



**Permanent Mission of the Republic of North Macedonia to the
United Nations in New York**

Statement by

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International Migration Review Forum, 19-20 May 2022

- General Debate -

New York, 19-20 May, 2022

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

It is my honor to address the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) I will read out a short version of the Statement. The full text will be uploaded on relevant UN platform of this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As acknowledged in the GCM itself, no country can address migration alone. We need all together to enhance cooperation and manage migration, while respecting human rights and the principle of non-discrimination.

Mr. President,

The Republic of North Macedonia lies on the notorious Western Balkan transit route for migrants and refugees. In 2015, over a million migrants and refugees were using the WB route on their way to Western European countries. Last year, more than 20000 migrants transited through our country. In addition, during 2021 we had over 18000 attempts for illegal crossing of the territory of North Macedonia, but the actual numbers are much higher.

North Macedonia, as many countries in the Balkans is traditionally a country of emigration. Our emigrants and the Diaspora constitute an important resource for the country. Not that they only bring the remittances, they also bring knowledge and experience acquired during the migratory path. Following GCM objective 19, migration can be a source of sustainable development for countries of origin and destination alike. However, it is important to indicate the phenomenon of the so-called potential migration which reaches concerning dimensions, since the country is losing a significant part of its young population and human capital. Securing and subsidizing employment of young people remain the biggest challenge of the migration policy for the forthcoming period.

For these reasons, amongst the others, the Government of North Macedonia supports the vision of the GCM and gives special attention to the implementation of the GCM and all 23 goals.

Mr. President,

In preparation for this year IMRF, Government of North Macedonia with support by the IOM prepared and submitted a voluntary Review of the Status of Implementation of the GCM. The Review focuses on the progress made and addresses the challenges we faced in fulfilment of GCM's goals.

Allow me to briefly enumerate some of our achievements. Ongoing implementation of the MPTF project (Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration) supported by the UN is dedicated to Evidence-based migration policy planning in North Macedonia. This project resulted in developing of a new Comprehensive migration policy for the period 2021-2025 by properly creating: a migration profile of the country, a migration governance index, a migration module in research on workforce. Therefore, the system of interdepartmental cooperation has been strengthened, as well as the raising public awareness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Turning to the challenges, and countertrends we share the concern regarding the issue of the equal treatment of migrants, trends of cultural racism and discrimination, using issue of migration in xenophobic mobilization in internal political disqustruggles in various countries. Treating the migrants as "others", dangerous intruders leads only to their discrimination and abusing international standards of protections of refugees and migrants. Leading to further stagnation and negative equilibrium in protection of refuge and migrants rights.

In addition, negative narrative and attitude in the media towards migrants and refugees is another concern. Using term “illegal migrants “ as form of dehumanization is further “intoxicating” the social milieu for migrant’s further integration in the societies. Since May 2020, the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking has followed an upward trend. We all must stand firm against these negative trends.

Mr. President,

I would like to reaffirm that North Macedonia remains a committed and a responsible partner that you can rely on. Transforming the challenges into possibilities by demonstrating political will and decreasing polarized discourse on migrants is the only way forward to effectively implement the GCM.

Thank you.

- FULL TEXT of the Statement -

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

It is an honor and great pleasure to address the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) which provides an opportunity to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the GCM, as well as to focus on remaining challenges in its implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As acknowledged in the GCM itself, no country can address migration alone. North Macedonia supports the vision of the GCM and is committed to working together with all countries to enhance cooperation and manage migration, while respecting human rights, non-discrimination and sovereignty of States.

Mr. President,

The Republic of North Macedonia lies on the notorious Western Balkan transit route for migrants and refugees. In 2015, more than a million migrants and refugees were using the WB route on their way to Western European countries. Last year, more than 20000 migrants have crossed our borders. In addition, during 2021 we had more than 18000 attempts for illegal crossing of the territory of North Macedonia, but the actual numbers are higher.

North Macedonia, as many countries in the Balkans is traditionally a country of emigration. Our emigrants and the Diaspora constitute an important resource for the country. Not that they only bring the remittances, they also bring knowledge and experience acquired during the migratory path. Following GCM objective 19, migration can be a source of sustainable development for

countries of origin and destination alike. However, it is important to indicate the phenomenon of the so-called potential migration which reaches concerning dimensions, since the country is losing a significant part of its young population and human capital. Securing and subsidizing employment of young people remain the biggest challenge of the migration policy for the forthcoming period.

For these reasons, amongst the others, the Government of North Macedonia supports the vision of the GCM and gives special attention to the implementation of the GCM and all 23 goals.

Mr. President,

Allow me to briefly address the current migration policy in the country and to highlight some achievements in the field of migration. As a result of the ongoing implementation of the MPTF project (Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration) supported by the UN which is dedicated to Evidence-based migration policy planning and discourse in North Macedonia, the Resolution on the new comprehensive migration policy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025 has been adopted by the Parliament. Also, the New Country Specific Migration Profile 2021, that covers the period 2009-2021 has been developed. The Migration Governance Indicators Profile 2021 has been also developed, published and available in EN, MK and ALB languages. In addition, the Communication Strategy for Social change has been prepared, as well as an informative campaign on positive narratives of migrants and refugees focusing on their contributions. Implementation of this project has resulted in developing a new comprehensive migration policy for the period 2021-2025 by properly creating: a migration profile of the country, a migration governance index, introducing a migration module in research on workforce, as well as generating new data on migration based on innovative collection methods. Therefore, the system of interdepartmental cooperation between the relevant authorities, as well as raising public awareness and changing the negative narrative and attitude towards migrants and refugees has been strengthened.

Mr. President,

The country is a party to and signatory of numerous international documents that fully or partially govern the issue of migration, including to the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. In preparation for the Migration Review Forum 2022, IOM in cooperation with the relevant institutions within the Government of North Macedonia prepared and submitted a voluntary Review of the Status of Implementation of the GCM. The Review reflects the influence of the GCM on the migration situation in the country, through the policies and involvement of the GCM in the implementation of the governmental measures by the parties concerned, the progress made, as well as the challenges faced by the state in fulfilment of GCM 23 goals.

Apart from the Government, responsible ministries and relevant state agencies, the involvement of NGOs, the academic community, as well as regional and international organizations with a mandate to act on migration flows complement the Review and the content of activities. The involvement of such a large scope of stakeholders indicates additional activities that the Republic of North Macedonia should undertake for more effective implementation of the GCM.

The Review also contains the steps that North Macedonia is taking and will continue to take in order to comprehensively integrate the vision and principles of the GCM in the national strategies and implementation plans. The difficulties and the lack of resources encountered by the institutions in achieving the goals of the GCM are presented, as well as measures that the state takes in order to better mobilize funds for the implementation of activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Turning to the challenges faced by the entire international community, we share the concern on the issue of the equal treatment of migrants, which was frequently emphasized on the Round tables of the IMRF. It is obvious that treating the migrants as “others” leads only to their discrimination. In addition, negative narrative and attitude towards migrants and refugees in the media is another concern. Growing trends of disseminating disinformation and fake news on the role of migrants is just further “intoxicating” the social milieu, which is an obstacle for their real integration in these societies. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic, severely affected the situation, in all areas, especially in terms of the trend of growth of irregular migration. The smuggling of migrants, especially since May 2020, has followed an upward trend. We all must stand against these negative trends.

Concerning the challenges faced by the entire international community, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it can only be noted that it severely affected the situation and the surrounding in the country, in all areas, especially in terms of the trend of growth of irregular migration. The smuggling of migrants, especially since May 2020, has followed an upward trend. Inter alia, the new conditions increase the risk of infection of migrants, as well as of police officers, social services and volunteers.

North Macedonia, as many countries in the Balkans is traditionally a country of emigration. Our emigrants and the diaspora constitute an important resource for the country, not only because of the remittances, but also because they bring knowledge, experience and connections acquired during the migratory path. Following GCM objective 19, migration can be a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable development for countries of origin and destination alike, and migrants make vital contributions to help advances the 2030 Agenda. In that context, the Government has adopted strategies to engage with its diaspora at multiple levels that will contribute to facilitating diaspora investments and services for diaspora members. However, it is important to indicate the phenomenon of the so-called potential migration which reaches concerning dimensions, since the country is losing a significant part of its young population and human capital. Securing employment following the completion of education and to subsidize employment of young people remain the biggest challenges of the migration policy for the forthcoming period.

In conclusion, allow me to underline that good coordination and cooperation, exchange of information and experience, as well as shared responsibility can greatly contribute to solving the current global challenges, and to reaffirm that the Republic of North Macedonia remains a committed and a responsible partner that you can rely on. Transforming the challenges into possibilities by demonstrating political will and decreasing polarized discourse on migration and migrants is the only way forward to achieve an ambitious, effective and human rights-based implementation of the GCM.

Thank you.