



REPÚBLICA
PORTUGUESA

GABINETE DA SECRETÁRIA DE ESTADO
DAS COMUNIDADES PORTUGUESAS

Secretary of State for the Portuguese Communities, Berta Nunes

***Closing Session of the First Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe,
Orderly and Regular Migration in the UNECE region***

November 13, 2020

Thank you Mr. Prentice,

First of all, I would like to address my co-speakers at this closing session, Mr. Stéphane Jaquemet and Minister Marco Mendicino. It is an honour to participate at their side, recognizing the International Catholic Migration Committee's work on migrations since the early 50's (fifties) and the exceptional role played by Canada that, with Portugal, shares the status of champion country on migrations in the UNECE region.

It has been an honour for me to take part in this common reflection of the First Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration. It was a very fruitful and successful discussion.

This Review has been a pioneering and unique opportunity to learn through the experiences of Member States and other stakeholders, promotion a transparent discussion on international migration; commitments made in the GCM have been reinforced; and it was a great occasion to share visions on how to address the challenges of today's migration.

After this two-day discussion, I would highlight, among the different themes addressed, migrants' positive contribution to the development of both countries of origin and destination; the need to reinforce bilateral and multilateral cooperation for upholding human and labour rights of migrants; the need to fulfil the right of migrants to a legal identity and adequate documentation; and to contribute to well-informed public dialogue, based on reliable data. These are just some of the main areas identified where further efforts are needed.

No country alone can successfully address these needs and many other relevant challenges identified during the four roundtables. Thus, Portugal has been advocating for multilateral approaches, based on solidarity, human rights and a rules-based international order.

Portugal is committed with humanitarian values of protection and solidarity, by reinforcing cooperation and participating in specific programs to support integration of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers.

Our History is closely linked to migration – a priority for us. Thereby, as it was already stated, Portugal was one of the first countries to adopt a National Implementation Plan of the Global Compact for Migration.

In this context, we see as a priority the building of strong partnerships with countries of origin, transit and destination, engaging with various stakeholders to that end.

In collaboration with IOM, we aim at developing further an adequate framework of labour migration management, especially in contexts where there is high demand for labour. This will also ensure the right protection and integration conditions for migrant workers, while enabling employers to properly fulfil their labour shortages and skills gaps.

With this purpose, last September we co-organised with IOM a very fruitful webinar on Labour Mobility and we are currently negotiating Bilateral Labour Migration Arrangements with India and Morocco.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, prompting economic crisis and job insecurity, unemployment and social fragilities, thus threatening people on the move, who were already most vulnerable before the crisis.

In our national context, COVID-19 did not stop our efforts in implementing the GCM, on the contrary. We rearranged our commitments and promptly mobilized to minimize the negative impact on migrants.

Among the measures taken, allow me to underline the grant of temporary residency rights to all immigrants and asylum seekers, therefore granting them access, until the end of March 2021, to social and health benefits; and grant temporary extension of documents and visas under the same terms – just to name a few examples.

Furthermore, we cannot leave anyone behind in our response and recovery efforts, namely migrants. Our National Recovery and Resilience Plan envisages to provide decent housing to migrants and refugees.

As a “champion country”, we look at the “two sides of the coin”: Portugal is both a country of destination and a country of origin of migrants. And we should take advantage of our experience on working with our communities living abroad.

Thereby, we see this role in a broad perspective: to share our experience, to listen to other countries’ challenges and to promote a multi-stakeholder discussion, thus boosting the GCM and contributing to safe, orderly and regular migration.

Looking ahead, we are interested in interacting actively with other Member States and stakeholders, aggregating social capital and advocating for inclusive and resilient communities.

In this final stretch of the Review, let me underline that its added value is not only in and for our Region. The lessons learned from this exercise can contribute to the other regional reviews and to consolidate the role of the UN Network on Migration.

Moreover, this Regional Review’s substantial discussion will positively feed into the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), taking place in 2022.

Lastly, let me conclude with a note of hope and encouragement for further cooperation. The progress towards the GCM's objectives will also accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I recall that the structuring principle of the 2030 Agenda is inclusion, "to leave no one behind". Thus, migrants and migration should be considered in all aspects of the implementation of the SDGs and respective targets.

Thank you.