

Topic:	International Forum on Migration Statistics (IFMS), Opening panel
Date and time:	Tuesday, 24 January 2023, 09:30 – 10:20 AM
Venue:	ECLAC, Dag Hammarskjold 3477, Vitacura, Salón Raúl Prebisch

IOM Director General Antonio Vitorino

- Thanking ECLAC for hosting, UN DESA and OECD for partnership in organizing the Forum
- Data helps us understand almost all aspects of our societies, from employment to education.
- However, as it has been said, data on migration is not yet as abundant or refined as it is for other issues of global interest. As we heard from the Chilean experience, migration is becoming more relevant in all countries around the world and also in the UN agencies' agenda. IOM is proud to join the third IFMS to share insights from across our Organization what we are doing in terms of data collection and analysis and to discuss the power of data to discuss safe, orderly and regular migration as stated in the Global Compact.
- **When we last met**, at the second International Forum for Migration Statistics in January 2020 in Cairo, the world was a different place. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation we are experiencing, expanding energy and food insecurity have all impacted migrant communities, just as continued climate crisis, political instability and conflict.
- I am delighted that we are able to gather in person at last, here in Chile, to reflect on how these **new and continuing challenges** have affected data collection and data sharing:
 - o from the challenges of conducting 2020 census in many countries during COVID-19 lockdowns, to improving data collection on migrant health, access and inclusion in terms of diagnosis and treatment of migrants;
 - o from addressing emerging yet persistent gaps in data and information on how people are moving in a context of rapid environmental and climate change, and we see that climate change is having a huge impact in forced displacement, to ensuring basic data on migrant stocks and flows that we should be able to disaggregate by age, sex, and gender. This disaggregation is crucial to frame the best public policies to address the needs of migrants.
 - o Many migrants have not been accounted for in data collection systems, due to their lack of formal status. They are invisible. Statistics cannot turn a blind eye to those invisible migrants in irregular situations. Invisibility has many forms. Some groups, such as persons with disabilities, are still missed in our accounting – and I also speak on behalf of IOM, we are undercounting them. At the same time, we likely undercount the number who tragically disappear, even lose their lives, during their journey. Since our last meeting in Cairo, IOM estimates that more than 15,000 people have lost their lives, clearly an undercount.
- We are witness to a growing number of migrants in vulnerable situations:

- Many millions Venezuelan nationals that have moved in recent years, the vast majority of them residing in Latin American and Caribbean countries;
 - In 2022, the number of migrants crossing into Panama across the Darien Gap increased by 86% to almost 250,000;
 - Over the past year, 14 million Ukrainians have been displaced by the conflict, both internally in the country, and across the European continent.
- Indeed, we must look beyond the raw numbers and remember that each number is one person, one human being. We must continue to place data in context, creating **evidence-based narratives** that can help combat xenophobia and discrimination that are also rising everywhere.
 - We must also remember that migrants are not only resilient, but are integral partners, agents of our humanitarian, crisis, and development responses. However, we still lack global comparable data on diaspora numbers and contributions to the development of the countries of origin. I have to recall you that the total amount of remittances sent back by migrants worldwide is more than FDI and development official aid put together. IOM's *Diaspora Mapping Handbook* and guidance on migrants' economic contributions – showcased in the “On the Road to Santiago” webinar series in the run-up to this forum -- is intended to further that discussion about the role of diaspora in the development of the countries of origin.
 - Since our last meeting in 2020, there have been many **important advances**:
 - The UN Migration Data Expert Group has revised migration definitions and data collection methods;
 - The Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS) has issued what I believe is essential guidance on data collection.
 - Some initiatives are a direct consequence of our discussions in Cairo, such as the creation of the African Migration Data Network, a partnership among IOM, the African Union, OECD, the Swedish Government, and African National Statistical Offices (NSOs).
 - We must continue to press to establish collaborative approaches and facilitate these with common standards. There are good practices:
 - the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (R4V), which brings together over 200 partners.

The challenge to make sense of data is real and growing. We may quickly become overwhelmed by the speed and scale of information flow, and struggle to make sense of it, even while the demand for more accurate, timely and innovative insights into human mobility increases. The world is moving more quickly, in and out of crisis, while technology changes our workplaces and communities. As we have just heard including remote work in the statistics is quite challenging.

- In this context, **IOM's priority** is to enhance the quality, availability and policy relevance of global migration and human mobility data, and offer greater guidance and clarity in a world crowded with information and -- too often -- misinformation.

- Core to this is IOM's Global Data Institute, based in Berlin, and bringing together IOM's data capabilities on migration, displacement, and on supporting Member States with capacity building.
 - We want to expand our capacity to contribute to humanitarian responses through Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) that informs 84% of all Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs);
 - o Strengthening our data analytics, including predictive analytics, and data capacity development through partnerships with key stakeholders, in academia, private sector, civil society;
 - o We have invested in regional analysis through nine dedicated Regional Data Hubs. Migration is more and more not a static issue but a flow issue, we need to have a regional approach about migration root causes.
- And of course we will continue to try to innovate as much as we can:
 - o Using Wifi Analytics in **Colombia**, based on internet access points where migrants connect for data collection, to better understand migrants needs. I can assure you migrants may lack many things but they will have a smart phone with internet access and geolocation.
 - o Developing emergency event tracking to complement our baseline assessments in crisis situations, such as **Afghanistan**, to boost the timeliness and comprehensiveness of our humanitarian response.
 - o Using computer assisted telephone interviews, for instance in **Ukraine** to continuously collect data on the situation of almost 6 millions internally displaced persons, identifying their needs and mobility intentions in an almost real time manner.
 - o Working closely with Microsoft Research to publish synthetic datasets based on our **Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative** (CTDC), ensuring the privacy of data and allows the international community to know what the trends are on trafficking.
- Here in the region, we are:
 - o Supporting the South American Conference on Migration in developing a Regional Vision;
 - o Working with Member States of MERCOSUR; and
 - o Developing a technical structure for encryption of sensitive border data to facilitate exchange among migration authorities.
- As John has recalled, the first objective of the Global Compact for Migration focuses on data. As such, the UN Network on Migration is working at global, regional, and national level to improve coordination of migration data.
- Meanwhile, Issue-based Coalitions such as the one in Latin America and the Caribbean on Human Mobility, are hosting the Regional UNNM and Task Force on Data, co-led by IOM, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- As **co-organizers of this third IFMS**, I hope that this meeting can further the momentum of the **Global Migration Data Network** that we have launched in Cairo three years ago.

- In addition to global collaboration, we hope to strengthen the work of the network of data focal points of National Statistical Offices in Latin America and the Caribbean, as we have just heard, based on a Working Group led by our partners ECLAC and UN DESA in the framework of the Statistics Conference of the Americas.
- I am grateful to all of you here for your attendance of this meeting here and online and your commitment – whether in person or online – to this important series of discussions.
- And my particular thanks goes to our great partners in UN DESA and OECD, who continue to strengthen this partnership with their commitment and expertise. The preparations of this Forum started more than a year ago and all three teams have worked extremely hard to ensure we have a successful meeting. I want to thank all the teams involved and wish you fruitful discussions