Rapporteur report of common space session: Beyond Xenophobia and exclusion - Local partnerships and action for the social inclusion of migrants and diaspora

Moderator: Michele Levoy, Director, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
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The moderator started the discussions by recalling that the issues of xenophobia and social inclusion have not been central in the GFMD agenda so far. It can be argued that this may well be the missing link in the migration and development debate since winning the support of public opinion can go a long way to unlocking the development potential of migration.

In an increasingly globalized world, as local communities and countries move from homogeneity towards greater heterogeneity and cultural diversity, capitalizing on the energies and economic potential of a diverse workforce and society, while at the same time curling intolerance, is one of the challenges of our time.

The on-going refugee crisis has given rise to nationalist and right wing political parties in Europe and beyond. Participants recalled that negative perceptions have a direct impact on the integration of migrants, hampering their ability to become active social and development actors.

The realization of goal 16 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development..." cannot be achieved without the effective governance of diversity. We need to explore the manner in which the social contract between the state and society is negotiated in culturally diverse societies in order to design new policy options acknowledging the intrinsic value and the development potential of migrants carrying multiple identities.

The presentations and the discussions that followed can be characterized in two main threads:

1. **The importance of improving governance of increasingly diverse societies.**

This aspect came out in a prominent manner and this case was made for all levels of governance:

- Governance at the global level:

The representative of Bangladesh recalled the importance of **ensuring the coherence of migration policies with international human rights instruments which provide a robust legal basis to fight xenophobia and discrimination**. This is particularly relevant as we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of migrant workers and their family members. She also emphasized that during its up-coming chairmanship of the GFMD, Bangladesh will look at human and social rights of migration in a comprehensive manner. It is interesting also to recall the recommendation that came out

of the Civil Society Days that the GFMD establish links with relevant Special Mechanisms and Mandate Holders such as the UN Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the African Commission Special Rapporteur on Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Migrants and IDPS in order to strengthen and synthesize issues of migration and xenophobia into international processes.

- Governance at national level:

Mr. Goetz Schmidt-Bremme, Director for Legal and Consular Services including Migration, Federal Foreign Office recalled the importance of political leadership in leading societies at a time of large influxes of refugees. This cannot be a discussion dividing left and right wing parties. This is paramount as **societies have to be willing to include new comers and political leaders need to lead the way.** Germany has shown strong leadership in this arena and participants argued that progressive governments need to put pressure on less willing governments. Participants also recalled the importance for national leaders to speak the truth and to set the discussions right towards their public opinion by relaying strong anti-xenophobic statements. In addition, national legislations against xenophobia and intolerance need to be fully and actively enforced.

- Governance at local level:

Participants acknowledged that the **role of cities and local governments is paramount to the issue of management of diversity** as they are the first arrival point of migrants and are therefore pivotal to migrants' stories. A participant explained the interesting work done by the city of Turin to promote the understanding of diversity among migrants and the local population. There are many more examples of this kind and it is important to start capitalizing on the good practices developed at the local level to influence national policy making and funding in this field.

Mr. Badji Nfaly, Director, Agence Régionale de Développement de Sedhiou Santassou, Senegal shared the work carried forward by the Regional Development Agency with the support of the Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI). It works towards the inclusion of migration and development in local governance tools to create a conducive economic environment for migrants and local population at large, which has direct positive repercussions in terms of social inclusion. He also presented a number of tools and practices which have been developed to create inclusive consultation processes to bring together migrants (diaspora abroad but also economic migrants from other African countries present in Sedhiou), local authorities and the local population and he highlighted the positive impact this has in terms of the social inclusion of migrants. He also mentioned that this initiative organizes missions abroad for local authorities in the Sedhiou region to meet with their diaspora as well as build partnerships with the local authorities in the territories where their diaspora is present. This example clearly illustrated the great need to **engage with local and regional authorities in relation to social cohesion while directly activating the linkage between migration and development**.

2. **The importance of changing the narrative on migration.**

Participants emphasized the importance of conducting public engagement/public awareness campaigns to **bring a human face to the phenomenon of migration and change the social perception of migration**, which is overwhelmingly negative at this juncture. It was emphasized by Ms. Nazek Ramadan Moussa,

Executive Director of Migrant Voice, the importance of acknowledging that "everyone is talking about migration except migrants themselves". She explained that in the UK, only one article in eight related to migration actually quote a migrant. Innovative and important campaigns are on-going, such as Migrant Voices campaign; #MigrationMeans social media campaign; Migrant Heroes campaign; 'I am a Migrant' global photo campaign led by IOM. There is also increased public engagement. For instance, in the UK the newspaper 'Migrant Voices' is produced by migrants themselves.

H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) emphasized the **importance of engaging global media to curtail hate speech**. He described the innovative approaches currently conducted by UNAOC through its Hate Speech project. UNAOC conducts training and workshops for journalists and also developed a media friendly glossary. He also emphasized that local partnerships are a key element of their strategy to contribute to the social inclusion of migrants.

Working on **changing the narrative on migration also includes working on the education of the younger generations** as per the interventions made by a number of participants. Countries across the globe must incorporate national and international histories of migration into national curricula to demonstrate how the world is interconnected. Children need to be taught the history of their countries through the lens of migration.

A participant also emphasized the importance of involving social partners and to **conduct sensitization campaigns in the workplace**. This is indeed a strategic arena to facilitate social inclusion of migrants and fight xenophobia through social dialogue where employers have a key role in ensuring no discrimination work policies.

Cécile Riallant, 15th October 2015