

**Remarks by
Ms. Esen Altug at Civil Society Plenary Session “Looking Back and Moving
Forward”
(October 13 2015, 14.30)**

I would like to thank the chairs of the Civil Society Days for inviting me to take part in this plenary session. Thanks also to the rapporteurs-- it has been very valuable for us, as chair of the Global Forum, to hear the conclusions of your deliberations, and I thank you for this chance to reflect on how these ideas and proposals connect with the discussions to come in the next three days, at the Common Space and the Government Summit.

As you know, the first meeting of the GFMD took place in Brussels in 2007. From this very first meeting, civil society was a part of the GFMD, although I believe it took a few years for good communication to be established between the government and civil society meetings. The first Common Space session, with both participating as equal partners, took place in Greece in 2009, and has been a feature of the Global Forum ever since. It has been a process of trial and error in finding the right format, and I am sure it will continue to evolve. But I think we have established a valuable platform for communication that really does act as a bridge between the first two days of the Forum and the last two days. It is interesting that the *organization* of the agendas of the Civil Society and Government portions of the GFMD have diverged in recent years, but the themes that both sessions consider have come closer together in *substance*. I think we see that especially this year, when migration is near the top of the policy agenda in almost every country in one way or another, and is a priority for many non-governmental organizations—even those that have not given great priority to migration issues in the past—and of course for the civil society organizations represented here, which have vast collective experience of working with migrants and with migration issues.

I believe the Civil Society Days have led the way on a theme that will carry through the Common Space and the Government Summit in all of our discussions and in side events—and that theme is the need to take *action*. Even though the GFMD is not a body that makes binding decisions, it cannot be just about talk. The discussions that take place here, in the formal sessions and in the margins have already led to some cooperative actions, like the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative, and substantive inputs to the Sustainable Development Goals.

These will continue to be items on our action agenda. But I think there is a lot more potential for action to address the issues that concern all GFMD participants from both civil society and governments, and, increasingly I hope, for partnerships between them. This is another of the overarching themes that bridge the Civil Society Days, the Common Space and the Government Summit: the need for *partnership*. We are talking about partnerships among countries, between civil society and governments, and partnerships with the private sector. These two themes—action and partnership—need to be anchored in specific programs and lead to real outcomes that make a difference in the lives of migrants. The GFMD has pushed forward several issues that governments and civil society can continue to help translate into action. Civil society at the GFMD has long argued for expanding the idea of protecting and assisting *migrants in countries in crisis to migrants in transit*. The tragedies that we have witnessed these last two years in the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden, and the Bay of Bengal, as well as on land routes, have shown how important this is. The discussions you started in the Civil Society Days, on how to protect the rights and ensure the safety of migrants as they travel, will continue at the Common Space and the Government summit. I am sure that the participants here will come away with ideas and motivations to address this critical issue.

Another area for action in partnership that cuts across all the elements of the GFMD is the imperative to *lower the human and the financial costs of migration*. I think we have made progress on these issues too, in partnership with the international organizations like the World Bank, and both taking up and handing over to discussions in other venues—especially the G20 which took up the need to *reduce remittance costs* several years ago, and which Turkey is also chairing this year. Several ideas for *ethical recruitment of migrant labor* have been developed, partly at the GFMD. By its very nature, ethical recruitment requires partnership—among countries of origin, countries of destination; among social partners, middlemen, and migrants themselves. Progress on recruitment has the potential to reduce both human and financial costs for migrants.

I think many of us attending the GFMD in 2015, from civil society, governments and international organizations, have a sense that something important was achieved in getting several targets specifically on migration included in the *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda*. Now the big challenge is *implementation*, and that is a recurring call to action throughout this Global Forum. It will require a high level of cooperation to develop indicators at the national and local levels that are consistent with the global targets.

Finally, I want to mention another bridge between the Civil Society Days, the Common Space and the Government Summit. I think the subject of *forced migration* must be very much on everyone's mind, especially since we are meeting here in Turkey, where at least two million people have fled from the wars in Syria and Iraq. There is a very serious failure of international partnership to provide protection and care for these people, and to assist the countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey that are providing shelter to the great majority of them. As some of them continue their journeys toward Europe, we see that they are accompanied by refugees from other regions, and by people who are equally desperate but do not have a claim to international protection as refugees. Some new kinds of solutions must be found for these millions of people forced to leave their countries, whether by war, repression, the collapse of their livelihoods, or other factors beyond their control. These solutions must be found in the connection between migration and development, and the positive potential of human mobility: the overarching themes of this Global Forum.

We look forward, in the next three days, to continuing the work you have done yesterday and today. Speaking for the Turkish Chair, we appreciate the positive and practical spirit you have shown, and feel sure that it will lead to many positive outcomes for migrants.

Thank you.