

Excellencies. Fellow panelists. Ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to thank our Moroccan hosts, in particular Mr. Nadir – for inviting me to speak here today on this very historic moment,

I am here today in Marrakesh to speak on behalf of young migrants and refugees whose daily struggles remain unseen and unheard.

1 in 3 migrants is under 30.

50 million children left or have been force to leave their homes.

1 million children are currently detained because of their immigration status.

1,300 deaths of migrant children has been recorded since 2014.

It is children and young people that are most affected by migration policies and practices – regardless if they are leaving in search of safety or for better education, with their parents or alone, migrate safely or need to rely on the help of smugglers.

Migration even touches on children who never left their homes - like the 3 million children left behind by migrating parents in the Philippines.

And it also affects young people like myself – second generation migrants.

As we all know, migration is complex. There are many reasons why people leave, many ways that people migrate. And migration affects us differently depending on our age, our gender, and where we come from.

We need to challenge ourselves not only to look at the impact of our actions, but to also consider the costs of 'inaction'.

For example, by failing to reduce the costs of sending remittances home – we waste 1 billion US dollars that could be spent on education.

By failing to act now to address climate change – we risk the lives of 140 million people who will be displaced by its effects by 2050.

So, while I am one of those your migrant, I am lucky to be privileged.

I am half German and half Lebanese. I was raised bilingually and was lucky to go to international schools in Egypt and Germany.

While I feel at home in two cultures and two religions, I never felt fully accepted in both cultures. I never forget what my father told me: *'You have to be twice as good, three times as good, if you are a migrant and want to succeed.'* Looking back, I know, he was right.

To be taken seriously and to be heard, migrant children and youth often need to be twice as good, twice as smart and twice as loud.

So, what can – and must – be done?

First, we must accept that there is not one 'solution' for migration. Migration is here to stay. It is inevitable.

Second, we must work at many levels at the same time – local, national and global. We must stop working as separate entities and should work together.

By "we", I mean young people and adults. Host communities and migrants. Professionals and the general public. Sharing our stories, ideas and knowledge.

But our migration policies must also be flexible and tailored to individual needs. While we are all humans, we have diverse needs, dreams, hopes and talents.

Children are vulnerable. They are not just small adults. They require special support and care. Many migrant children suffer from depressions and anxiety disorders because of the traumas of their journeys. Children who miss out on education or whose school degrees are not recognized face additional burdens to integrate in their host communities.

But we should not underestimate the potential of young migrants. Children are strong and resilient. With the right support and in the right environments, they have immense potential to drive change.

That is why young migrants must be given the possibility to speak up and play an active role in our societies. Young people are creative and often have a fresh and hopeful look on the world.

We must change the narrative. Instead of always talking about migration as a 'burden', a 'problem', we must do more to maximize the potential benefits of migration.

But most importantly, we must start reaching out to those that do not share our ideas and visions. We need to talk to those that fear migration. Instead of judging them, we must include them in our discussion even if it is hard.

Change starts when we talk to each other. Learn to understand each other. Person to person, city to city, nation to nation, without labels or prejudice.

Lastly, we need to understand the root causes of migration and address these too. As a medical student I know - prevention is better, cheaper and more durable than mending someone in the emergency room.

Six months ago, young people were for the first time the focus and center of a dedicated GFMD workshop.

Back in June in Agadir, I was one of 13 youth delegates from 10 countries invited by the German and Moroccan Co-Chairs of the GFMD and UNICEF to discuss solutions on how to make migration safe and empowering for all.

While our personal migration stories differed – some of us being second generation migrants while others had to flee their countries, we shared a common vision about what we wanted to tell decision makers:

Involve us. Nothing about us, without us.

And here is the good news – **there are some concrete steps you can take to partner with us on an equal level. Eye to eye.**

First, the incoming chair of the GFMD can make child and youth participation ‘the new normal’. By offering us a seat at the table – alongside member states, mayors, the private sector and civil society partners.

Second, member states must invest in better data, both quantitative and qualitative data. Don’t make assumptions about what we need and what we want. If you care – make us visible. Because what is not counted, often doesn’t count.

Third, six months from now – let us meet again to take stock together of progress in implementing the GCM, and hold ourselves to account.

All over the world, young migrants and refugees are stepping up to take the lead in their communities. We know that while there are borders drawn on maps, there are no borders in our hearts.

With a seat at the table, we can help you build a better future and make migration safe and positive for all. Because migration policies that work for youth, and children, work for all.

Thank you,