



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Opening speech

Parliamentary conference on the occasion of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Rabat, 6-7 December 2018

Dear President of the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco,
Dear President of the House of Councillors of the Kingdom of Morocco,
Honorable members of parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to open this parliamentary conference, which is about a topic that is very close to my heart. I wish to thank our Moroccan hosts for the great hospitality extended to us and for the arrangements they have put in place to allow us to meet in the best of conditions.

In a few days, governments from across the world will give their official stamp of approval to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Compact offers a blue-print to help us govern migration in the coming decades. It is the result of a long and arduous journey, following one and a half years of discussions and negotiations with all stakeholders. Unfortunately, some countries decided to pull out of the process in the belief that the text was unbalanced in presenting too much of a rosy picture of migration and in placing too much emphasis on the rights of migrants and the obligations of destination countries.

I think these concerns and fears are unjustified and therefore hope that these countries will eventually come back to the fore. Indeed, the Global Compact does not suggest opening our borders without checks to anyone who wants to move in. It is not about giving away fundamental sovereign rights. And it is definitely not about renouncing our national identities and rich cultures.

The Global Compact underscores rather that migration offers both opportunities and challenges. It makes the point that we all have the obligation to make migration work and can only achieve this by joining hands in solidarity. The Global Compact takes on board the concerns and perspectives of origin, transit and destination countries alike, and that of migrants themselves.

Ladies and gentlemen,

No one should risk her or his life trying to get to another country to make a living, or simply to survive, as in the case of people fleeing disaster or war. Most people, having the choice, do not want to move. The vast majority of the world's populations want to stay in their home countries. They want to be close to family and rooted in communities where they speak the same language and share the same traditions. People are much more likely to move for work or other reasons within their own countries than between countries.

As parliamentarians we should do everything possible to collectively address the adverse drivers of migration and to make migration the result of a choice, not a necessity. It is not by chance that migration is also reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 10, on inequality, and Goal 8, on work. I say this because, when properly implemented, the SDGs will help address the root causes of involuntary migration that ultimately come from bad policy choices at national and international levels.

It is also paramount that we, as parliamentarians, use our power to protect migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations, through the ratification and implementation of relevant international human rights treaties and ILO Conventions, and to see to it that our governments uphold their rights.

We also need to work better together to ensure that migrants have the legal status they need to contribute to the societies in which they live. Far too many countries are putting up unreasonable obstacles which force people to look for alternative, often dangerous routes, and to live underground. Although we need to do more to tackle human trafficking, the Global Compact also requires us to work towards enhancing the pathways for regular migration and hence the "choice" of migrants to seek a better future elsewhere. Indeed, better policies can help destination countries find the workers they need to grow their economies as well as help sending countries capitalize on the skills and savings of migrants returning home.

Our responsibility as parliamentarians to protect migrants does not end with promoting their legal protection. We have to stop the worrying trend in some quarters of holding foreigners responsible for home-grown problems that are not of their making. As politicians we should avoid language that stokes the flames of xenophobia. We should call out such incidents whenever they occur and use our legislative power to punish the advocates of racism and other forms of discrimination. We have to set the right example and use our political platform to promote evidence-based narratives and policies offering balanced views about migration. These views should foster mutual understanding and respect between migrants and the host society, as a two-way responsibility, as well as migrants' integration in society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global parliamentary community has been intimately associated with the process leading to the Global Compact. Indeed, the IPU has regularly brought parliaments and their members together to discuss the migration agenda from a parliamentary perspective. More than once, the IPU has taken position on the main issues defining the Global Compact. Each time, the IPU has embraced a people-centered approach and called for more cooperation and coordination - not less - at the international, regional and national levels.

While the adoption of the Global Compact is the result of long negotiations, the real journey is only yet to begin. Indeed, the reason why we are here today and tomorrow is not only to discuss the content of the Compact, to reaffirm our commitment to its implementation but also to focus more concretely on what that implementation can and should look like to make the words "safe", "orderly" and "regular" ring true.

I hope that in the course of the next two days we will hear about many concrete examples that show that parliamentarians and others have not waited for the formal adoption of the Global Compact to start implementing new policies and initiatives to better govern migration. It is my hope that we will draw on these examples in the design of our national parliamentary action plans on migration and that we can work together to implement these plans and thus help put in practice the commitments of the Global Compact. As I said, the real journey is only now beginning and I count on all of you to be part of it.

Thank you.