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**OPENING STATEMENT
16th Coordination Meeting on International Migration**

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Delivered by Mr. John Wilmoth, Director, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**Excellencies,
Distinguished experts,
Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 16th Coordination Meeting on International Migration. The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been convening these meetings since 2002.

The purpose is two-fold: to coordinate activities on international migration undertaken by entities of the UN system and other international and regional organizations, and to collect information to assist States in identifying critical issues and discussing future steps.

According to our latest estimates, released on 18 December, there were 258 million international migrants worldwide in 2017. These are persons living outside their country of birth, who comprise the foreign-born populations of other countries.

Although the global population of foreign-born persons increased twice as fast as the total population between 2000 and 2017, international migration continues to be a relatively rare event. Today, international migrants represent only about 3.4 per cent of the world's population.

The UN estimates demonstrate that roughly half of the migrants born in countries of the global South are now residing in other countries of the South, while the other half have moved to countries of the global North. For refugees, however, a large majority (more than 80 per cent) are being hosted in developing countries.

Population projections by the United Nations indicate that international migration will slow the long-term process of population ageing in migrant-receiving countries. This will boost the size of the working-age population as a share of the total, resulting in a more favourable ratio of workers to retirees at least temporarily.

Immigration cannot, however, halt or reverse the gradual upward shift in the population age distribution that is taking place over time because of the demographic transition toward longer lives and smaller families.

In DESA, over the last year, we have redoubled our efforts to provide you with relevant estimates and analysis of international migration. We hope that this work will help to inform the negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, starting next week.

DESA's work on counting the foreign-born population also provides critical information that can be used to disaggregate a subset of relevant SDG indicators by migratory status. More broadly, we believe that knowing the facts about global migration trends, and about the contributions of migrants to both destination and origin countries, can help to dispel myths and misperceptions about migrants and migration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the adoption of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, international migration and related issues have been considered on a regular basis by the Commission on Population and Development. This year, the annual session of the Commission in April will focus on the theme of "Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration". I am sure that the expert deliberations in the Commission will be a focused and useful complement to the on-going negotiations of the global compact.

The inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marked an important milestone in the consideration of this topic by the General Assembly. The high-level political forum is the primary platform within the United Nations for the review and follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to migration.

Migration is as old as humanity itself. Our history as a species has been marked by the drive to explore new frontiers, to expand horizons and to exchange goods, ideas and technology. Migration has often been a force of

innovation and a means to create and strengthen bonds between nations, as well as a source of opportunity for individual migrants. However, when poorly managed, history shows that migration is often accompanied by discrimination, abuse and xenophobia.

International migration is a positive experience for most migrants. We must continue to focus our efforts on strengthening the benefits and addressing the challenges that human mobility presents for countries of origin and destination.

Over more than two decades, discussions on international migration and development in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council have provided an opportunity for a global dialogue on international migration in all its dimensions and for linking migration to the global development agenda. This is an important lesson as Member States begin to make plans for the review and follow-up of the global compact.

Dear colleagues,

The urgent need to strengthen migration data, research and training was a common thread in the thematic sessions and regional consultations convened to inform the preparation of the global compact. The Population Division and the Statistics Division of DESA worked closely with the global community of population scientists and key institutional partners to develop recommendations on this topic. And last month, DESA co-organized, together with IOM and the OECD, the first International Forum on Migration Statistics.

Strengthening national institutions and investing in local skills and capacities to collect and use migration-related data is key to understanding and properly managing migration. I was pleased, therefore, to learn that the zero-draft of the global compact reflects the urgent need to strengthen migration data, research and training.

For decades, DESA has helped to develop global statistical standards on international migration and has produced global estimates of the size and essential characteristics of the foreign-born population. It has brought together migration experts, supported relevant intergovernmental processes and engaged in capacity building on migration data and statistics. In doing so, we have worked closely with various partners, especially through the Global Migration Group. DESA looks forward to continuing this fruitful collaboration in the future.

In closing, let me welcome you once again to this coordination meeting. I thank all the panellists, presenters and moderators for accepting our invitation, as well as those who travelled from afar to join us in this meeting. We encourage all of you to contribute actively to the discussions over the next two days and hope that you will take advantage of the various side events.

I wish you a very successful meeting.
