

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen..

The kingdom of Bahrain, has always been on migratory pathways, we have built a historic civilization, as well as a modern vibrant economy based on the movement of goods, investment, and of course, people.

We partake in today's event to bring a unique perspective to this distinguished panel; our country has a labour migrant population that exceeds 50% of its demographic. We are an embodiment of how migration works to the advantage of countries of Origin and Destination, and of course, migrants themselves.

Having such a high percentage of migrants within our society, Bahrain has long embarked on a ground breaking reform initiative lead by HRH the Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa in 2004, the fruits of which are seen today in the form of labour and migration management laws and systems, the likes of which are unheard of in our region. We have effectively reformed the sponsorship system to eliminate any possibility of abuse, and gave freedom of mobility to migrants to pursue better opportunities without the consent of the employer, all of this was in 2006. More recently, we introduced the first of its kind sponsor-less visa and work permit, allowing the migrant worker to work with whomever he or she wants, and to set the terms of his engagement, it is dubbed The Flexi, and its paving the way to leaving the old sponsorship system behind us.

The way the Global Compact for Migration has developed is a testimony not only to the able leadership of SRSG Louise Arbour, and diplomatic craftsmanship of the co-facilitators the ambassadors of Switzerland and Mexico, but also to the collective global tenacity to address this complex issue effectively, all the while maintaining state sovereignty, rule of national law, and cultural specifics. For this, I congratulate all those who worked on it for their perseverance and vision.

The Kingdom of Bahrain sees the importance of all of the 23 objectives of the Compact, we further see how these objectives align with specific Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Specifically Bahrain has been working diligently on projects that correspond with the following Objectives:

Objective (5) to Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration

Objective (6) to Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work

Objective (7) to Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration

and Objective (10) to Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration

And we recognize how they align with the details of SDGs 5, 8, 10, and 16, making this a perfect new drive on how various UN apparatus are tackling complex issues with an approach worthy of the 21st century.

Furthermore, the late addition of Objective 23 on international cooperation comes as a welcomed enhancement; the transnational nature of migration makes it imperative to forge partnerships between countries of Origin, Transit, and Destination, where national priorities are aligned, and the welfare of migrants and societies are upheld. It is in this context, that Bahrain and the Philippines have been making great strides to set a practical example of translating this -and other objectives- into actions. We are working together to regularize the irregulars, streamline processes, and most importantly protect the vulnerable, where we have an ambitious joint project to create a new pathway for migrant domestic workers, one that decreases the cost and increases protections, with

the aim of “leaving no one behind”. We are showcasing this project in a co-sponsored side event in Marrakesh, and look forward to seeing you all there.

The Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the prominent role set for the IOM in the Compact, we have worked closely with them on the areas of capacity building and technical assistance in the field of combating trafficking in persons, they are a valuable asset to the cause. In this regard, I would like to recognize the tremendous leadership of the IOM’s Director General Ambassador William-Lacy Swing, who will step down at the end of this month after 10 years at the helm of this organization, and look forward to working with the Director General Elect, Mr. Antonio Vitorino.

Finally, the Global Compact on safe, regular, and orderly migration serves as an example of how to address controversial issues, it is a new approach to an age old phenomenon, it will be interesting to see how various countries address the issue in its light, in the years to come.