



7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Baku, Azerbaijan, 25-27 April, 2016

Breakout Session “The Role of Cities in Global Migration”

Background

Globally, more than half of the population lives in urban areas, with 54 per cent of people residing in urban areas in 2014 alone. In 1950, 30 per cent of the world’s population was urban, and by 2050, 66 per cent of the world’s population is projected to be urban¹. Migrant communities constitute a major part of this urban population growth, with one in five of all migrants living in the world’s 20 largest cities².

The 2015 World Migration Report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) argues that migration is largely overlooked in discussions about urbanization, and when taken into consideration, is perceived negatively. All over the world, there are examples of local and national governments, as well as individuals, blaming migrants for their neighborhoods, cities and nations’ struggles. In this context, migrant communities can rarely feel and act as full and equal members of societies, which can be conducive to social disorder³.

The IOM report shows that poor urban planning can undermine the management of migrant integration in urban areas, and that migration can bring in economic and cultural vitality if migrant and host communities are given the right tools. In other words, migration is one of the main features contributing to urban growth, and it therefore needs to be fully incorporated into urban planning.

2015 was marked by several waves of migration, from the flows of asylum seekers and migrants to Europe and the displacement from new and ongoing conflicts in various countries. This new era has created challenges and opportunities for societies throughout the world. It also has served to “underscore the clear linkage between migration and development,” as the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon explained, as well as the opportunities it provides for the “concerted improvement of economic and social conditions at both origin and destination”⁴.

In this context, the breakout session on Global Migrants and Cities during the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in Baku, Azerbaijan, will explore various initiatives in cities and neighborhoods around the world, and discuss best practices for the integration of newcomers.

Points of Discussion

- What are innovative and practical approaches to the integration of urban migrants?
- What is the role of cities in the integration of migrant communities?
- What is the role of migrants and host communities on migration integration?

¹ United Nations, World Urbanization Prospect, 2014 revision: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/highlights/wup2014-highlights.pdf>

² International Organization for Migration, “The World Migration Report 2015: Migrants and Cities, New Partnerships to Manage Mobility” <https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2015>

³ World Urban Campaign, UN-Habitat Manifesto for Cities: http://mirror.unhabitat.org/images/WUC_Manifestos/Manifesto%20For%20Cities_English.pdf

⁴ Ban Ki-moon, Message for International Migrants Day, 18 December 2015 <http://www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/>

- What role do local communities and neighborhood organizations play in the integration of migrants?
- How can cities contribute to improving the public perception of migrants?
- How can the experience and knowledge of non- governmental actors be utilized and fed into the policy cycle?
- When it comes to religion and places of worship, what are major trends in the integration process of migrants?