

## UNICEF Closing Speech, GFMD, December 7<sup>th</sup> 2018

### Laurence Chandy, Director of Data, Research and Policy (DRP)

- Acknowledged the role of the co-chairs in having children's rights fully reflected in the GCM, including giving voice/ensuring participation throughout the process, from the thematic workshop with youth held in Agadir in Jun 2018, to enabling Yasmin to speak as our youth advocate.
- There are important changes in the way we think about migration and this is part of a broader transition in the last couple of years. We see children in migration discussions move from either altogether invisible, or seen as danger, to innocent - recognizing that a child is a child – and vulnerable – that *when migration is poorly managed*, children are most at risk to exploitation/harm. The challenge in 2019 is to make the next transition from vulnerable to potential. That *when migration is well managed*, children are recognized as ripe targets for investment, both to support successful integration (as we heard from OECD) and through their human capital, to drive development, just as 130 of Fortune 500 companies were founded by children of migrants. Child migrants need to move from being perceived as danger - to vulnerable - to potential.
- GFMD's strength was exhibited over the last 3 days – as place for learning, exchange, solutions. Seen in meetings, such as Mexico's concrete examples of piloting and developing infrastructure for alternatives for detention to work towards ending child immigration detention; also seen in bilaterals, e.g. Thailand – there is an eagerness to solve and a willingness to share.
- Challenge is for learning/exchange to help us shift from pilots and evidence to policy change, scale, replication, investments. That is what success of the GCM ultimately hinges on: when such efforts add up to move numbers at global level, or change norms.
- We would like to specifically highlight 3 areas where we want to see this change:
  1. Working towards ending child immigration detention: Alternatives to detention need to be identified and pursued so that >100 countries who currently detain children diminishes.
  2. Access to public services needs to become no different for migrant as non-migrant children, so we can stop counting the difference.
  3. On cross-border cooperation and returns, we need to establish standards specifically for children. The aim needs to be that the same care, thought and lessons that are applied to integration are also applied to reintegration.
- For Ecuador, as the in-coming co-chair, we commend you as a pioneer on children. Ecuador's Human Mobility Act shows their strong commitment to the rights of migrant children within their own country. We trust that Ecuador will keep children on the GFMD's agenda, and build on opportunities to hear from children directly.

- This afternoon UNICEF released results of a youth poll capturing the voices of 4000 young migrants and refugees. It shows how migration is a lonely, isolating experience: no help, no doctor, missed schooling.
- We would like to propose a provocative idea: just as we have mechanisms for cities and private sector to engage with the GFMD, maybe it is time for a youth mechanism? It is an opportunity to look at youth engagement not just as a way to ensure their voices are heard, but as they are among those most affected by migration, to deliver on the accountability that we are all calling for.