

MECHELEN DECLARATION ON CITIES AND MIGRATION

1. We, Mayors and leaders of Local and Regional Governments, recalling the relevant provisions of the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the New York Declaration on Migrants and Refugees, draw attention to the fact that, although the movement of populations into towns and cities poses a variety of challenges, it can also bring significant social, economic and cultural contributions to urban development;
2. Acknowledging that migration governance is a State's sovereign prerogative, and noting that including local authorities in governance mechanisms can strengthen coordinated action, shape a positive discourse on migration and enhance social and economic integration of migrants;
3. Recognizing that the majority of migrants increasingly seek opportunities in cities which have historically benefitted from migrants;
4. Noting the importance of good migration governance, as presented in the Migration Governance Framework, emphasizing a participatory approach based on the protection of human rights of all migrants, whether internal or international, voluntary or forced, and regardless of the causes, legal status or length of stay;
5. Recalling the pledge of States, reaffirmed in the New Urban Agenda, to enable all inhabitants including migrants, whether in formal or informal settlements, to lead decent, dignified, and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential;
6. Emphasizing that the effective protection and fulfillment of human rights should be provided to all inhabitants of the city without distinction or preference, and that strengthening policies and resources to protect human rights improves institutional capacity to protect all;
7. Recognizes the importance of a community driven approach to local urban governance that clearly benefits communities of origin, transit, destination as well as migrants, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced populations;
8. Recalling States' recognition, outlined in the New York Declaration on Migrants and Refugees, of the particular needs of local governments, who are the first receivers of migrants;
9. Looking towards the development of a Global Compact of Migration, which is expected to provide a unifying framework of common principles, commitments and understandings amongst Member States on all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, recovery, development and human rights-related dimensions;
10. Building on the "Mayoral Declaration on Migrants and Refugees: Meeting Needs, Protecting Rights and Fostering Empowerment" endorsed by the 4th Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development in Berlin, on 27 June 2017;
11. Identify the following migration policy gaps and call on States to consider in the development of the Global Compact on Migration:
 - a. To recognize the support required for cities of origin, transit and return, as well as host destination cities, noting that they have committed themselves "to support host cities in the spirit of international cooperation, taking into account national circumstances";

- b. To systematically treat local and regional governments as part of their nation-State, and not external or non-governmental stakeholders;
 - c. To set up coordination mechanisms, whether formal or informal, to enable local and regional governments to contribute to migration policymaking within a whole-of-government approach with the goal of comprehensive, inclusive and coherent migration governance;
 - d. To enable integrated urban solutions that are inclusive;
 - e. To ensure the roles and responsibilities of local, regional and national governments on migration are clear, including as implementers of the National Migration Policy and National Urban Policy or, coherently, in both.
 - f. To ensure that the allocation of resources to local and regional authorities as well as the service provision, is done in a manner proportional to the growth of the population under their jurisdiction, as well appropriate support in cases of large scale of migration flows
 - g. Enhance the capacity for disaggregated local level data-collection and analysis, including for assessment reports and policymaking;
 - h. Recognize and provide support to local and regional governments in their joint responsibility with the State to ensure safety and access to justice for all.
12. Herewith submit this Declaration and its Annex presenting our actionable commitments, means of implementation, and monitoring and evaluation mechanism as a basis for the first follow-up and review of the migration-related commitments included in the New Urban Agenda, at the ninth session of the World Urban Forum to take place in Kuala Lumpur, 7-13 February 2018;
 13. Herewith further request the Government of Belgium and the International Organization for Migration to submit this Declaration as input to the preparatory process of the Global Compact on Migration ahead of the intergovernmental stocktaking meeting in Mexico, in December 2017.
 14. Call on the next World Council of UCLG, in December 2017, in Hangzhou, China, to endorse and promote the Mechelen Declaration;
 15. Calls on all institutional partners to endorse and support the Mechelen Declaration.

ANNEX

POTENTIAL COMMITMENTS BY LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

We, Local and Regional Governments, commit to work with national governments and other relevant stakeholders to implement the following commitments:

16. We recognize that local and regional governments face specific challenges as places of origin, transit, destination and return for migration, with varying and changing proportions of different kinds of migration, and that the following action areas serve as a minimum operating standard for all, regardless of the current migratory dynamics:

International cooperation and global governance

17. We express our willingness to play an active role in the standardization, collection, analysis, and dissemination of disaggregated migrant data, at local and regional levels; to act on an enhanced capacity in promoting evidence-based migration governance;
18. We note and express our support for including local dimensions within the Migration Governance Indicator, developed by IOM together with the Economist Intelligence Unit, and which reflects migration-related commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals and those of the New Urban Agenda.
19. We commit to provide systematic and timely inputs to and express our willingness to participate as part of national delegations in existing regional and global mechanisms on migration, , including the Global Forum on Migration and Development, UN High-Level Dialogues, and the 2018 intergovernmental migration conference, as provided in the Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration (A/71/728), recommendation 14 b;
20. We recognize that policies of supranational entities on migration have an impact on local action, as well as the importance in good migration governance and sustainable economic development of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation (i.e. between development assistance providers, partners in South-South cooperation and international organizations);
21. We commit to strengthen cooperation among local and regional governments, particularly to replicate successful practices in city-to-city cooperation on migration issues, including across borders, and also commit to strengthening other partnerships, including those with intergovernmental agencies, the private sector, and migrant and diaspora associations;
22. We commit to facilitating programs to increase the financial literacy of migrants and access to financial services, in support of target established by states to reduce the cost of remittances.

Implementation of human rights

23. We commit to work with States to fulfill at the local level their international commitments to ensure full respect for the human rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, regardless of their migratory status, and that of child-oriented policies, where necessary;
24. We commit to work with States in promoting equitable and affordable access to sustainable basic physical and social infrastructure for all, without discrimination, including affordable serviced land, housing, modern and renewable energy, safe drinking water and sanitation, safe, nutritious and adequate food, waste disposal, sustainable mobility, health care, psychosocial support and family planning, education, culture, and information and communications technologies, in a way that is responsive to the rights and needs of migrants, indigenous peoples and local communities, as appropriate, and to those of others in vulnerable situations and [in a manner that]eliminates legal, institutional, socioeconomic and physical barriers.
25. We commit to working with States at the local and regional level in providing inclusive and equitable quality education to migrants, especially migrant youth, and to provide access to life-long learning that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society.
26. We emphasize the importance of promoting complementary modes of international protection, including humanitarian visas with work permits as a means to manage spontaneous, large and mixed migration.

Drivers of migration

27. We strive to develop and use land and property registration without any discrimination and to ensure monitoring and evaluation through disaggregated data relevant to migration;
28. We recognize that climate change drives migration, and acknowledge that action to combat climate change must respect, protect and consider the rights of migrants.
29. We emphasize the importance of foreign direct investment at the local level to grow businesses and promote employment that reduces the drive for irregular migration.

Social, cultural and economic integration

30. We stand ready to work with states, as appropriate, to fulfill their commitments to respect, protect and promote non-discriminatory treatment of migrants, including in their access to health services and education;
31. We note the paramount role of local and regional governments in facilitating migrant integration, particularly by offering language training, skills and entrepreneurship training, skills certification;
32. We commit to fulfill our key role in strengthening the interface with migrants, offering opportunities for dialogue with the host community and effective participation and collaboration with migrant associations;
33. We recognize that, in order to provide a local environment where life in diversity can succeed, other partners at the local level (social associations, schools, youth clubs, sports clubs) need to support this message. These partners constitute the social tissue of society at a local level. We commit to investing in structured bilateral consultations with these partners and engage with them on a shared local platform.

34. We stand ready to assist states, as appropriate, in their commitments to pursue full and productive employment, decent work for all and livelihood opportunities with special attention to migrants, and to promote non-discriminatory access to legal income-earning opportunities;
35. We recognize the contributions of migrant informal workers and seek to enhance their livelihoods, working conditions, income security, legal and social protection, and to facilitate a progressive transition to the formal economy, in line with state commitments in the New Urban Agenda;
36. We stand ready to contribute to the attainment of target 8.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals in which States commit to “Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environment for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”.
37. We encourage national authorities and professional groups and universities to recognize and certify educational and labor qualifications.

Migration and sustainable, resilient, safe and inclusive urban development

38. We stand ready to contribute towards States’ commitments to strengthening synergies between international migration and development at the global, regional, national, and local levels by ensuring safe, orderly, and regular migration through planned and well-managed migration policies;
39. Urban planning is crucial in creating, enforcing and updating zoning to reduce natural disaster risks, improve security, reduce health risks, ensure access to services (including health, drinking water and sanitation education and child protection), ensure access to affordable and safe housing, reduce costs associated with commuting and congestion;
40. Include reference to access to services, including education, health and child protection.

Migrant smuggling and human trafficking, addressing irregular migration

41. We commit to providing access to health, education, and justice regardless of a migrants’ documentation status, by creating firewalls between data collection and service providers;
42. We commit to providing needs-based assistance to victims of trafficking and to smuggled migrants;
43. We commit to support States in fulfilling obligations in line with the Palermo Protocol, on the issue of smuggling as well as trafficking;
44. We commit to collecting disaggregated data on migration in order to more clearly identify labor needs and how both regular and irregular migration supply these, in order to work with the State to provide transparent mechanisms for regular migration and to eliminate the illegal market for trafficked and smuggled migrants.

MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

45. Recalling states' commitment to support local and regional governments in establishing frameworks that enable the positive contribution of migrants to cities and strengthened urban-rural linkages;
46. Recalling also that states have committed to strengthening international cooperation to improve capacities of local and regional governments and to mobilize municipal revenues;
47. Calling on States to align migration and urban policies and to strengthen their support to cities to develop an integrated and nationally coherent approach to city planning, financing and governance, integrating the needs of and support mechanisms for host and migrant communities
48. Commit to evidence based policies on migration related issues, including urban planning;
49. Noting the importance of a differentiated and specialized approach to gender and to providing assistance to minors and protecting their rights;
50. We propose the following action steps:
 - a. Governmental actors at all levels to conduct jointly an initial assessment in terms of
 - o institutional capacity – identify whether the State, local and regional governments have the clear institutional role and the resources required to ensure that migration is well governed.
 - o policy coherence – assess whether sectoral policies contradict each other, or are not in line with international conventions that the state is a party to.
 - o policy comprehensiveness – determine whether migration needs are addressed in all relevant sectors and policy areas.
 - b. The process would ensure participation of migration representatives of major groups;
 - c. The assessment would be focused on the following sectors, depending on the local context, and prioritized in line with the urgency or inter-dependency of the relevant activities:
 - a. Food
 - b. Water and sanitation
 - c. Security
 - d. Infrastructure and communications
 - e. Housing
 - f. Education
 - g. Timely issuance of identification documents and regularization
 - h. Clear and transparent information as to rights and obligations of migrants
 - i. Access to justice / redress.
51. We call on the support of IOM, as the lead agency on migration, given its expertise as HABITAT III Task Team focal point on migration and in light of its leading role on policy and technical guidance towards the Global Compact on Migration, as mandated by the modalities resolution *A/RES/71/280*;
52. We call on the support of UN Habitat, given its role within the United Nations as a focal point on sustainable urbanization and human settlements, including in the implementation, follow-up and review of the urban targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, in collaboration with other UN system agencies and with IOM as focal point on migration;

53. We call for the establishment of a dedicated initiative for cities and regions — especially those for whom migration and displacement are relatively new phenomena— to develop, finance, coordinate, share and pilot good practices in the fields of migration and refugee policy, for instance through a comprehensive management and leadership development programme for city administrations.