

A. KEY BOTTLENECKS LINKED TO COVID-19, MOBILITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND 11 ACCELERATION POINTS TO SUPPORT COVID-19 RECOVERY AND ACHIEVE THE SDGS THROUGH MIGRATION

In its 2021 submission to the HLPF, IOM highlighted the important role that well-governed migration can play to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19, stimulate strong socio-economic recovery, and build more inclusive societies that protect human rights and are better prepared to address future crises. Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, this message remains as relevant as before.

As outlined in IOM’s World Migration Report 2022¹, the pandemic reversed hard-won development gains and altered human mobility dynamics around the world, with continued disruptions to travel and mobility from ongoing border restrictions and increased displacement as just two examples among many. In addition, with the global climate crisis unfolding in plain sight and climate-related disaster events increasing, forced migration and displacement are becoming more frequent and are further threatening recovery from the pandemic. At the same time, migrants’ important contributions to the COVID-19 pandemic response – which have been rightly recognized and celebrated in many countries² – are a reminder of the positive role of migration for sustainable development.

States can and should build on the now large base of evidence and understanding of the interconnections between migration, displacement, and sustainable development, and proactively and coherently integrate them into policy strategies and international cooperation efforts. The first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) taking place in May 2022 to take stock of the status of implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is an opportunity for the international community to reinforce the role of the GCM and the power of multilateralism to leverage migration for accelerating response and recovery efforts and keep the achievement of the SDGs in sight. As outlined in the Secretary General’s Report on the implementation of the GCM, “the need for a cooperative framework on migration has never been more apparent, and the foresight of Member States and stakeholders in developing the GCM has never been more evident³”.

Strengthening the positive impact of human mobility on societies and sustainable development can also help to advance key priority areas of the UN Common Agenda and support the role of human mobility as a global public good for a renewed global social contract. This means understanding migration and displacement in the broader context of challenges to the social contract – such as inadequate health systems; gaps in social protection; structural inequalities rooted in racism, discrimination and xenophobia; or environmental degradation⁴ – and reinforcing the role of migration to build stronger communities, thereby ensuring that the future of human mobility is embedded in multilateral and national frameworks for the years to come.

IOM is working tirelessly to support a swift recovery from the pandemic through direct assistance and programming for migrants, displaced populations, and the communities they live in, as well as providing technical advice to governments to advance integrated approaches for sustainable

¹ IOM (2021), [World Migration Report 2022](#); IOM and Migration Policy Institute (2022, publication forthcoming), COVID-19 and the State of Global Mobility in 2021.

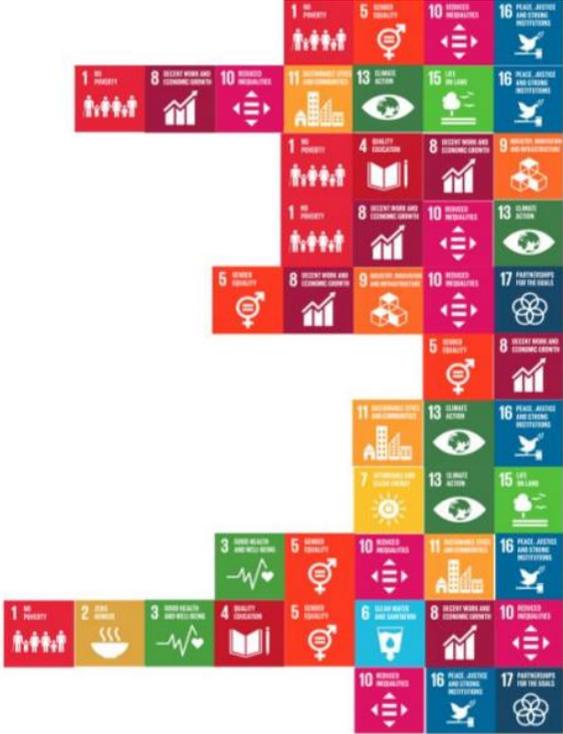
² See [proceedings of the 112th Session of the IOM Council](#) and Statements from Member States.

³ United Nations (2018), [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

⁴ United Nations Secretary General Nelson Mandela Lecture (2020) “[Tackling the Inequality Pandemic: A New Social Contract for a New Era](#)”.

development and migration governance. In 2020 and 2021, IOM proposed 11 actions⁵ to the HLPF that can accelerate sustainable development and advance COVID-19 recovery. These actions, underpinned by its Institutional strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development⁶, apply an integrated approach to migration, recovery and sustainable development, and build on the opportunities the GCM objectives can bring for the achievement of the SDGs individually and as a whole. They directly support the SDGs under review for this year’s HLPF.

- 1 Protect migrants’ human rights, including the protection of social and economic rights across borders
- 2 Identify and address the factors which lead people to migrate in an unsafe manner
- 3 Leverage digitalization to enhance migrants’ well-being and facilitate their contributions to sustainable development
- 4 Restart mobility and expand safe and regular migration pathways in the circular economy to boost recovery efforts
- 5 Empower diaspora groups, migrants and displaced persons, in particular through financial inclusion in line with sustainable and productive investment strategies
- 6 Protect migrant workers along global supply chains and throughout recruitment processes
- 7 Empower local governments and include migrants in local decision-making to support recovery in severely affected urban settings
- 8 Effectively connect recovery with greening the economy and climate action in relation to migration
- 9 Combat xenophobia and harness the positive role of diversity for inclusive recovery
- 10 Ensure equitable access to services to recover better
- 11 Strengthened data, research and analysis on the interlinkages between migration, internally displaced, COVID-19 and sustainable development



IOM’s 11 Actions to leverage migration for accelerating sustainable development and the SDGs they impact.

B. HOW MIGRATION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS UNDER REVIEW

SDG 4 – QUALITY EDUCATION



The closure of borders has stranded and caused economic hardships for hundreds of thousands of foreign students in higher education. Primary and secondary education systems around the globe suffered from COVID-related lockdowns and the introduction of remote learning mechanisms further hindered universal access to education. In April 2020 75% of enrolled learners (over 1.32 billion learners) were affected by school closures, with 139 nationwide closures⁷. Governments should ensure equitable access to services and leverage digitalization to enhance migrants’ well-being and facilitate their contributions to sustainable development, including by lending their skills and knowledge to advance quality education for all. Two of the actions identified by IOM can accelerate progress towards SDG 4:

⁵ IOM (2021), [IOM Submission to the High Level Political Forum 2021](#).
⁶ IOM (2020), [IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#).
⁷ UNESCO (2021). For an overview of COVID-19 impact on education, consult Chapter 5 of the [World Migration Report 2022](#).

➤➤➤ **Ensure equitable access to services as a way to empower migrants to contribute to recovery and sustainable development:** Investing to improve and expand migrant education can be a strategic long-term investment as it is linked to improving migrants' health, income and integration⁸. It can help societies overall to recover better from COVID-19 and ensure that the targets for SDG 4 are achieved together with the entire 2030 Agenda. Numerous governments have advanced policies and initiatives to facilitate the socio-economic integration of migrants into host societies and facilitate the access of migrant children to formal education pathways, allowing them to validate their knowledge and expand their skills⁹. Facilitation of mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competencies should be pursued through innovative solutions in order to avoid the loss of qualified and talented migrants wishing to contribute in their host countries and would ease labour market insertion.

➤➤➤ **Leveraging digitalization to enhance migrants' access to education and facilitate their contributions to sustainable development:** New distance learning technologies have broadened access to education for some, but in other contexts exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, particularly in areas where learners and potential learners experience barriers in accessing technology for learning, be they of financial, legal or practical nature. Migrants with lower income, especially those with irregular status, are facing these barriers. More needs to be done to close the digital divide by improving connectivity and access to digital technologies, ensuring that migrants are not left behind in these initiatives.

Examples of government policies and IOM support on SDG 4:

The city of Milan, Italy, adopted a 2020–2022 strategic plan to improve access to good-quality education, other services and social inclusion for all Milanese children, including migrants¹⁰. At the global level, IOM partnered with UNICEF, ILO, and UNESCO to launch a Toolkit¹¹ for integrating migration into education interventions. It provides information and tools to support partners to understand how migration can be reflected in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education projects or programmes. Together with ILO, UNESCO, IOE, and ITUC, IOM is co-leading the Global Skills Partnership initiative to advance the recognition of skills of migrant workers with a particular focus on women and youth. In various countries, IOM has supported expanding access to migrants for remote education during COVID-19 by assisting migrants in vulnerable situations with equipment and tools to access virtual education¹². In Serbia, IOM is supporting local initiatives in three municipalities to facilitate access to vocational training programmes for youth most prone to unemployment, including returnees. In Brazil, IOM, UNICEF, and UNHCR teamed up to facilitate online access to information on basic services and learning opportunities for migrants¹³.

SDG 5 – GENDER EQUALITY



Discrimination, xenophobia, misinformation and the stigmatization of migrants or minorities associated with migration predates the pandemic and remains virulent with particular impact on women and girls¹⁴. But the pandemic has also increased pre-existing risks of gender-based violence and forms of abuse¹⁵ along the migration journey, such as trafficking in persons and harassment against women migrant workers, all the while they provided front line services in key sectors¹⁶. It has reinforced gender-based inequalities and created new vulnerabilities, as organized criminal networks adapted their modus operandi to border closures and movement restrictions and targeted children

⁸ IOM (2021), *Where are Migrants in the Sustainable Development Goals – SDG 4*.

⁹ UNICEF (2021), [Lifting Barriers to Education During and After COVID-19](#).

¹⁰ United Nations Secretary General (2022), [Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

¹¹ IOM (2022), [Toolkit for Integrating Migration into Education Interventions](#).

¹² See as an example the work implemented by IOM in [Trinidad and Tobago](#).

¹³ See more at [IOM Brazil](#).

¹⁴ United Nations Secretary General (2022), [Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

¹⁵ IOM (2021), [World Migration Report 2022](#).

¹⁶ IOM (2020), [COVID-19 and Women Migrant Workers: impacts and implications](#).

online¹⁷. Three of the actions identified by IOM are accelerating progress towards SDG 5 and should be a top priority for Member States:

➤➤➤ **Protect migrants' human rights through a gender-sensitive approach, including the protection of social and economic rights of women and girls across borders:** Almost half of all international migrant being women. Ensuring that gender considerations, challenges and needs of women and girls, and persons of diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression and Sex Characteristics approach (SOGIESC) are considered and addressed throughout the migration cycle; and combating all types of abuse and exploitation will reduce vulnerabilities for women and girls on the move, whilst ensuring they can actively improve opportunities for human development for themselves and their families¹⁸, further accelerate the recovery from COVID-19, in addition to other positive impacts on sustainable development, such as advancing greater gender equity.

➤➤➤ **Empower women and girls on the move, in particular through financial inclusion in line with sustainable and productive investment strategies:** Women are known to be the ones making the essential of economic, spending and savings decisions for their families. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; recognizing their independence, agency and leadership in order to move away from addressing migrant women primarily through a lens of victimhood is not only indispensable to advance the achievement of SDG 5, but also have cascading accelerating effects on other SDGs, contributing to peaceful societies, equality and prosperity. Ensuring financial inclusion of migrant women can contribute to maximize the positive development impacts of remittances and reduce vulnerabilities by releasing the full potential of women migrants to act as agents of change and contributors to innovation.

➤➤➤ **Combat xenophobia and harness the positive role of diversity for inclusive recovery:** During the pandemic, more than ever, women migrants and ethnic minorities - that make up in many countries the majority of hospitals staff, working as health workers or as cleaners¹⁹ evidenced their indispensable contributions to society, yet they continued to face discrimination and sometimes xenophobia. Governments should avail mechanisms and implement concrete programmes and actions to prevent, detect, and respond to all forms of discrimination or incitement to violence directed towards migrants.

Examples of government policies and IOM support on SDG 5:

In Uruguay, the establishment of the Honorary Commission against Racism, Xenophobia and All Other Forms of Discrimination, proposes policies and practical steps to prevent all forms of discrimination, and the country's national migration policy directly addresses the issue of discrimination²⁰. IOM has continued to emphasize gender equality and mainstreaming in its programming. In 2020, 60 offices reported including gender considerations in immigration and border management programming. In Central Asia, IOM has been working with financial institutions and female remittance recipients to promote the use of digital financial tools and support greater financial knowledge and inclusion of remittance recipients. In Solomon Islands, through research, policy interventions, capacity building and outreach, IOM is developing sustainable solutions to reduce systemic vulnerabilities, to strengthen coordination frameworks and mechanisms, and to provide increased support to vulnerable populations, including victims of trafficking, survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), exploited and abused migrants, and communities at risk of displacement or relocation due to natural hazards and slow onset disasters such as sea level rise.

¹⁷ UNODC (2021), [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020](#).

¹⁸ United Nations Secretary General (2022), [Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

¹⁹ IOM (2020), [COVID-19 and Women Migrant Workers: impacts and implications](#).

²⁰ IOM (2021), [Migration Governance Indicators Profile, The Eastern Republic of Uruguay](#).

SDG 14 – LIFE BELOW WATER



The climate crisis and the unsustainable use of natural resources pose an imminent threat to ocean-based communities, whose economies are already severely impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic²¹. This also is leading to increased pressures for forced migration and displacement. Coastal communities are threatened in their very existence, exposed to adverse factors that compel people to move to areas with more secure livelihoods, sustainable food and income. Two of the actions identified

by IOM can accelerate progress towards SDG 14:

➤➤➤ Identify and address the factors in coastal areas and ocean-based communities which compel people to move or migrate in an unsafe manner: As mobility dynamics are closely interlinked with risks and opportunities in coastal areas, understanding the complex reasons that compel people to move and addressing them as part of a comprehensive response to ocean-based communities can allow to build back better from COVID-19 and accelerate sustainable development. This can inform policy interventions to increase the resilience of coastal communities, reduce disaster risks and achieve the sustainable use of coastal resources.

➤➤➤ Effectively connect recovery with greening the economy and climate action in relation to migration to support coastal areas: Migration can also play an important role in addressing adverse drivers and advancing the sustainable use of coastal resources. The skills and knowledge of migrant workers can fill key labour market needs in the transition to a blue economy, whilst supporting training and re-skilling of local communities in emerging economic sectors. Further, seasonal migration pathways can allow communities in climate affected areas to counter the impact of climate change on local income opportunities. Migration therefore can provide an important boost to blue growth initiatives to address the challenges faced by coastal communities.

Examples of government policies and IOM support on SDG 14:

IOM developed an institutional strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change that is sensitive to the impact of slow-onset events in coastal areas and their impact on migration and displacement dynamics and is supporting governments to address them comprehensively with solutions for people impacted by climate change to stay, solutions for people to move, and solutions for people on the move²². In Timor Leste, IOM is helping to build the evidence base on the impacts of coastal change on migration, with a view to informing the development of national climate change programming. IOM is also supporting communities at-risk to coastal change implement gender-inclusive community-based planning (CBP) initiatives that foster preparedness, prevention and management of environmental migration. In the Republic of Marshall Islands, IOM is working with local governments to establish conservation areas for sustainable use of natural resources and to support livelihoods in atoll communities. In Madagascar, IOM and UNDP initiated a study in 2021 to better understand how the gradual rarefaction of traditional livelihoods of fishing communities impacts social cohesion and how those negative effects can be proactively mitigated.

SDG 15 – LIFE ON LAND



Ecosystems changes endanger ecosystems services that affect drivers of migration²³. As a result, millions of men, women and children around the world move in anticipation or in response to environmental stress or triggers every year. In West and Central Africa for instance, the unpredictability of international herder movements due to climate variations have led to recurrent local conflicts, as mobile herds graze on uncollected crops, thereby diminishing revenues of the sedentary

²¹ UNCTAD (2021), [Impacts and Implications of COVID-19 for the Ocean Economy and Trade Strategy, Case studies of Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica.](#)

²² IOM (2021), [Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021 - 2030.](#)

²³ IOM (2021), [World Migration Report 2022.](#)

farming communities²⁴. Concurrently to the ongoing biodiversity loss, employment loss and premature return of migrant workers; or economic hardship in cities induced by the COVID-19 pandemic have forced millions to settle back in rural areas of origin and has exacerbated negative human behaviors that drive natural resources destruction. Three of the actions identified by IOM can help to accelerate progress towards SDG 15:

➤➤➤ **Identify and address the factors which lead people to migrate in an unsafe manner:** Achieving SDG 15 in the context of recovery from COVID-19 requires deep transformations and integrating migration in these efforts can serve as an accelerator. Identifying and addressing drivers of migration and factors which lead people to migrate is essential, in order to build people’s resilience to remain in place with dignity.

➤➤➤ **Effectively connect recovery with greening the economy and climate action in relation to migration:** Migrants and their families are entrepreneurs, innovators and consumers of goods and services, and they can shape and contribute to the sustainable and resilient transition needed towards a green economy. Governments should work to enable this role, including by enhancing the ability of migrants to move from one job or employer to another, supporting integration into the formal economy, and promoting knowledge and skills transfer between countries of origin and countries of destination.

➤➤➤ **Empowering local governments in this process** can further accelerate the impact of this action as local action can deliver on policies and programmes that are developed at the national, regional and international levels.

➤➤➤ **Restart mobility and expand safe and regular migration pathways in the circular economy to boost recovery efforts:** Migration is part of a suite of adaptation measures, which people use to reduce poverty and boost resilience. Rebuilding and reinforcing legal channels for migration while mitigating the long-term scarring effects of the pandemic, both on migrants and on the many countries that are highly dependent or impacted by migration, with enhanced availability and flexibility of diversified pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration, can prevent negative coping mechanisms that lead to natural resources destruction as vulnerable people fend off to meet their basic needs.

Examples of government policies and IOM support on SDG 15:

The 2019–2024 strategy on drought-related disasters of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) includes efforts to build resilience and promote migration as an adaptation mechanism. In 2021, IOM, ILO, UNHCR and UNOPS launched a regional joint programme to facilitate pathways for regular migration in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region and minimizing displacement risk in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. In the Pacific region, States, UN agencies, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and other actors support a human rights-based regional approach to human mobility associated with climate change, including by facilitating labour migration. The African Union Commission, together with IOM, UNDP, the World Bank and the UNFCCC launched the Africa Climate Migration Initiative, which aims to generate political momentum and resources to harness the potential of mobility in the context of the climate crisis, as well as address climate-forced displacement and migration across the African continent.

SDG 17 – PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



The 2030 Agenda calls for a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development both as an underlying principle and specifically through Goal 17. This call is echoed in the GCM’s “whole-of-society approach”, which underscores how effective migration governance requires partnerships among governments, as well as with migrants and host societies. The first IMRF taking place in May 2022 is an opportunity to contribute to the reshaping of human mobility in the post pandemic era. Therefore, the accelerating actions proposed by IOM and built on the objectives of the GCM

²⁴ IOM (2020), [Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean](#).

cannot be achieved in isolation, they require close coordination among government partners to unfold their accelerating impact on the 2030 Agenda, for instance:

➤➤➤ **Protect migrants' human rights, including the protection of social and economic rights across borders through partnerships:** Partnerships among governments and other stakeholders can ensure the guarantee and protection of rights of migrants across borders, advancing social protection and the portability of entitlements that ultimately strengthen the resilience of societies as a whole. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted once more the importance of social protection systems for societies to bounce back from adverse shocks. The better migrants' rights are protected across borders and against adversities, the better they can actively contribute to the recovery from COVID-19 and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

➤➤➤ **Strengthened data, research and analysis on the interlinkages between migration, internally displaced, COVID-19 and sustainable development:** Similarly, Goal 17 calls for improving migration data and increasing disaggregation of data by migratory status. Strong partnerships boost capacities to address gaps in the quantity, accuracy, timeliness, comparability and accessibility of migration data. Strengthened migration data can therefore support better programming and policies to help protect and empower vulnerable groups and leverage the potential of migration for sustainable development.

Examples of government policies and IOM support on SDG 17:

Social security agreements, such the one signed between Belarus and the Republic of Moldova in 2019, or between Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam to facilitate the portability of pension entitlements for returning nationals remain a key instrument for advancing migration partnerships to achieve the global goals. In 2020, Southern African Development Community (SADC) ministers and social partners adopted a set of guidelines on the portability of social security benefits²⁵.

As the Coordinator and Secretariat of the UN Network on Migration, IOM is coordinating system wide efforts of the UN to advance the achievement of the Global Compact for Migration in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through partnership and strengthened multilateralism. With over 50 national networks in UNCTs established and integrated in UNCTs, the network is strengthening its joint offer of support to Member States to implement the Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration as a key element of strengthened partnerships for achieving SDG 17 and the 2030 Agenda.

IOM and the Migration Policy Institute have produced a report on Impact of COVID-19 on Mobility²⁶, analyzing the trends in travel restrictions and measures applied by governments and authorities and how they have impacted migrants and different population categories on the move. The report concludes with policy implications and developments as well as key decisions and recommendations for states and international community for the process of post COVID-19 recovery. In the Asia-Pacific Region, IOM is currently looking into data on migratory status in the region to complement the 2020 Asia-Pacific Migration Data Report which provided analysis of disaggregated data by migratory status and further by gender, sex, age, geographic location and other characteristics. In Iraq, the Migration Governance Indicators²⁷ process, which identified as critical gap the lack of data collection and use, led to the creation of an Inter-ministerial committee on migration which developed a new national migration strategy to implement the GCM.

²⁵ United Nations Secretary General (2022), [Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

²⁶ IOM (2021), [COVID-19 and the State of Global Mobility in 2020](#).

²⁷ IOM (2020), [Migration Governance Indicators Profile, Republic of Iraq](#).

C. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HLPF DECLARATION

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development has often been described as a “declaration of interdependence”, because of its recognition of the shared responsibility the international community has towards sustainable development, as well as of the interconnected nature of sustainable development issues.

As this review of the SDGs 4, 5, 14, 15, and 17 has evidenced, migration is more than ever a multi-faceted reality that can make contribute to positive development outcomes – on the SDGs as a whole. Human mobility unites societies, economies, and markets in a manner which proved to be resilient despite COVID-19 disruptions. Governments should harness the positive power of migration to fast-track progress toward the SDGs as it provides an opportunity to both protect and empower mobile populations to fulfil their development potential and benefit individuals, communities and countries around the world.

To meet that ambition, and despite the positive progresses presented, efforts are to be stepped up to clearly and accurately speak to the vulnerabilities that migrants face and the protection of their rights, and also to the contribution migrants make to communities and to sustainable development. Within the broader context of societal transformations, such as the changing worlds of work and education and the green transition, States need to work together to promote inclusive societies and include migrants in COVID-19 response and recovery, to promote safe and regular migration, to prevent loss of life and other tragedies during migration, and to build capacities of migration and development stakeholders through a whole-of-society approach.

Beyond the review of progress to specific SDGs, the HLPF Declaration provides an opportunity to answer the call for renewed solidarity and social contract, articulated by the Secretary General in the UN Common Agenda, and to better deliver good migration governance.

IOM encourages States to:

- **Reiterate the importance and transversality of migration as a core development consideration, to build back better from COVID-19, and as an accelerator for the attainment of the SDGs.**
- **Reiterate the centrality of the GCM and the power of multilateralism to leverage migration for accelerating response and recovery efforts and keep the achievement of the SDGs in sight, and to guide the development and implementation of migration laws, policies, practices consistent with its principles.**
- **Strengthen the positive impact of human mobility on societies and sustainable development to advance the role of human mobility as a global public good for a renewed global social contract.**
- **Proactively and coherently integrate migration into national development and policy strategies and international cooperation efforts, including the UN System’s Cooperation Frameworks.**
- **Consider migration as a transversal element of analysis and encourage reporting on migration policies and programmes in their voluntary national review processes, in order to support the sharing of good practices across countries and regions.**