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# **International Forum on Migration Statistics**

## **Closing remarks**

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**Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD**

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Dear Excellences, Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We just had two intense and very fertile days. Trying to summarise the wealth of information and insights you all shared and the breadth of the debates is clearly a daunting challenge. Before I share with you my main take away messages I would like to express a few words of gratitude to those who made this first International Forum on Migration Statistics possible.

I would like first to thank the representatives from Eurostat, UNHCR, UNODC, UNECE, ILO and the World Bank, the key partner organisations of the Forum, who made major contributions both during the preparation and the event itself by organising stimulating special sessions. I would like also to reserve a special gratitude for the dedication and support of our organising partners at IOM and UNDESA who worked so hard to plan and organise this unique event with us. Last but not least, I would like to thank the OECD staff, notably from the Statistics Directorate and from the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate, for their commitment and professionalism, which I am sure you have been able to fully appreciate during these two days.

While our partner organisations played an important role in this Forum, it is the 240 speakers and chairs in plenary and parallel sessions who made this Forum a success. Speakers have come from a wide variety of institutions and countries, all of which have a stake in producing, disseminating, or using high-quality data on migration. While National Statistical Institutes have been the primary and traditional producers of such data—and they have played a leading role during these two days— this Forum has also brought together representatives of international organisations, researchers and policy makers. The breadth and depth of what these speakers have shared with us over the past two days is astonishing.

Let me share with you my take away messages.

Despite the importance of the topic in the media and political agenda of countries worldwide, it is widely acknowledged that there is a paucity of basic data on international migration and that existing data are not fully utilized or shared. The inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has important implications for the collection of migration data, not least because the commitment to “leave no one behind” necessitates a more granular approach that looks beyond averages.

What is more, the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants has set in motion a process of intergovernmental consultations and negotiations which is intended to lead to the adoption in 2018 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and of the Global Compact on Refugees. The associated data needs to support these processes should not be underestimated as we heard notably from Louise Arbour, the Special Representative for International Migration to the UN Secretary General, and from William Lacy Swing, Director General of the International Organisation for Migration as well as from Volker Turk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection. We need to put in place urgently the required statistical infrastructure to monitor the outcomes of migrants and their children, to evaluate progress over time and to assess the impact of collective and country-specific policy responses.

The increased urgency, and broadened scope, of the demand for migration data is putting an unprecedented pressure on data producers, notably National Statistical Institutes. We have heard about their commitment and concrete actions they are taking to fill the main data gaps and respond to the increasing demand for timely and disaggregated data.

This demand is not only coming from policy makers and international processes but also from public opinion, in a context of a looming backlash against migration and migrants in many countries. The challenge here is not necessarily to obtain a consensus on immigration and integration issues, but rather to provide the best relevant evidence to address distorted preconceptions and to differentiate between the past and the current.

In this regard, factual evidence on the characteristics of migration and migrants, on integration outcomes and on the costs and benefits of migration is important. As speakers from the high level panel that took place this morning on this topic clearly mentioned, understanding how public opinions on migration and migrants are formed, and to what extent these opinions can be changed by well-communicated facts, is a fundamental issue in the perspective of much needed migration policy reforms and if we want to make the most of migration and migrants to our economies and societies.

More can be done to further develop and exploit existing traditional data sources, but as it was discussed in one of the plenary sessions earlier today and in several parallel sessions, new technology-driven sources of migration data as well as innovative data source based on public and private administrative data have a great potential. We should do more to harness this potential while addressing some of the legitimate ethical, methodological and quality concerns that some of you also expressed in this regard.

As far as developing countries are concerned, while they host about half of all international migrants worldwide, strengthening international cooperation, facilitating knowledge transfers and providing adequate resources, will be key to reinforce their capacity on migration statistics. We hope that this Forum will contribute to this much needed exchange of knowledge and we are particularly grateful to all the colleagues who made the long trip from Africa, Asia and Latin America to share their experience with us.

More generally, we hope that this Forum has not only provided you with information about challenges, opportunities, and innovations in migration statistics, but has also created a space of exchange. We hope that you have expanded your professional connections to include colleagues from the diverse institutions and countries represented at the Forum. Indeed, one of our goals for this Forum was to put into place a durable network of migration-statistics stakeholders.

We hope that this network will stay on and that this Forum will become a recurring event. The OECD, IOM, and UNDESA will work hard in the coming months to make that goal a

reality, and we hope to welcome you soon to the second International Forum on Migration Statistics.

Thank you,