

**Going in the Right Direction**  
IOM and the Global Compact on Migration

Statement of the International Catholic Migration Commission  
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Mr. Chair, Mr. Director General, and partners,

More than most, migrants and refugees often stake their lives on trying to figure out how to go in the right direction. Millions depend on agencies of the UN going in the right direction.

And we are impressed with how much IOM *is* going in the right direction these days.

We would even say, going in the “best” direction on a number of journeys in the last couple of years. We know this because we and our own members around the world partner with you and your Member States directly in all of this, not just in meeting rooms but on the ground.

To name a few:

- IOM’s work on direct assistance and evacuation and on guidelines and practices to help and protect migrants trapped in countries in conflict or disaster situations.
- IOM’s work on identification and protection of other migrants who are “*inherently vulnerable*”, especially children, as Louise Arbour, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative on International Migration (SRSG) said in the opening panel this week; migrants who are in vulnerable situations, including millions *forced to migrate even if they are not refugees* and others brutalized in gauntlet migration.
- Reform of migrant workers recruitment practices that are no less than “human fracking”: strong programmes on migrant and refugee health, on welcome and integration of migrants and refugees, and on protection of migrant workers, members of their families and social cohesion under the important UN Migrant Workers Convention.

All of this is strongly endorsed in the landmark report written by former SRSG Peter Sutherland (who was also President of ICMC.) All of it belongs in the new Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration—covering refugees as well as other migrants.

Joining the UN last year both reflected and further propelled IOM’s work in the right direction: it helped fill an important gap, with great ability, energy and promise, directly at the UN table.

A key part of these “right directions”—for IOM and for both Compacts being developed—is *how* IOM has been doing this work. As you repeatedly emphasize Mr. Director General, IOM does this work best in support of States’ efforts, but always multi-actor: together with other international and regional agencies who can work at the same level of concern and speed, with civil society—and in increasingly smart engagement with the private sector, migrants and diaspora groups, and local authorities. That States-and-multi-actor-reflex is your key to it all, your “best direction”.

But not all is yet where it needs to be. So many migrants and refugees stake their lives on trying to find the right direction often struggling and suffering terribly against all odds and kinds of abuses. Increasingly harsh policies blocking even those fleeing for their lives categorically violate international law which prohibits *non-refoulement*. Many, even children, are pushed back into countries at war, to Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan or struggling with generalized and sometimes targeted violence, as in the Northern Triangle in Central America and parts of Southeast Asia. Some countries move or constrain them to camps that objective observers describe as squalid and prison-like, off Australia, in Greece and parts of North Africa.

Indeed the “right direction” is also the *rights* direction—fully—for the sake of migrants of all kinds, their families and all of society.

**Turning to both Global Compacts being developed, may we ask you, Mr. Director General, how you see the three “R”s of *refoulement*, return and regularization?**

**Return:** As we see it, among the many evidence-based and wise recommendations in the Sutherland Report, # 7 observes that how return is being done today is neither good for migrants nor for States. It is time for straight dialogue on principles and practices on return, including practical readmission and reintegration, and looking at experience and data on returnees simply re-migrating. This, too belongs in the Compact, and IOM should take this up immediately.

**Regularization** is one of the world’s “best kept secrets”. Given how many programmes exist already, it may be *the* most under-rated solution to all sorts of migration, labour and integration challenges. It’s time to expand regularization programmes that exist for migrants—often “below the radar”: programmes that successfully regularize migrants and refugees whose lives, family unity or recovery from human trafficking and other brutality depend on it, and fill jobs with workers in countries *that structurally need them*: regularization that is permanent where possible, temporary only if decent.

**Orderly departure and humanitarian corridors.** An emergency is an emergency. Other words have been used to describe the situation and movement of large numbers of people displaced by war, in the Middle East, in particular. But whose “crisis” is it? Theirs. Moreover, it’s compounded when there is nothing but chaos available for their movement. Yet so many alternative mechanisms exist: most recently, in the humanitarian corridors in Italy, France and Belgium. But these need to be scaled way up. How? With cooperation: even voluntary cooperation among States and other actors, as was the case a generation ago, when 70 countries, UNHCR, IOM and other actors including ICMC came together in orderly departure programmes, resettlement, family reunification and labour migration that helped more than 2 million people move safely to new lives in new countries.

**Other mechanisms for safe, orderly and legal pathways that should be expanded include private sponsorship, family re-unification and labour migration.** IOM, you have been saying this for years, so have leading civil society actors across the board. Once again, practical mechanisms exist—most notably in Canada, and are multiplying, though slowly, in Australia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. In fact, it seems clear that States are near a tipping point of convergence toward carefully expanding these concrete, structured forms of entry to better match reality, especially in response to the mutual need of those looking for work (including refugees) and countries needing workers. We have also been struck by the rising convergence among States saying: no strategy to reduce human trafficking and brutal migrant smuggling will work unless safe and ordered channels exist that allow people needing to migrate to do so, especially so that they can save their lives and support or unite their families.

**Inclusion and integration.** Integration starts with how migrants are actually admitted, from pre-departure orientation and language training to immigration law services, skills recognition and matching, job counseling and placement. Work and family unity are key here; so is collaboration with migrant and diaspora associations, and faith-based and other civil society organizations who are present and trusted in the community, by migrants as well as local, district and national governments.

**Governance.** *Of course*, IOM is the leading global agency on migration. You have been for years! So of course IOM has a central role in complementary governance of migration. As Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly said in the opening panel this week, governance must always be people-centered and rights-based. And we would add: diligently ordered to the common good of *all* in society.

**Mr. Director General: a last question to you:** what do you recommend for *new* elements of governance, not only in implementation of the new Compact but in migration in general these next 5 years?

All of this, too, belongs in the new Compact on Migration, in fact across both Compacts. Together with 180 civil society partners, we have consolidated these priorities in a unified civil society document entitled *Now and How: TEN ACTS for the Global Compact*. The *TEN ACTS* reflect the thinking from over a thousand hours and civil society partners around the world, participating in global and regional processes specifically on the Compacts since December. [*Copies are available on the table outside the hall, and in English, French and Spanish at [www.madenetwork.org](http://www.madenetwork.org). Arabic, Chinese and Russian translations will be available next week.*]

Many of us all are going in these same directions with you. The right direction—the *rights* direction—to concrete solutions is essential in IOM’s work and the Compacts because so *many* lives—and societies-- depend on it.

*/Thank you.*

The International Catholic Migration Commission is a Catholic Church-inspired, international non- governmental organization which protects and serves uprooted people, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, victims of human trafficking, and migrants, regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or nationality.

Founded in 1951 by Pope Pius XII, ICMC facilitates a network of national Catholic Bishops Conferences and other Catholic-inspired institutions worldwide. Headquartered in Geneva, ICMC has staff and programs in more than 50 countries, affiliated offices in Brussels, Washington DC and Boston, and operational offices in Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey.

In Syria, ICMC provides lifesaving assistance to internally displaced Syrians, as well as vulnerable Iraqis. In Jordan, ICMC delivers humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and Jordanian host communities. In Greece, ICMC works with the UNHCR to provide help to incoming refugees and migrants and to support the Greek government in its asylum reform. With funding from the US State Department, ICMC runs the Resettlement Support Center for Turkey and the Middle East, processing the application of refugees referred by UNHCR for resettlement to the US. ICMC also works with UNHCR on a separate program to deploy resettlement experts worldwide. In 2016, ICMC deployed 210 experts to 63 UNHCR offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America.

Since 2011, ICMC has served as international coordinator of civil society activities in the Global Forum on Migration and Development since 2011, and in similar functions towards the UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013 and the UN High-level Summit on Refugees and Migrants in 2016. ICMC initiated and is co-convenor of the civil society Action Committee, which brings together 24 leading refugee protection and migrant rights NGOs from around the world for joint follow-up to the 2016 Summit’s *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*