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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

**Friends of the Forum Meeting
Global Forum on Migration and Development
22 October 2014, Geneva
9:30-12:30 Salle V, R3 Level ILO Building**

Statement of Assistant Secretary-General Sally Fegan-Wyles

Introduction

Honourable Ambassador Mehmet Samsar,

We thank you for this invitation to participate in the 1st Friends of the Forum meeting under the auspices of the Turkish Chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). We congratulate you on your investment in this process not least at a time when your country continues to bring considerable aid and assistance to the Syrian people.

As regards the preparatory process for the 8th GFMD, we also note the focus areas selected by your Chairmanship in the excellent (draft) Concept Note you have shared with us.

UNITAR takes the floor to emphasise a key ally that is not explicitly referenced in the aforementioned Note but which nevertheless plays a vital role in all three proposed GFMD Forum Roundtables: that of local (and regional) government.

It is an undeniable fact that to exclude local government from policy exchanges and opportunities geared at informing and strengthening policy making, is to overlook the major challenges that will face all cities – large and small – namely the mass urbanisation and diversification of city centres across the globe.

Friends of the Forum,

Local government represents a worthy partner for the GFMD's overarching theme of "*strengthening partnerships (on) human mobility for sustainable development*". It benefits from a close proximity to its constituency, and studies reveal that migrants (in Western European, American and Canadian cities) identify as much if not more with their city than with any other geographical reference.



Indeed, Roundtable 1's focus on "*the well-being of migrants (...)*", and in this context how public perceptions are shaped, is largely determined by what UNITAR has revealed through its work with local government, namely a City's "body language": in other words, the way cities broach diversity in their daily functions ranging from legal protection, education, public order, economic development, health and urban planning.

What is more, and with reference to Roundtable 2 on "*migration as a development factor*", recent research supports the fact that *local* government serves as a "missing link" in the migration/development equation, spurring positive outcomes in both origin and destination communities. Indeed, it is not surprising that cities and local communities are also considered agents of change in the context of the emerging post 2015 development agenda. Just last week in New York, UNITAR shared insights on local government's scope of action in actualizing possible "mobility targets" during the Global Migration Group (GMG) post 2015 technical meeting.

Access, voice, impact

To date, however, despite their relevance, local authorities' access, voice and impact within various migration initiatives remains largely underdeveloped.¹

As stated in the "*Declaration of Barcelona*", the Outcome Document resulting from the first annual Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development launched last June by UNITAR and the City of Barcelona, with the European Commission, the World Bank's KNOMAD Project, IOM, the Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMIDI), and UNU: Cities represented (including Ankara)² called for: "*a voice and role in shaping migration policies...*"³

UNITAR, SRSG Peter Sutherland, and the aforementioned institutional partners, hosted a first convening of local government representatives on the issue of migration and development during the 2nd High Level Dialogue (on Migration and Development) last October.

¹ Many obstacles exist such as: a lack of capacities, inefficient coordination within the administrations and with other stakeholders, and thus far, limited access to inter-governmental policy circles.

² (including Barcelona, Athens, Lisbon, Paris, Quito, La Paz, Sincan, La Unión, Bilbao, Budapest, San Salvador, Cologne, Ankara, Seoul, Malaga and Milan)
<https://www.unitar.org/ldp/facilitating-policy-dialogue>.

³ "***[requesting] the international community to pay attention to local policies of integration and to take into account cities as key actors in discussions and decision-making processes on the design of migration policies.***"



Access, and voice offered by such gatherings provide an opportune time for *local* government to speak up on what the GFMD Chair has precisely challenged the international community to consider in Roundtable 3 – namely creative solutions to new and emerging issues. Indeed, it is *local* government that is putting forward inter-city resettlement (of stranded migrants) proposals; arrangements for temporary work permits (for undocumented migrants); protections for unaccompanied minors (including alternatives to detention); policy planning on the reintegration of returning combatants; to name a few areas.

Conclusion

UNITAR aims to continue to support Cities on sustainable development and urbanization through partnerships around the world including through its CIFAL Network, with the Government of El Salvador to municipalities in China, South Africa, and South Korea (to name a few). Next month, it will convene a second gathering of local leaders at the UN in New York to discuss the local dimension of the post 2015 agenda. In May 2015, with its partners, the World Bank KNOMAD Project, IOM and the JMDI, it will invite Mayors from around the world to partake in the Second Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development to take place in Quito.

With the guidance of the Turkish Chair and GFMD Troika, it cordially invites further reflection on how to ensure that the voice and impact of local (and regional) government may add to the fruitful deliberations that will take place in Istanbul next October.⁴

We continue to pledge our support to the Turkish Chair.

⁴Beginning last July in Istanbul, we proposed that a side-event on local development take place at the next GFMD which was received favourably by Turkey.