

Coordination Meeting on International Migration  
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Ambassador Gomez Camacho for introducing this panel and for his undertaking the vital task of co-facilitating the modalities of the Global Compact on Migration.

I would like to thank as well to DESA for organizing 15 of these ever valuable Coordination Meetings and preparing a succinct but informative background note for this panel identifying landmarks in the UN's engagement with migration issues.

We all know how far the UN needs to go, how much needs to be done to meet the expectations of the two compacts on refugees and migrants promised in the New York Declaration for 2018. I ask your indulgence for letting me reverse the lenses and reflect how far the UN and global community have come in the past 15 years. I would like to explain why migration played next to no role in the MDGs in 2001. But it is central to the SDGs.

A group of UN officials wrote a report to Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2002. The international community has come far since then in making migration an essential part of the UN agenda, reflected in the "Sutherland report" which will be presented later today and the leadership exercised by key member states, including Sweden and Morocco represented on this panel this morning.

Migration did not arise in the discussions in the spring and summer of 2001 among the group of experts from UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN DESA, WB, IMF and OECD who crystalized the goals in the Millennium Declaration. We identified 8 MDGs, 18 targets and 48 indicators that we then presented to the GA in September 2001 as part of the Roadmap Report. Our marching orders were derived from the Millennium Declaration which the member states had adopted the previous September at the conclusion of the Summit bringing together 189 heads of states and government. The Declaration had chapters covering peace and security, development, the environment, human rights, democracy and good governance, protecting the vulnerable, Africa and UN reform. The MDG exercise focused on the development and environment chapters. The Millennium Declaration covered migration in the human rights chapter, where it called for ratifying the Migrant Workers Convention, developing better documentation programmes and implementing UN technical assistance. *In short, neither the Member States nor the experts thought of migration primarily as a development issue.*

An effort was made to explore the feasibility of matching the MDGs with Millennium Rights Goals (MRGs), which would then have included migration targets and indicators drawn from the human rights chapter of the Millennium Declaration. But the reluctance of the Member States and the leading human rights institutions was firm and persuasive. In 2001, the UN community lacked the common ground to identify clear, measureable, shared targets and widely accepted indicators of how to measure progress in human rights, democracy and migration. On top of that, the small Secretariat group preparing the Roadmap was simply swamped and could barely meet the deadlines given for the MDGs.

I should mention that SG Annan was disappointed that Migration was not receiving the attention he thought it deserved. Having spent so much of his career in international service, he called himself “a life-long migrant.” In the middle of the ongoing crisis over the war in Iraq, he asked me to recruit a team from the UN Secretariat, ILO, IOM, UNHCR and OHCHR to explore the issue and write a report on how to improve system coordination in migration.

The highlights of the report, circulated in February 2003, identified the need for greater UN leadership on migration. With Bob Paiva (IOM), Joe Chamie (DESA), Eric Morris (UNHCR), Kathleen Newland (MPI), we reviewed the growth in international migration. Thanks to Joe Chamie’s expertise in demography we emphasized the complementary dynamics of the youth glut in the developing world and the elderly glut in the OECD. We considered IOM joining the UN, but noted IOM’s reluctance to join the UN at the time. We polled the member states, asking whether they were prepared to discuss migration at the governmental level in the UN. The overwhelming response was negative. More successfully, we recommended the setting up of what we called an interagency standing committee on migration, an ancestor of the Global Migration Group (GMG). And we called for a leadership role for the UN in advocating a cooperative agenda for migration and recommended the establishment of a Global Commission to launch the initiative.

*That was then, but this is now.*

Thanks to the hard work of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), led by Jan Carlsson (Sweden) and Mamphela Ramphele (South Africa), with financial support from the governments of Sweden and Switzerland, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), the GMG, the inspired leadership of Sir Peter Sutherland and the support of governments sponsoring the migration dialogues, the international community has a much better informed and much more widely shared understanding of what migration can do to promote development while respecting human and labour rights. Thanks to their efforts, the international community has deepened its understanding of the effects of the 240 million international migrants plus who have crossed borders.

The most important difference between the MDGs and the SDGs regarding migration is that while migration was absent from the MDGs it is present in the SDGs, especially but not

exclusively in SDG 10.7: “orderly, safe, regular and responsible” migration facilitated by well-managed migration policies.

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, whatever its limitations as an action platform, reflects a clear willingness of Member States to reaffirm the principles of refugee protection and to assume multilateral UN responsibility for promoting orderly migration.

And now we have an carefully crafted report from Peter Sutherland that identifies practical measures that states can take now to ensure that migration is more orderly safe regular and responsible.

Clearly the UN has set an ambitious agenda between now and 2018. And the world is watching, and waiting for the UN to deliver.

Thank you.