



## Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Mayors Mechanism: Enabling Local Solutions for Inclusive COVID-19 Response and Recovery: 22 January 2021

The Mayors Mechanism of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) hosted a session on “Enabling local solutions for inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery.” The session addressed local-to-national frameworks and partnerships for migration policy, as well as priorities for joint action, barriers to success, and solutions for greater collaboration on migration policymaking going forward in the post-COVID-19 era. The event highlighted the need for participation of local and regional governments in the development of migration policies, review of often restrictive national legal frameworks, and direct access by local and regional governments to international funding.

The GFMD Mayors Mechanism was established in 2018. Co-steered by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Mechanism aims to ensure inclusion of local and regional governments within the GFMD process, bringing their voices and expertise into State-led deliberations, and intensifying dialogue between different government levels and stakeholder groups.

The GFMD is a government-led, informal and non-binding process, which helps shape the global debate on migration and development. It was created in 2007 and, while not formally part of the UN system, it coordinates with it in a number of ways. For example, the GFMD provides a flexible, multi-stakeholder space where national governments, in formal consultation with local and regional governments, civil society, the private sector, the UN system, and other relevant stakeholders, can discuss multi-dimensional aspects, opportunities and challenges related to migration, development, and the link between these two areas. The GFMD was instrumental in ensuring the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and paved the way for recent global political agreements on migration, including the 2017 New York Declaration and the [2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#). The GFMD is supported by a Steering Group of 28 member countries and is organized under a rotating Chair, with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) serving as current Chair.

The two-hour session was held virtually on 22 January 2021, within the framework of the 13th GFMD Summit. The Summit convened online from 18-26 January 2021, due to the COVID-19

pandemic, under the central theme “The Future of Human Mobility: Innovative Partnerships for Sustainable Development.”

### Report of the Session

#### Introduction

Sophie van Haasen, GFMD Mayors Mechanism Coordinator, explained the session forms an integral part of the GFMD Summit, creating a space for dialogue among local, regional and national governments. She noted the opportunity to exchange insights on migration policy, including challenges and innovative solutions, in the context of COVID-19.

António Vitorino, IOM Director General, stressed that local governments should be able to participate not only in the implementation but also in the design and evaluation of migration policies, in line with the principles of the GCM. He commended the UAE, as Chair, for facilitating integration of local government perspectives, and the Mayors Mechanism for showcasing the strong determination of local governments to ensure protection of migrants.

#### Round 1: How can policy coordination between local and national governments enable inclusive response and recovery?

This roundtable discussed response and recovery efforts at the local and national levels, including challenges regarding effective local-national coordination and lessons learnt.

Moderator Cécile Riallant, Head of the Migration and Sustainable Development Unit, IOM, stressed that application of the GCM requires recognizing the role of cities in policies related to migration, human mobility, and response to COVID-19.

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Noting the many efforts cities have made to include migrants in recovery efforts despite declining revenues, she highlighted lessons learnt, including that: cities depend on migrants as key workers; the pandemic is exacerbated if many community members are left behind; and failure to include local governments and migrants in shaping migration policies could lead to policies that do not reflect reality.

Alexandra Young, Director, International Migration Policy, International and Intergovernmental Relations, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, presented on collaboration between the federal, provincial/territory and local governments in her country, in the context of COVID-19 recovery efforts. She drew attention to strong collaboration efforts between these government levels, including weekly meetings aimed at information sharing, and the establishment of an inventory of sectors requiring foreign labor. She further highlighted: collaboration with resettlement and integration partners; establishment of the Local Immigration Partnerships; anti-racism work at the community level; and addressing the impact of COVID-19 on communities with a high number of immigrants. Summarizing lessons learnt, she stressed that strong networks and constant communication are critical for successful partnerships.

Carola Gunnarsson, Lord Mayor of Sala, Sweden, said the Swedish governance framework allows for decentralization in sectors such as health and education, recognizing that not all national legal frameworks support local action. Stressing the need for strong cooperation among all government levels and political leadership built on trust, she called for the development of new legislative frameworks that would enable action at the local level to respond to global challenges. She concluded that local and regional governments should become decision-making partners at the global and national levels, rather than only implementing partners.

### ***Round 2: How can national-local legal frameworks enable inclusive response and recovery?***

This roundtable discussed issues related to national legal frameworks governing local government competencies, including whether they sufficiently enable local government to implement COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Moderator Emilia Saiz, UCLG Secretary General, noted this is the first time the GFMD opens its space of dialogue with local governments, inviting participants to use it to raise difficult questions, including the need to change perceptions to promote full inclusion of migrants.



**Carola Gunnarsson**, Mayor of Sala, Sweden, and **Cécile Riallant**, IOM

Salvatore Martello, Mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa, Italy, underscored that the unacceptable penalization of any attempt to salvage human lives in Italian legislation was withdrawn. He noted that, although this withdrawal allows again for an expression of solidarity and respect for human rights in Italy, the residence permit for humanitarian reasons alone cannot address the complexity of migrant arrivals in Lampedusa, let alone in the context of the pandemic. “Migration has always been part of human nature,” he said drawing attention to economic migrants. He recalled the history of Italians as refugees, and called for regular migration channels, protection of the collective memory, and respect for the principles of solidarity and human rights. In response, Saiz underscored the need for regularization of human mobility.

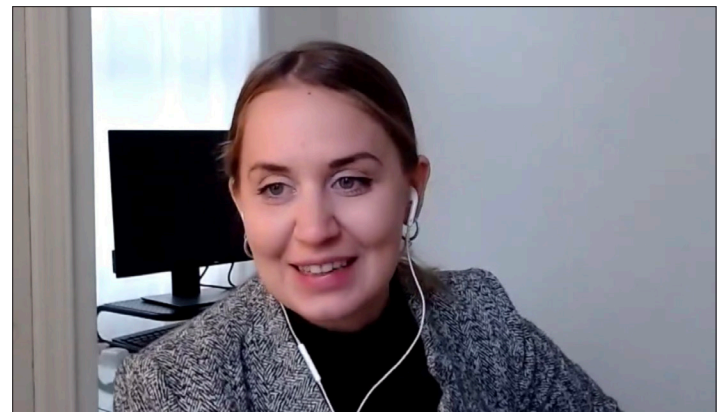
Ahmed Skim, Director of Migration Affairs, Ministry Delegate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Morocco, drew attention to his country’s leadership on migration policies in Africa. He also mentioned Morocco’s new legislative framework granting competencies to local governments, which could be used to support migration policies. He further noted capacity-building efforts, including for local governments to integrate migration issues into their action plans.

### ***Round 3: How can municipal access to international funding and financing mechanisms enable inclusive response and recovery?***

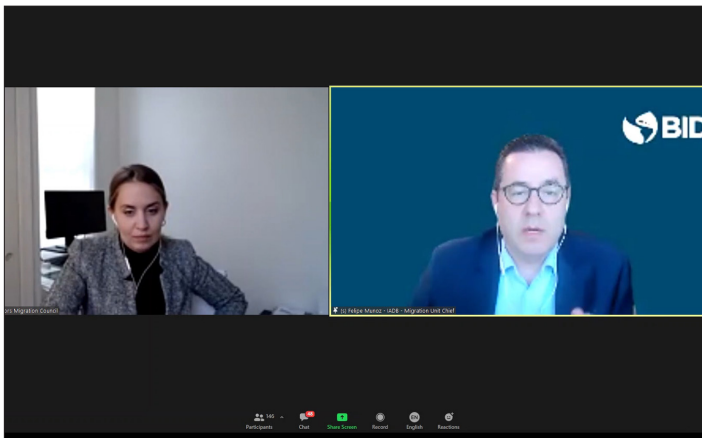
This roundtable discussed ways for the GFMD community to channel international funding directly to cities to enable an inclusive COVID-19 response.

Moderator Vittoria Zanuso, Executive Director, MMC, highlighted losses in municipal budgets around the world, which has resulted in difficulties with service delivery to their residents, and challenges regarding access to international funding. She drew attention to the Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Pandemic Response, an MMC initiative aimed at responding to the needs of cities as they support migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people during COVID-19. She added the initiative will also be used as an example of fiscal feasibility and build precedent.

Jeniffer Villarreal de Hoyos, Secretary of Government of the District of Barranquilla, Colombia, provided an overview of the city’s policies to welcome migrants from Venezuela, who



**Vittoria Zanuso**, Executive Director, Mayors Migration Council



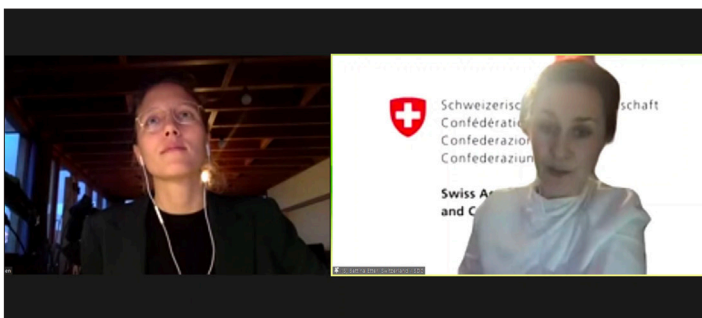
**Vittoria Zanuso**, Executive Director, Mayors Migration Council, and **Felipe Muñoz**, Inter-American Development Bank

currently form nine percent of the city’s population. She noted funding received assisted with the integration of migrants into society and the labor market, including through direct benefits and access to education and legal and medical support.

Felipe Muñoz, Migration Unit Chief, Inter-American Development Bank, presented on the Bank’s direct support for municipal-level work, including in Barranquilla. He said it prioritizes engagement with cities on migration issues, highlighting their vulnerability in the context of COVID-19. He showcased the Bank’s programme on Socio-Urban Integration of Migrants in Colombian Cities, which aims to strengthen the institutional capacity for migrant assistance in subnational entities, increase opportunities for economic integration, and facilitate access to affordable rental housing. He stressed the need to promote co-existence, improve empathy, work with diaspora communities and, for funders, adapt priorities to focus on the local level.

**Open Discussion**

The discussion was moderated by Sophie van Haasen. Bettina Etter, Senior Advisor, Global Migration Governance, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland, addressed financing. Acknowledging cities are increasingly asked to do more with less, she stressed that local development finance is even more important in the context of the pandemic. She stressed the need



**Sophie van Haasen**, GFMD Mayors Mechanism, and **Bettina Etter**, Switzerland

for stronger partnerships involving development actors and banks to ensure access for cities to international financing mechanisms. She further called for active involvement of cities in the design and selection of projects.

Amb. Diego Morejón, Representative of Ecuador to the GFMD, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, Ecuador, drew attention to migration flows in the region over the last few decades. He highlighted national-level processes to create a space for dialogue with local governments and provide free access to health services for people in mobility.

Mohamed Wajdi Aydi, City of Sfax, Tunisia, lamented the limited access of local governments to the development of migration policies and called for attention to both the humanitarian and economic dimensions of migration.

Imen Ouardani, Deputy-Mayor, City of Sousse, Tunisia, pointed to challenges for local governments resulting from lack of competencies according to the Tunisian legislation, and to a digital platform assisting migrants with access to basic services.

Marcela Petrantonio, City of Tandil, Argentina, highlighted the need for collaborative management of migration and additional financing for education and health. Rubén Herrera, City of Tulcán, Ecuador, pointed to activities providing refugees with access to food services, health and education.

In conclusion, Mayor Salvatore Martello encouraged participants to: continue to push for their messages and ideas to be heard in Europe and around the world; “stop the fires of hate that twist the discourse on migration”; and make positive changes.

**Closing Remarks**

The moderators closed the session expressing their appreciation to participants for their contributions and to the UAE, as Chair, for making progress on the inclusion of local governments in the process. They urged participants to “think of humanity as one and single.”



**Emilia Saiz**, Secretary-General, United Cities and Local Governments; **Salvatore Martello**, Mayor of Lampedusa and Linosa, Italy; and **Ahmed Skim**, Morocco