



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Ms. Louise Arbour

**Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International
Migration
Opening Plenary of the GFMD**

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Dear Excellencies, colleagues and friends,

The GFMD has been a driving force in setting the international migration agenda for more than a decade, so I consider it a great honor to join you. In my role as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration it is my responsibility to serve as the link between this group and the United Nations, so I am looking forward to the substantive conversations we will have over the coming days.

I would, from the outset, like to pay tribute to the work of the previous Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, Peter Sutherland. It was in this forum that he mobilized your expertise and commitment, from which we will continue to draw as we move forward in this new chapter of our journey towards a Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

This journey is now well on its way. We are now halfway through the six thematic sessions of the global compact process.

Allow me to share some of my observations from the process thus far.

First, the global compact presents us with an opportunity towards facilitating regular and legal pathways for migration, not restricting them.

These pathways could be expanded through some combination of increased opportunities for family reunification, study, humanitarian

considerations and access to work at all skills levels, including through cyclical, temporary or permanent migration schemes. The facilitation of regular and legal pathways for migration should be combined with robust social inclusion programmes that focus on benefitting all members of the community, and not encourage -- even unintentionally -- any discord between newcomers and hosts.

Safe, orderly and regular migration also signifies states' ability to identify and prioritize who should enter their countries, for what purpose and for how long. Return and readmission programmes are necessary elements in this regard. They should be carried out in a dignified manner, with respect for human rights, and within a collaborative framework between states.

A successful compact, with real deliverables, will address the number of security, development and human rights concerns regarding migration. Failure, on the other hand, would leave us unequipped to harvest the immense potential of migration. Worse still, the negative impact of irregular migration – both human and societal – would develop roots which would become ever harder to eradicate.

Second, we need to make clear that **migration has an overwhelmingly positive economic, social and cultural impact on countries of origin and destination.**

This calls into question why so much of the narrative around this phenomenon is in fact negative, just as it compels us to acknowledge the concerns of those who are sceptical or even hostile to the changes brought by newcomers. It is by recognizing and addressing effectively these concerns that we will succeed in reversing the narrative, a reversal I consider to be essential to the success of this endeavour.

Third, and perhaps most important for this group, the success of the global compact will depend on effective international cooperation and political leadership.

We should give priority to the issues that virtually all stakeholders view

as the most critical and realistically achievable, and we should all aim for the highest common denominator. Negotiating a successful global compact will take leadership – your leadership – and a willingness to compromise.

In the process leading to the global compact, we must resist the temptation to reinvent the wheel. The UN Charter, the international human rights framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provide the framework into which a Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration can find its natural home.

To conclude, I hope this Global Forum will inspire us to invest our energies in solutions and seize the opportunity Global Compact represents

Thank you.