Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Global Migration Group (GMG), an inter-agency body bringing together the heads of 22 UN entities to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration.

When the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) adopted its Programme of Action back in 1994, it was a document well ahead of its time.

It was the first major intergovernmental agreement to address – in a single outcome document – the interrelated issues of population dynamics, migration and urbanization. The ICPD Programme of Action offers strong and compelling recommendations on the values that should guide both national and global approaches to international migration. These values include recognizing the humanity, dignity and human rights of all person, regardless of their status; recognizing the high social cost of inequality; and providing the need for development at home.

Cities are centers of social, economic and political activity. An increasing share of the world's population, including most migrants, now live in cities. Indeed, the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas, between urban settlements and internationally is and will continue to shape population dynamics within and across national boundaries. For some, cities serve as gateways on their way to the next destination. The engagement of municipal leaders in decision-making processes is key in this context. Increasingly, mayoral networks are exchanging good practices and raising awareness on the role of local governments in migration.

The New Urban Agenda, adopted at Habitat III in Quito, recognized the important role of cities in addressing multiple forms of discrimination and inequality, including those based on a person's migration status, and noted that our commitment to ensuring full respect for the human rights of migrants, including their equal and non-discriminatory access to basic services, are key factors for the achievement of sustainable urban development.

The annual Global Mayoral Forums on Migration and Development and the 2017 Global Conference on Cities and Migration in Mechelen confirm the emerging role of cities in managing migrants and migration. The contributions to these fora reflected the actions of cities in

combatting discrimination, xenophobia, racism and violence against immigrants that has erupted in some parts around the world.

In 2017, during the preparations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, many states and stakeholders recognized that the local level is 'where migration happens'.

Distinguished delegates,

The 51st session of the Commission on Population and Development is a good opportunity to solidify the progress we have made. The GMG would like to highlight three areas in particular:

First, think local.

The notion that migration policy is solely a responsibility for national governments is out of tune with the realities on the ground. The Secretary-General underscored this in his report on 'Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration'. Migrants settle in local communities where they contribute to the economy, create social networks, enrich to culture and access services. Our approach to migration governance must consider the regional, local and municipal levels.

Cities and other local authorities should not only be involved in implementing migration programmes, but also in developing migration policy. Being the closest to their constituents, cities and local and regional authorities should be able to contribute their expertise to policy planning, thereby ensuring that programmes are responsive to the real needs of migrants and adjusted to local contexts.

Second, link migration and urban planning.

Migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon that affects and is affected by many factors at the local level. Planning must take into account the movement of people to, from and within urban centers as well as the implications of migratory movements for the local population.

This means considering the impact of migration on issues such as infrastructure, service provision, social protection, health and sanitation, food security, economic development and environmental sustainability. It also means considering how migrants' fundamental rights, and their basic needs, can be met and addressed in the way we plan, build and govern our cities.

Three, support local authorities.

We need to equip cities and local authorities with the tools and resources to effectively manage the settlement of newcomers and its implications.

Governments have already committed to this in the New Urban Agenda, by agreeing to support local authorities in establishing frameworks that enable the positive contribution of migrants to cities.

Now we need to provide the tools and promote migrant integration and social cohesion, to properly plan for migration towards cities, and to uphold the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants and local populations alike. These interventions can provide a path to combatting the discrimination, xenophobia, and racism.

Promoting collaboration between cities on migratory issues is one area in which further support can be provided. Indeed, cities are already collaborating in many places through decentralized and south-south cooperation. These initiatives should be nurtured and enhanced.

Just as we seek to integrate migration in national development planning, migrants and migration should be included regional and urban planning. Generating economic growth, providing decent jobs and creating livelihood opportunities for all are key steps towards successful migrant integration in urban areas.

Thank you.