Speech

**International Dialogue on Migration 2020**

**COVID-19 crisis: reimagining the role of migrants and human mobility for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

**15 and 16 October 2020, Geneva**

**Panel 3: Enhancing migrants’ agency and contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

**Honorable audience,**

**Dear participants,**

International migration is a phenomenon that affects the population globally, in this process being involved almost all countries of the world, some being countries of origin and others of destination. The Republic of Moldova is no exception in this respect, being a developing country, which in recent years has been and is affected by the phenomenon of migration.

In this context, we greet IDM as a very suitable platform for migration policy dialogue, promoting the timely discussions on the implications of the COVID-19 for migrants and human mobility as well as migrants’ contribution to response and recovery efforts.

On this occasion, I would like to thank IOM for organizing this event, and also for our longstanding cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire globe, having negative effects not only on the health of the population, but also on social welfare, which is why migration and protection of migrants is becoming an important topic on the agenda of world countries, giving the fact that migration has grown during the pandemic.

With the outbreak of pandemic, migrants have become very vulnerable, encountering various issues such as job loss, lack of resources for existences, loss of a place to live as well as difficulties for their mobility due to restrictions on circulation.

In the Republic of Moldova, the indicative number of migrants is approximately 800.000 individuals. They currently reside in more than 45 countries of the world. In terms of migrants who left for the purpose of employment, then their figure amounts to 325.000 individuals. The main destinations countries are the Russian Federation, Italy, Israel, Greece etc.

Therefore, proceeding from existing migration profile, the Republic of Moldova took all necessary measures in order to incorporate an integrated approach with respect to labour migration management, which also reacts to those objectives that are included in Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The efforts of the Republic of Moldova being focused on:

* Supporting migrants in distress and ensuring their protection;
* Undertaking reintegration measures;
* Harnessing the potential of migrants and diaspora.

These measures aim at preventing Moldovan nationals abroad of being in distress, their reintegration in the country, but also attracting and transferring of human capital (new working experiences, new skills and knowledge, entrepreneurial ideas etc.) that require to be harnessed and assimilated in the country of origin.

In this sense, we involved the Diaspora in attracting Moldovans who left for studies to return to the country and contribute to its development. At the moment, there are over 6,000 Moldovans studying abroad, based on the treaties that the Republic of Moldova has concluded with other states.

Regarding the social dialogue in the field of social security with the destination states of Moldovan citizens, I would like to emphasize that we are currently discussing and negotiating with the Russian Federation, Spain and the Hellenic Republic, so that in the near future we sign treaties in this field.

However, in the context of returning nationals to the country, the pension rights realized on the territory of the destination country can be capitalized. So far, the Republic of Moldova has signed 14 social security agreements, 13 of which have been successfully implemented.

In the meantime, it is intended to provide economic support to members of Diaspora through developing and implementing various economic empowerment programs such as PARE 1+1, Diaspora Engagement HUB, DAR 1+3. These programs aim at supporting people from Diaspora to implement projects in the country that are meant to improve infrastructural conditions in rural and urban localities, to harness human potential and to contribute to knowledge transfer. They will be used with the aim of contributing to the overall development of the society.

It is important to mention that in the context of the pandemic, when a large part of our fellow citizens returned to the Republic of Moldova, we adopted additional measures to support them. Although they did not work in the country, respectively they were not entitled to unemployment benefits in case of job loss, we provided unemployment benefits in the amount of 2775 lei per month to overcome the difficult situation. Their access to social services for returned citizens has also been increased.

We believe that skills and material resources of Moldovan migrants who are forced to repatriate because of COVID-19 need to be valorised as major contributions for the development of their home country, through putting in place appropriate policies, programmes, and conditions.

We have developed this year with IOM’s support a mechanism for validation and certification of informal skills migrants gained abroad.

Diaspora has already mobilised itself in providing COVID-19 response by delivering support for vulnerable groups in Moldova and in the diaspora. Their contributions through knowledge and skills transfer, entrepreneurship and innovation, trade and investment will prepare the ground for a swifter socio-economic recovery of the country from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

We value the data and analysis drawn from important IOM-led instruments – such as the Migration Governance Indicators, UN Migration Network, Extended Migration Profiles, or DTM surveys, but now we need to act – addressing the mobility-driven COVID-19 development impact in the Republic of Moldova and contributing to an early recovery of impacted groups.

I am convinced that this 20th edition of the IDM will greatly foster cooperation, partnerships, and networks for future practical and relevant action in these challenging times.