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Common Space, 10th Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)
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Implementation & Mobilization Towards a Global Compact for Human Mobility worth agreeing to

Report GFMD Civil Society Day 1 (29 June), by Wies Maas, Chair Civil Society Days 2017

Excellencies, partners, and fellow co-actors in civil society,

It is symbolic that we have gathered for the 10th Anniversary of GFMD, and the 7th edition of Common Space, in Berlin.

A city once divided by a Wall and barbed wire, now a symbol of unity and diversity.

To appreciate that walls-do-come-down, we started our Civil Society Days at the Brandenburg Gate last Wednesday.

We started with stories, and poetry: of detention, disappearances and broken families....

... but also of the beauty of diversity, and the power of organizing people across borders and boundaries.

With us here today in this room, are mothers and fathers whose sons have disappeared while migrating; young people who were held in detention away from their family and deported for lack of the right papers; refugees of war, even of this country and continent; survivors of the sea....

... all workers; more than a few are also transnational citizens with dual passports, and international students.

And a majority of us are refugees, migrants and diaspora. For us, migration is not just politics, and policies, it is not just professional or practical: it is *personal*. It touches our lives, our families, and our communities.

We began our Civil Society Days (CSD) yesterday, under the theme of: “*Safe, Orderly, Regular Migration Now: Mechanics of a Compact Worth Agreeing to*”. “Worth agreeing to” means asking: how can Compacts change realities faced by refugees, migrants and societies?

We organized in plenary and seven thematic sessions, and connected *live* with simultaneous civil society meetings in Kathmandu, Budapest and Dakar. As an innovation this year, spokespersons of our thematic sessions will be sharing a report back and recommendations in each of the seven Common Space break-out sessions this morning.

Following Common Space, we finish tomorrow with a day focused on “commitments” for action and follow up that *we can do ourselves*. You are all warmly invited to join us there; and make some commitments too?

Allow me to share then, ten recommendations coming out of the Civil Society Days -- ten highlights for the 10th anniversary of the GFMD.

- 1. Implementation and goals.** There are so many multilateral commitments to human rights, to labour rights, in conventions and treaties, that are signed and binding, and apply to migrants across the board. A Global Compact should focus on implementing these, not simply restating them. To repeat the words of Gibril Faal once more “*we are over-principled and underperforming. It is time for the era of implementation*”. The Compact should propel international rights-based mechanisms that help states fulfill commitments – for example through National Plans. We envision a Compact and National Plans that include goals, timelines and means for implementation that are ambitious, achievable, and accountable.
- 2. Children on the Move.** We are inspired by the Children on the Move initiative of civil society organizations, UN agencies and some states, which has put forward practical mechanisms and achievable timelines to include child rights across *both* Global Compacts. Our youth delegates reiterated yesterday, that indeed all policies and decisions concerning migrant children, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, should ensure that the best interest of the child is always the primary consideration, and that ending the immigration detention of children is absolute top priority. *A priority that cannot wait.*
- 3. Regularization and regular pathways for human mobility across the board.** Central to the drive for implementation, and thus for the Compacts should be the facilitation of human mobility with human rights for all. More and better regular pathways for refugees and migrants need to be created, including increases in resettlement places, humanitarian visa, private sponsorship programs, family reunification, student visa, and labour mobility and matching at all skill levels. Such regular pathways reduce the vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees *en route*, in transit and

at destination. The Global Compact should develop principles on regularization - a pathway to secure residency after having lived in the country of immigration for a certain number of years. This is in the interest of social cohesion, and lifts people out of vulnerable and exploitative situations.

4. **Women's agency and protection.** We analysed how policies and implementation impact the agency and protection of all women affected by migration, including those left behind or returning. Our civil society Rapporteur on Women emphasized that women are not by nature a vulnerable population in need of rescue, but do too often find themselves in vulnerable situations due to (migration) policies, values and the denial of rights. The Compact should draw from the UN Women Recommendations on addressing the human rights of women in the Global Compact for Migration.
5. **Ethical recruitment, decent jobs and labour mobility:** the protection of the labour rights of migrants and ethical recruitment need to be stepped up. Recruitment fees should be borne by the employer, not the migrant worker. To end a huge arena of exploitation, migrant worker visas should *never* be tied to one employer. There can be no question about the rights of workers to join and form trade unions and workers organizations. Much more investments are needed in decent work and jobs "at home and abroad" as well as more efforts to harmonize qualifications and invest in skills and training for example through vocational partnerships.
6. **On return and reintegration:** Voluntary return should be tailor-made and context specific, and involve a process with true choices, including choosing the moment of return. There should be no deportation of children in no circumstances and they should not be separated from their families. The Global Compact for Migration, should not become a Global Compact for Deportation.
7. **No criminalization and alternatives to detention:** Policies are needed that put an end to the criminalisation of migrants, and those who help them. We need to implement practical, available alternatives to detention. Citizens and organizations that help undocumented migrants in need should be admired and protected, not criminalized.
8. **Firewalls and access to justice:** The Compact and national policies should include the concept of firewalls. Firewalls that allow all migrants, regardless of status, to access justice, essential services and complaint mechanisms without fear that this will result in their detention or deportation on the basis of their migration status.
9. **Participation and mobilization:** Groups affected by national policies and the Compact, in particular migrants themselves, should be meaningfully engaged through consultation and decision-making processes. Nothing about us without us. To change the narrative and perceptions on migration, our voices need to be uplifted and audible. Civil society, has an important role to play in mobilizing people and wider solidarity movements on the ground – to stand firm against xenophobia and discrimination, and for equality, justice and dignity for all.

10. Drivers of forced displacement. Finally, the drivers of displacement and migrants in vulnerable situations, including poverty, unemployment, and the lack of good governance, need to be addressed urgently. Climate change impacts are inextricably linked to conflicts across the world—causing so *much* suffering and displacement—and obliterating livelihoods and dignity. These realities need to be recognized and integrated into global and national economic and development strategies.

At the opening on Wednesday I spoke about the spirit of Tatendrang (“a zest for action” in German) and Tumaini (which means “hope & confidence” in Swahili). Today I like to add two words to that spirit of Tatendrang & Tumaini: Implementation & Mobilization. May all of us share, today, tomorrow, and when we go home, a drive for implementation and for mobilization, continuing to ask and answer the question: how will our work, and Global Compact for Human Mobility, change the realities on the ground faced by refugees, migrants and societies?

Let’s begin to answer that question together in Common Space now, and beyond.
