and targets to take forward the impact of migrants and migration on development, and vice versa. The focus of our work was to set goals and targets for our own activity, as well as by and with governments, and to set a vision not just for the global development agenda but very much for national development agendas too.

2. Civil society “Stockholm Agenda”: Migrants and migration in Global and National development agendas

41 civil society organizations around the world came together on this, mostly NGOs, migrant and diaspora groups, faith-based, labour and development organizations, at national and regional as well as international levels. A 6-month drafting process culminated in more than 20 hours of discussion and refinement during the Civil Society Days of the GFMD and parallel civil society processes in Stockholm last May.

The “Stockholm Agenda” is just one page, back and front (copies on side table.). 311 organizations have signed it to date, and have been taking it to their governments at home and in regional and global meetings since.

The Stockholm Agenda drew from four principal references:

- Civil society’s work and recommendations over recent years in the GFMD, the World Social Forum on Migration and other international and regional processes
- the Dhaka process and Declaration on “Population Dynamics and the SDGs” from 2013-2014
- the work of Peter Sutherland’s office, namely a small, informal “think tank” of governments, agencies, and civil society organizations convened by Gregory Maniatis
- early work of OWG and other SDG processes

A quick look at the Stockholm Agenda:

- The Stockholm Agenda groups migrant and migration-related development targets under 9 Goals: 8 like the MDGs, plus 1 distinctly mobility-related
- *the first 8* are development targets where migrants and migration fit under MDG-like goals as first articulated by the “Eminent Persons Panel” , and now very much also by the OWG:
 - jobs
 - ending poverty
 - empowering girls and women
 - education
 - health
 - good governance
 - stable and peaceful societies
 - enabling environment and new partnerships
- *the 9th and last goal* groups a set of distinct development targets that we thought fit together as mobility-related targets:
 - preventing and addressing human *trafficking* and violence against migrants in transit
 - improving *systemic responses to forced migration*, including migrants uprooted by crisis and climate change
 - facilitating *safe, orderly, and regular migration* through enhanced international cooperation
 - reducing inefficiencies that generate large numbers of *migrants lacking proper documentation*

3. So how did we do—how does Civil society’s Stockholm Agenda compare to the OWG’s 17 goals?

Having spoken about the OWG document with a number of Civil society organizations that signed the Stockholm Agenda ((though not all 311), let me first report that many are broadly pleased with the number and quality of the OWG’s references to migrants and migration, with rights at the center, though there are several things *not* in the OWG that should be.

What is in the OWG from the Stockholm Agenda?

- *Explicitly*, the *OWG* includes two top Stockholm Agenda priorities and three other significant emphases:
 - *Decent work and social protection*, at home as well as abroad: Goal 8 on Decent Work, and specifically target 8.8, explicitly apply to migrant workers, and among them, explicitly women migrant workers. Such specification is essential in this goal and target!
 - *Safe, legal and regular migration*: Goal 10, target 7
 - reducing human *trafficking*: Goals 5 & 16 (oddly, two targets and referring only to women and children)
 - reducing *remittance transfer costs*: Goal 10c
 - *data disaggregation*: Goal 17 on global partnership
- The OWG also *implicitly* includes many other Civil society targets of the Stockholm Agenda under other OWG Goals (e.g., girls and women, education, health, etc.), by framing the goals as applying “*for all*”: words that the OWG preamble language *explicitly* defines to include migrants. In this regard, it will be important to ensure that clear indicators under these targets make their application to migrants a reality.

Among Stockholm Agenda targets that are not reflected in the OWG, several stand out either to be added to the OWG targets or included within specific indicators under the targets:

- *portability* of social security, pensions and skills (including recognition of qualifications): which logically fit under Goal 1 (ending poverty in all its forms) or 8 (employment and decent work)
- explicit mention of *refugees and displaced persons* (as noted by the UN Secretary general's *Synthesis Report* in November), possibly under Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies
- a greater connecting and integration of *human rights* across all of the Goals and targets, which provides coherence to all the SDGs. The Synthesis Report is quite solid on this point.

4. Final thoughts

If you would allow me some final impressions.

- 17, the number of OWG goals, is an “OK number” of goals. Looking back at the original, “just” 8 MDGs, rising to 17 this second time around can be seen as a sign of success, a vote of approval of the approach, enthusiasm! Nor is the higher number surprising, if this time aspires to go more fully global, and not so much narrowed to developing countries only. Rather, the more important question may be: which targets and indicators will meaningfully lead to achieving the goals?
- Consideration should be given to using the Secretary General's Synthesis Report for the SDG Preamble, and possibly the SDG political declaration that states are expected to issue.
- Regarding indicators:
 - to reiterate: clear indicators are especially important where goals and targets are highly relevant to migrants but do not explicitly mention migrants.
 - Civil society must be involved in creating, measuring and monitoring the indicators, and as practitioners, not just academics. This is crucial when speaking of “anything migrant”: where Civil society has trust, access and presence in migrant life and communities (in many cases, it's who we are) as well as expertise
 - Beware the blind “data veto” which says, “if the data does not already exist today, then there can be no indicator.” Of course data—and even existing data and mechanisms—are important, but some forms of data or related mechanisms may need to be created, as in the “dollar-a-day” data and measuring under the original MDGs, which was created along the way. This is particularly important on targets involving migration, as it is a field new to these goals and evolving in its own data collection and coherence. Goal 17 on data dis-aggregation will help enormously at this.
- Implementation. Reflection is needed on the difference between—and the actors in—“measuring” vs. “monitoring” achievement of the SDGs. The proposal for the GFMD itself to take on some or a large part of that role is interesting, but also would be quite a jump, given its broader agenda, limited capacity and mandate, and fragmenting of civil society-state collaboration.

But much is possible over 15 years. With the case so clearly made for migrants and migration in the new SDGs, we look forward to their negotiation and the Summit to adopt them at the UN General Assembly in September.

/Thank you.