***REMARKS***

***Migration and Integration: Migration with a Human Face***

**WILLIAM LACY SWING**

**Director General, International Organization for Migration**

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Vice-Ministers of Foreign Affairs;

Vice-Ministers of Interior and Migration Directors;

Excellencies and distinguished representatives:

It is an honor for me to be here with you at the “Regional Conference of Migration”. Let me start by thanking the Costa Rican Chair for organizing this important event as well as the Government of Costa Rica and all our “Tico” friends for so warmly welcoming us in your marvelous country.

Migration is a “mega-trend” of the 21st Century. Canada and the US alone host around 50 million migrants – equal to some 23% of all migrants in the world. Mesoamerica and the Caribbean host more than 2 million South-South migrants. During the past five years, over half a million migrants have returned annually to Central America and Mexico.

Drawing from IOM’s experience in supporting governments to make migration better for all, I would like to share with you three key “lessons learned” to feed our discussion: **1)** the importance of integration and reintegration measures; **2)** the achievements regional cooperation has fostered so far; **3)** the opportunity for RCPs to influence the Second HLD by advancing region-specific approaches to migration challenges in the global migration governance.

**1- Importance of integration and reintegration measures**

Migrants and returnees require specific policies to empower them in becoming agents of their own development as well as the region’s development. Vulnerable groups all require dedicated integration and reintegration policies, particularly unaccompanied children, the elderly, indigenous people, the disabled and victims of abuses and crimes such as human trafficking.

The first step for good integration and reintegration is accurate data on migrant flows and vulnerabilities in host, transit, and home communities. A clear and comprehensive understanding of migration realities is crucial and must be seen as a basis for targeted, appropriate and effective migration policies. This is particularly relevant in a region with such massive migration flows, and where the communities that migrants move through are often very vulnerable.

The most vulnerable migrants do not have the resources to integrate or re-integrate unassisted: they need protection and support from governments through inter-ministerial polices that advance practical, durable measures to neutralize these vulnerabilities. Sustainable approaches take into account the perspective of all actors involved, including the media, civil society and the private sector of both countries of origin and destination. Furthermore, real integration, beneficial to migrants and host communities alike, is a two-way adaptive process that takes into account migrants’ voices. To this end, it is crucial to improve public perception of migration by acknowledging the important role of active partners in host and home country development. IOM’s partnership since with the UN Alliance of Civilizations’ PLURAL + has provided young filmmakers from all over the world with a platform to help us all think constructively about the social issues of migration, and to give migrants a voice in how to improve migration policies. In addition, IOM will soon be launching a public information campaign to this end, and we hope for your support.

The same need for assistance that applies to migrants also applies to many communities of origin and destination in the region – and all the more so given the ongoing economic crisis: many of these communities are poor and often highly exposed to organized crime and natural disasters, requiring durable approaches to make them sufficiently resilient to integrate or re-integrate migrants. An integration or re-integration policy must, therefore, take into account ways to address the vulnerabilities of host and local communities. A good example of this is in Chinandega, Nicaragua, where the local government created a reintegration policy that included involvement of local authorities, grass-roots organizations, and business owners who work together to provide reintegration support to returnees. This has strengthened the host community and improved reintegration support to migrants.

**2- Achievements of regional cooperation in promoting integration and reintegration**

Throughout its 17 years, this RCM has proven to be an indispensable instrument for addressing the complex issues associated with migration. The RCM was most ably represented by its Pro Tempore Presidency at the Fourth Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretariats of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration in Lima. Initiated and sustained by States who see that their interests lie in building bridges for cooperation, the RCM facilitates common understanding of bottom-up approaches for migration management policies, fundamentally changing the prospects for the realization of the positive potential of migration.

This RCM’s multi-lateral, consensus-building approach has been vital in addressing issues that would have been much more difficult to tackle on a bilateral level alone. As I said in Lima, reaching this development potential is about reducing risks and costs of migration for all involved – migrants and host communities – and doing so in a human way focused on the well-being of migrants.

The event on integration and reintegration to be held by RCM in August will provide an opportunity to further this common understanding and promote coordination at the practical level to assist returnees. IOM is pleased to support this event and looks forward to continued partnership in these efforts, which I am sure will build consensus on human rights in integration and reintegration policies.

**3- Achievements need to be integrated in HLD**

The Global RCP meeting in Lima recognized the crucial role that RCPs play in developing migration policy and disseminating good migration practices. I ask for your help in ensuring that these successes are reflected in October, when the UN General Assembly holds its second High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in New York.

The RCM in particular – composed of countries committed to sustainable development and marked by enormous migration flows and challenges – has much to contribute to the debate: your unified voice and experience will have a significant impact.

Building on the discussions initiated at the first HLD in 2006, IOM sees this second HLD in October, 2013 as an important opportunity to further improve the governance of migration. IOM hopes, of course, that you will support the integration of the following desired outcomes, and stands ready to support governments here today in their preparation for this event:

**6 policy outcomes:**

1. Improve public perceptions of migrants
2. Integrate migration into development planning
3. Protect the human rights of all migrants
4. Manage migration in crises
5. Enhance evidence-building and knowledge-based policymaking on migration
6. Promote policy coherence and institutional development

**5 institutional outcomes:**

1. Recognition of the contribution of migrants and migration to all three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)
2. Renewed commitment to the protection of the human rights of all migrants
3. Systematic inclusion of migration issues in the post-2015 UN development agenda
4. A strengthened Global Migration Group, including a more permanent IOM role to promote effectiveness and continuity
5. Due recognition of IOM’s role as the global lead agency on migration: no need for duplication through new UN agencies.

These points all support one of the central discussions of this Regional Conference: integrating migrants by putting them at the center of migration policies, and by recognizing them as active contributors to sustainable development.

IOM stands ready to support the governments of all countries in this RCM in seizing the opportunity to play a central role in the HLD and to ensure that the HLD is responsive to the importance of integration and reintegration: after all, the RCM has some of the world’s top countries of origin and destination of south-north migration flows, of south-south migration flows and of return flows.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, I hope that the States in the region strengthen their cooperation towards three goals:

**First**, help migrants and communities of origin, transit and destination to overcome their vulnerabilities.

**Second**, effectively integrate and reintegrate migrants by exchanging information and best practices; facilitating documentation for migrants and returnees; developing comparable indicators and data on return migration and integration; and sharing and facilitating technical, political and economic resources.

**Third**, engage communities in the process of migrants’ and returnees reintegration through shared and coherent messages.

The RCM has already amply demonstrated over time its ability to address such complex problems through humane solutions based on common understanding and consensus. I congratulate you on your success and look forward to your continued achievements in the interest of more effective integration and reintegration of migrants and returnees. As always, I assure you that IOM will be at your side to support your efforts.