

First, I would like to thank Ecuador and Tajikistan for chairing this round table and we look forward for an interesting and fruitful exchange.

As this is the first time Belgium takes the floor, please allow me to briefly recall that the adoption of the GCM 4 years ago triggered a political crisis in Belgium. Nonetheless, the government that took office after the crisis, confirmed the importance of international cooperation on migration and expressed the ambition to translate the GCM into concrete actions to be presented at this first IMRF. An action Plan was thus established through a consultation process with all stakeholders dealing with migration that focuses specifically on 6 objectives of the GCM, 3 of which are discussed at this round table, and I will elaborate briefly on these, and this without neglecting the importance of the other objectives discussed.

In addition to this, Belgium also successfully submitted three good practices that are published on the repository of the UN Network on Migration: one about our national strategy on development cooperation and migration, one about our action plans on traffic and smuggling and the latest about a project named Reach Out aimed at providing information to stranded migrants.

Finally, our delegation headed by our Minister on Asylum and Migration comprises one mayor, representatives of civil society, of our development agency, of the reception agency and thus reflects clearly the spirit and the guiding principles of the GCM

With regard to the objectives 9 and 10 we filed a good practice regarding the whole of government approach that Belgium adopts tackling trafficking and smuggling of human beings: an **Interdepartmental Coordination Unit** brings together all departments at the federal level involved, and adopted national action plans for both trafficking and smuggling using a multidisciplinary approach. Furthermore Belgium has specific legislation in place, has appointed specialized magistrates for all judicial districts and established a **Dedicated Human Trafficking Unit** at the Federal Police. Police, immigration officers, and guardians receive training to detect victims so that they can be referred to specialised centers, where **legal** and **administrative support** as well as **psychological, medical** and social follow-up is provided.

To **dissuade people using the services of smugglers**, prevention campaigns are organized and Belgium further contributes to legal pathways as alternatives for irregular migration.

Going forward it is important to **step up international cooperation** to detect and prosecute perpetrators and networks between countries of destination, but equally with countries of origin and transit. Hereby we need to ensure that the fight against human trafficking does not target the victims or organizations and citizens who work to help migrants.

Secondly on objective 21, I want to recall that we all committed to cooperate on safe and dignified return, readmission and sustainable reintegration in full respect for the human right to return to one's own country and the obligation of States to readmit their own nationals. In this respect, the Belgian government invests in programmes to inform, guide, coach, and assist returnees to return and to reintegrate into their country of origin. An example of such programmes is **the Fedasil-Reach out-project** that aims at increasing knowledge about voluntary or assisted return among "unreachable" groups - stranded migrants and migrants in transit - a project that has also been published in the repository of Good Practices. More generally, on return and reintegration, both the Immigration Office and Fedasil are working together with public and private international partners such as IOM and Caritas International to provide a robust path, network, and support system for voluntary return and reintegration. Finally, Enabel, our cooperation agency, is developing with other actors ways to link return to sustainable reintegration and development through national referral mechanisms and we will host a side-event on this on Thursday.

In its Action Plan, Belgium committed further, among other things, (1) to intensify its efforts by drafting a law on a safe and dignified return policy, (2) to establish a quality Monitoring & Evaluation Framework to follow up on beneficiaries of reintegration support (3) and to extend the pilot project approach to help migrants to acquire competences that could be useful in the country of origin and facilitate reintegration.

Finally, and just touching upon objective 13, the Belgian Immigration Office set up a new department dedicated to alternatives to detention in June 2021. Persons in irregular situation are provided with a specialized and individualized coaching. An appointed coach will go through the entire judicial-administrative situation of the person and identify the durable solutions that can be envisaged. If there is no possibility of legal stay a guidance and preparation towards voluntary return is given. If the person does not wish to cooperate, she will be informed of the possibility of forced return. Furthermore, the government currently in place refrains from detaining minors in closed centers.