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Kingdom of Morocco  
Parliament

# Parliamentary Meeting on occasion of the Adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco

**6 - 7 December 2018, Rabat (Morocco)**

Mr. José Ignacio Echániz, rapporteur of the conference  
Concluding remarks

Some 220 participants, primarily parliamentarians from over 50 national and regional parliaments, took part in the parliamentary conference in Rabat, which was hosted by the Moroccan Parliament and co-organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Although this statement can never do fully justice to the richness of the discussions, I will attempt to distil some of the main messages that panellists and parliamentarians have conveyed in the last two days.

1. All participants have underscored that migration is a fact of life and has always shaped the course of history of human kind. Or as one panellist put it: “People have been on the move and will be on the move, whether we want it or not.” It was however pointed out that in relative terms the level of migration had not gone up over the years, with migrants making up 3.3% of the world population.
2. It was stated that although “refugees” and “migrants” were entitled to the same human rights, “refugees” were holders of special protection under the UN Refugee Convention and its Optional Protocol. At the same time, several participants underscored that many of those who leave their country do not fall clearly into either category. In fact, migrants often moved for a combination of more and less acute reasons, making their situation fall short of a justified claim to refugee status. Yet, they were not voluntarily leaving their homes as they would have preferred to stay in their own countries. Indeed, it was often hard to tell to what degree migration was voluntary or involuntary. We therefore need to better understand these realities and adopt legal definitions that extend the protection also to migrants at special risk or in need.
3. Several participants criticised the erroneous information that circulated in the public domain in an effort to “politicise” migration flows and trends. They highlighted that the strong public focus on – what were termed - “migration crises” had completely distorted what migration was fundamentally about, namely labour mobility in the 21st century. The point was repeatedly made that we have to recognize that our economies and development significantly depend on migration and that 90 per cent of migrants are directly or indirectly bound up in employment or otherwise engaged in economic activity. Although migrant labour was much needed to keep economies afloat, in particular in the face of declining populations in some parts of the world, the policy responses were, however, going in the other direction and increasingly focused on

restrictions and controls of migrant flows. It was also pointed out that most migration is taking place within – not between - regions, contrary to what news headlines may make us believe. There were also some calls for us to move away from distinguishing between those who have and those who don't have the right to move in the belief that the ultimate goal is that everyone be allowed to move freely.

4. Several participants highlighted the humanitarian crisis that we are facing with thousands of migrants losing their lives during the journey to their final destination. It was repeatedly mentioned that all efforts should be made, by states collectively, to save lives. Reference was made to the important work of the ICRC in preventing the disappearance of migrants and in shedding light on their fate once reported missing.
5. Many participants emphasized that migration was a consequence of causal factors. Those root causes must be addressed in order to ensure that migration was voluntary and safe, and conducted in a manner, which protected the rights of migrants. Participants highlighted a range of push factors that led to migration. Particular emphasis was placed on the numerous instances of armed conflict and war across the world, which had displaced millions of people, particularly in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela. Other push factors that were mentioned included poverty, lack of decent living conditions, absence of decent work, lack of development opportunities and the destructive effects of climate change. The right “not to migrate” was mentioned as a way to enable potential migrants to choose to stay in their countries, rather than being forced to move elsewhere due to circumstances. Several African participants highlighted that with Europe turning into a fortress, it increasingly fell to northern African countries to address the situation of migrants who got stuck on their way to cross the Mediterranean. Some made the point that skilled workers in Europe were much welcomed, but that this was not the case for unskilled workers and that more state solidarity was needed. In fact, the need for more solidarity and shared responsibilities between and within regions was emphasized throughout the conference. Participants agreed that material and financial support for development, increased investment and regional economic integration would be essential, making particular reference to the African continent, to resolving the pressures that pushed, if not forced, people to leave their countries of origin. Particular reference was also made to the importance of fully implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a viable long-term strategic approach to the issue.
6. Participants discussed the key push and pull factors leading to migration, namely education and training, the lack of which resulted in the marginalization, exclusion and alienation of many working-age people, especially young people, in countries of origin and destination. Participants recognized that improved access to education, training and continuous development would be crucial to tackling the increasing global shortages of people with tertiary-level qualifications and necessary vocational and technical skills, which, if not addressed, would threaten economies and societies and lead to a loss of talent and education resources, or “brain-drain”, particularly in less developed countries.
7. Some participants mentioned tension between the recognized need for accessible, legal and regular migration channels and the calls for effective migration control and restriction of movement, specifically irregular migration. Some solutions proposed included enhancing regular migration channels to prevent recourse to smuggling and strengthening efforts to combat organized trafficking operations and criminal groups. Participants called for increased international cooperation among countries and between regions in the fight against trafficking and smuggling.
8. Hostile media attention, hardening public attitudes and negative discourse directed towards migrants and refugees by political leaders were topics of grave concern at the conference. Participants called for assertive political leadership with a focus on the positive aspects of migration, and fact-based discourse by parliamentarians, government officials, business leaders, the media and other stakeholders. It was suggested that parliaments introduce concerted national programmes of action and strengthen domestic legislation against racism and xenophobia and in favour of non-discrimination and equality. Efforts should also be made to facilitate contact and engagement among migrants and host communities. It was considered crucial to put in place effective policies to ease the integration of migrants and

highlight their positive contributions. It was also pointed out that, although migration was a source of development, it was also a source of fierce debate in some national parliaments and that parliamentarians should not be blind to the fears of their people, such as in the case of low income workers fearing the competition of cheap labour or older people fearing increased rates of criminality. Similarly, it was pointed out that local populations bore the brunt of changing demographics and that it was largely the poor who were receiving the poor. Sudden significant peaks of migration could pose serious absorption challenges and lead to resistance among segments of the local population in destination countries. It was considered important to recognize and understand the fears and concerns from the local population and to address any significant costs arising from migration, in particular for the lower income classes.

9. Several participants referred to inclusion, non-discrimination, equality and integration as fundamental precepts for accommodating migrants and refugees in communities. Those principles would be essential to their successful inclusion in society and achieving social cohesion in increasingly diverse populations. Participants stressed that renewed attention should be paid to ensuring the optimal conditions and support for integration, and respecting the identities of migrants and host communities alike in the interests of building an inclusive society.
10. A significant part of the conference was focused on the Global Compact, its contents and relevance for parliaments and their members. The Compact is a forward-looking document and the result of arduous consultations and negotiations. The negotiations were so difficult because it concerns a crucial topic that is global in nature and for which a global perspective is needed. It was clearly pointed out that the Compact was very comprehensive. It was a compromise document that adequately and fairly represented the views and concerns of all stakeholders. Participants expressed their disappointment therefore that several countries had chosen to withdraw or to dissociate themselves from the Global Compact and its commitments. Participants expressed the hope that these countries would eventually decide to come out in support of the Compact and contribute to its implementation.
11. It was pointed out that the Global Compact was not prescriptive. The commitments mentioned therein should not be seen as a “burden”, giving rise to immediate and full-scale implementation. Instead it should be seen as a resource to guide and inform major national migration policy debates and outcomes. Indeed, the point was made that the Compact was not a stick to beat States with, but a cooperative framework for States that places a particular focus on partnerships for implementation.
12. The Compact makes several clear references to parliaments, in particular in the part on the implementation and review of the commitments. In the course of the conference, it was mentioned that parliaments can help to implement the Compact by showing leadership in promoting fact-based political discourse, in devising policies and legislation, by drawing on the menu of options detailed in the Compact, in exercising parliamentary scrutiny of such policies and legislation, and in promoting regional and international dialogue. It is now up to parliaments and members to take the discussion to the next level by discussing and adopting concrete parliamentary action plans that will help translate these commitments into concrete national realities.

Thank you.

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