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Panel Session - Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration -- From Process to Substance

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I am honoured to be part of this esteemed panel on the ‘Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration -- From Process to Substance’. The journey from process to substance is one that has occupied my mind over the past year. We are in a period of transition, transitioning from goal setting to implementation. But history will not remember the New York Declaration, the Paris Agreement or Agenda 2030 if we fail to follow through on these processes. The judgement of future generations will centre on the manner and seriousness with which we undertook the implementation of these agreements. The time for celebration has now past and the time for work and action is upon us.

Last month, Ambassador William Lacy Swing made a speech as part of an event organised by the Global Forum on Migration and Development in which he indicated that he saw three ‘Cs’ being central to the efforts to develop the Global Compact. Those were

that it be; Comprehensive, Coherent and Cooperative. I think the approach is a good one, and I would encourage you to read his speech from that session.

Today I would like to take one of those elements, the element of ‘coherence’ and explore it in a little more depth. In October I chaired a Panel on ‘human rights, migration, and displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change’ at an Expert Meeting organised by the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The panel and subsequent discussion session brought together actors from a wide array of different organisations currently working on climate displacement, including diverse representatives from international organisations, such as the IOM, from Civil Society as well as non-UN multilateral processes and party delegates to the UNFCCC.

The most striking refrain I heard on that day was the need to eliminate silos. Not just in international processes and organisations, but within civil society and national Governments.

Silos aren’t something new, but they are an increasing risk to the manner in which we undertake our work. It is easy to see the world as lurching from crisis to crisis. We see major movement of people across the globe, driven by war, economic disparity and the ravages of a changing climate exacerbating already over-taxed resources. At the same time there appears to be a reduction in the faith in multilateralism, increasing rifts in global

communities and distrust in processes that have been proven, if flawed, arbiters of peace and security.

But there is reason to hope. We already have the tools for coherence, it is up to countries to marshal these. IOM has led the way in this with its long history of close collaboration with the UN Family, and through taking the significant step this year of joining that community. I was also pleased to endorse the Atlas of Environmental Migration, which the Director General has presented at this session of the Council which brings together many of the elements of coherence I will be noting today. These are the clear and identifiable links between Agenda 2030, the UNFCCC process and the Global Compact, and how they are all underpinned by human rights.

Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals are clear that the goals and their means of implementation are universal, indivisible and interlinked. Sustainable Development Goal 10.7 is to *‘facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people , including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies’*. The Global Compact for Migration will clearly play a central role in the implementation of this goal. As such it behoves all countries involved to ensure that this implementation addresses not only the immediate needs of migrants and the impacts and drivers of migration of the present, but that it also builds solutions and

creates pathways for the migration that will be experienced by future generations.

We know that climate change will be a significant driver of migration in the years to come.

Some months ago I was in Honduras as part of my role as the Secretary General's Special Envoy on El Nino and Climate Change. While there, I travelled to a rural community and spoke to a woman who told me about the struggles she faced. 'We don't have any water' she told me, 'how can we live without water?'

The answer here is simple. She cannot. The solution is as simple, we must find a way to ensure she has access to water. We have two responsibilities in this regard, the first is to act on climate change to reduce the impact it is having on people like her and their access to the fundamental building blocks of life and livelihoods. But we also have to ensure there are pathways available for her to leave and secure a new life if the water does not return. This is a response of last resort, but one that must be provided for and guided with a full respect for her human rights.

From her perspective these are obvious obligations we hold, but looking at the international landscape the way forward can feel more muddied. The basic rights of those displaced by climate change must be recognised and protected. This will be a central test of the Global Compact, and whether it is a compact for the future or one trapped in the news cycles of today.

The Compact must recognise that at its core, climate displacement is an issue of justice, and that migrants moving as a result of the impacts of climate change, or of related issues exacerbated by climate, will - in large part - represent the most vulnerable in our society, and the least responsible for the causes of climate change.

I cannot stress this enough.

People displaced by climate change will represent the ‘furthest behind’ that we have committed to reaching first under Agenda 2030. Each person displaced in this way will represent a failure by the global community to take the action required to limit climate change and take the adaptive steps required. Without effective planning each displaced person will experience, at a minimum, a temporary denial of their basic rights guaranteed under the core human rights treaties.

To ensure cohesion the Global Compact for Migration must recognise that climate change and human rights are cross cutting issues that will be intrinsic in ensuring a fair and just approach to migration in the face of an increasing threat.

So these are the moral imperatives that have been set out before us, and the tools we can use to incorporate them into the public discourse and into policy solutions.

As this panel is about moving from process to substance, I wanted to include substantive proposals here.

Firstly; the Compact should recognise the intrinsic link between climate change and migration. Including climate change as a key driver of migration, now and in the future, and noting that the most effective way to limit its impacts is to achieve the 1.5 degree goal set out in the Paris Agreement, which came into force last month.

Secondly; noting that all migrants are covered by human rights, and that people displaced by climate change may need differing rights protections from other migrants. For example, with whole communities – and in some cases countries - threatened with displacement and the need to migrate, we must consider the need to protect their cultural heritage and self-determination. This is central to allowing for migration with dignity. It is by ensuring the voices of the marginalised are heard that we can best understand their needs and the responses we must undertake to assist them.

Finally the Compact must note and engage its place within Agenda 2030, and in so doing recognise that responsible and orderly migration is a central component to reducing inequalities and achieving sustainable development, and that it is indivisible from the wider goals, including combating climate change.

Ensuring these elements are included will build a Global Compact that is compatible with the principles of climate justice and that delivers a fairer world for current and future generations.

Let me return, briefly, to the panel I chaired on climate displacement. I noted previously that siloing was an issue that concerned a number of the experts there. But perhaps the recommendation that resonated most strongly with me was to establish mechanisms for impacted people to participate in relevant decision-making. This is a key element to any international process to ensure success, and delivery of results that are people centred. We already see the impacts of dictating policy without listening around the world. We see it in climate action that doesn't respect the basic property rights of indigenous people, driving them from their land. We see it in the social policies that are failing marginalised and vulnerable groups around the world.

We have started a *process* toward a Global Compact for Migration, if we want to ensure that the *substance* of the compact respects human rights, delivers action that is responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable and reaches the furthest behind first, then we need to have them in the room. Not protesting outside, not watching as their crops wilt while we speak, but present and engaged. Telling us their stories and their needs and ensuring that they not us - not an international bureaucracy, and not a self-serving nationalist or populist agenda - are at the centre of the response to migration today and in the future.

It was the great suffering of the Second World War that gave birth to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Refugee

Convention and the IOM. At that time the world came together in the face of terrible degradations to the human spirit and created something that showed we could do better.

It is now our turn to undertake a similar journey. To develop new pathways for the thousands of people on the move now and in the future, fleeing war, poverty and environmental degradation. The full weight of history is on our shoulders and the gaze of the future is on our actions. I urge everyone to remember that we are engaged in the protection of the core principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the ‘recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.’ We must not fail.