

ANNUAL DIASPORA FORUM

**DIASPORAS AS PARTNERS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN A
GLOBALIZED WORLD**

Organized by

**the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies of the
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
and
the International Organization for Migration**

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FINAL STATEMENT



Ensuring Sustainable Democratic Governance and Human Rights in the Southern Mediterranean

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We, members of the parliaments of European and South Mediterranean countries, representatives of international organisations, diaspora associations, other civil society and academic institutions, gathered in Geneva on 18 May 2018 at the Annual Diaspora Forum of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies organized by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in co-operation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM):

1. Underline the importance of diasporas as prominent development actors and highlight their paramount role in migration governance in a globalized world;
2. Welcome the recognition of the role of diaspora communities as facilitators and partners for sustainable development in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's Goal 17 on partnership, and Objective 19 of the Draft Rev 1 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM or Global Compact); also welcome the inclusion in the GCM Draft Rev 1 of a whole-of-society approach as a cross-cutting guiding principle, as well as the explicit reference to migrants and diasporas in the context of broad multi-stakeholder partnerships to address migration in all its dimensions, and, in this context, encourage:
 - 2.1. The international community and partners from public institutions, private sector, civil society to continue promoting a more balanced narrative on migration, recognizing its overwhelmingly positive impact on sustainable development in all its three pillars – economic, social and environmental;
 - 2.2. Parliamentarians, through their power of parlance, to contribute to changing the often toxic tone of the public discourse on migration to a more evidence-based and historically accurate approach -- an approach that counters widespread but false stereotypes of migrants and misleading "mythology" surrounding the public debate on migration;
 - 2.3. Governments of the Council of Europe Member States to adopt a whole-of-society approach to migration, including by promoting systematic participation of parliamentarians, diaspora groups and other partners in identifying priorities and developing concrete approaches in support of the implementation of the Global Compact;
 - 2.4. Capitalizing on legislatures' authority of policy and law-making, to contribute to making laws and migration policies that help protect migrants' rights making them equal partners for development, including by supporting actions that pay attention to those who are most vulnerable or marginalized, yet mobilizing the capacities of those who become empowered through migration;
 - 2.5. Contributing to global capacity building efforts for the GCM implementation, including by consolidating knowledge on effective migration management practices in specific countries and regions, for example through a Council of Europe Migration Observatory, to feed into the global knowledge network within the framework of a GCM capacity-building mechanism.
3. Encourage governments of countries where migrant communities reside to take concrete action to create a positive enabling environment for the fulfillment of the potential of diasporas as contributors to development by:
 - 3.1. Enabling civic participation of migrants at the local level so that they can contribute to the development of local policies and frameworks that promote their welfare, hence enabling their contribution to the socio-economic development in their local communities;
 - 3.2. Engaging with diaspora community leaders and representatives to detect and prevent incidences of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of anti-migrant discrimination and support joint activities promoting mutual respect and social cohesion;
 - 3.3. Developing effective partnership with diaspora organizations to promote the social inclusion and integration of newly arrived migrants in their communities;

3.4 Facilitating better understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures that diaspora and migrant communities bring through supporting multicultural activities such as sports, music, arts, culinary festivals and other social events;

3.5 Favouring the transferability and portability of social rights, pensions, savings schemes, invalidity rights, and other benefits between the host countries and the countries of origin.

4. Invite the governments of countries of origin of diaspora and transnational communities to:

4.1 Improve the capacity of diasporas to contribute to their countries and communities of origin by facilitating their mobility and providing access to dual citizenship, voting rights, property rights, social rights, national or special identity documents;

4.2 Include actions that maximize positive contributions of diaspora communities into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies in their countries of origin through, for example, involving representatives of diasporas in the preparation of annual development strategies or implementation mechanisms;

4.3 Consult with diaspora communities to address their concerns and eliminate obstacles perceived by diasporas as barriers to their contributions, such as lack of appropriate transport or banking infrastructure, complicated regulatory frameworks, insufficient avenues for effective partnerships, lack of support networks or designated interlocutors at governmental level both in countries of origin and their diplomatic representations abroad.

5. Underline the importance of working towards creating conditions and mechanisms that facilitate diasporas' contribution to economic development, with a focus on supporting investment, entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, innovation and philanthropy, by:

5.1 Providing official support, fiscal or other regulative incentives, such as tax deductions for charitable contributions, legal, information and financial support for business creation and granting seed capital matching, promoting diaspora development funds and dedicated trade fairs, simplified administrative procedures, that create motivations for and facilitate diaspora investment and charitable initiatives;

5.2 Reducing the cost of sending money back to countries of origin through facilitating the cheaper, faster and safer transfer of remittances, supporting smaller diaspora-led money transfer initiatives based on new information technologies that and promoting transparency and competition on the remittance transfer market through promoting conducive policy and regulatory frameworks that remove obstacles to non-bank remittance service providers in accessing payment system infrastructure, provide tax exemptions or incentives for remittance transfers, and eliminate exclusivity contracts

5.3 Supporting the formation of diaspora business networks through diaspora trade fairs and business summits, training programmes on international trade regulations and procedures for diaspora-owned businesses

5.4 creating one-stop-shops that target diaspora investors to help them identify opportunities that are in line with government private sector development policies, accompany them through the necessary administrative procedures, and help address any complaints and mediate conflicts.

6. Highlight the need to work towards enhancing the potential of diasporas' transfer of knowledge and skills and new technologies into countries of origin through

6.1 Supporting the development of diaspora professional networks;

6.2 Facilitating support from the private sector to facilitate skilled diaspora placement programmes in targeted sectors in countries of origin;

- 6.3 Supporting diasporas and their partners in the creation of databases, skills banks and other online tools designed to inform and mobilise diasporas as a resource for development.
7. Encourage parliaments and representatives of diasporas to foster political dialogue and co-operation, with a view to stimulating diasporas' involvement and contribution to sustainable development;
 8. Draw the attention to the importance of investing in research on the impact of non-financial contributions of migrants and diasporas to sustainable development in countries of origin and destination, such as knowledge and skills transfer, political participation and cultural exchange, with a view to developing global indicators, and strengthening global policy discussions
 9. Support the iDiaspora platform as a global diaspora engagement knowledge exchange hub that would serve as a global resource for diaspora communities and those looking to engage with them, as a portal for information and resources and as a platform for networking.
 10. Launch the European Diaspora Prize (EDP) of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies, to be awarded to the most distinguished diaspora association of the year, with the aim of:
 - 10.1. Identifying, celebrating and rewarding the most successful diaspora associations;
 - 10.2. Promoting the best initiatives and practices of diaspora associations;
 - 10.3. Encouraging diaspora associations to develop and implement innovative activities for the benefit of their members, the communities that they live in and their countries of origin.

Done on 18 May 2018, in Geneva, Switzerland.