Welcoming remarks by William Lacy Swing, Director General, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

International Forum on Migration Statistics

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Excellencies, Distinguished Participants and Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen –

It is an honour to welcome you all to the very first international forum exclusively dedicated to migration statistics. First, let me express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to our partners, OECD – and Secretary General Angel Gurría – and UN-DESA for the excellent collaboration in co-organizing this timely event, and particularly to OECD for hosting the forum.

I would like to begin my remarks by paying tribute to my colleague Peter Sutherland, whose passing just a week ago is an incalculable loss to the entire migration community. Peter was a global migration champion, a giant on the international stage and one of the most powerful advocates of migration as essential to global cooperation, international dialogue and human development. In his role as the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for International Migration, he was key to the convening of the first-ever UN summit on migrants and refugees in September 2016, at which IOM formally joined the UN system.

Peter Sutherland's strong advocacy of international cooperation on migration and migrants' rights extended to the need to improve data for fact-based migration policies and accountability. In his landmark report on migration, which came to be known as the "Sutherland Report," he set out a vision for how international cooperation can contribute to effective migration management. The report highlighted how, despite good data being essential to better migration governance, we still struggle to understand some basic facts about migration, *such as who migrants are, where they are, where they come from and why they moved, especially for movements* across countries in the Global South.

The report provided key recommendations on how to enhance our knowledge of migration, which include implementing expert recommendations on traditional sources of migration data, harnessing the potential of new data sources or 'big data', developing capacities to monitor migration-related SDGs and

monitoring the protection of human rights for people on the move. I am glad that these are some of the many aspects that will be discussed over the next two days. This conference represents an excellent opportunity to draw on Peter Sutherland's legacy and work together to make concrete progress in the area of migration statistics.

I would now like to focus on 3 key messages:

1. New era for migration presents new opportunities

2. Reliable and timely data are an essential element of good migration governance

3. IOM's recent efforts on migration data and capacity-building

1. New era for migration

- *Note* that we have been insisting on the need to improve migration data, but never before have we had such a **great opportunity to make real progress in this regard: migration is now at the top of the global policy agenda**. For the first time in history, migration is included in the global development framework – Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The Agenda **strongly reminds us that global development cannot be inclusive and sustainable if we do not protect and empower migrants, too.** Migration is also included in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement.

- *Remind* that the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants represents a major breakthrough: for the first time in history governments have agreed to come together and negotiate the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The Declaration also contains specific references to the need to improve data collection and provide capacity-building as well as technical and financial support to countries in need.

- *Recognize* that while welcoming this historic opportunity to make progress on migration governance, including data issues, we have yet to define a concrete way forward. We do not

have a Global Action Plan for data on migration and development and measuring progress on migration is still very difficult because of the existing gaps and limitations we all know too well.

2. Reliable and timely data are an essential element of good migration governance

- *Mention* that there are at least 3 reasons why the availability of high-quality and timely data on migration is crucial.

  a. *First,* if countries are to implement "planned and well-managed migration policies," we need to ensure that data is available to support each step in the policymaking process – from design to evaluation. Data are essential to devise policy interventions that can allow countries to capitalize on the many, long-term benefits that migration brings, while addressing the short-term challenges that is presents.

  b. *Second*, without reliable data and analysis, the actual and potential impact of migration in our societies can hardly be quantified. We know that entire cities around the world were built by migrants, and decades of research show that labour migration is overwhelmingly positive for all involved. However, more data and analysis are needed to better understand the migration and development linkages. Also, for migrants not to be "left behind", we need to ensure that they are visible.

  c. *Third***,** data enable us to promote a balanced and informed public debate around migration issues – one where real facts and actual empirical evidence can prevail over misrepresentation of the issue for political gain, and the xenophobic and antagonistic public sentiment this fuels. We must be aware that facts may not suffice to persuade those who fear the inevitable social change migration brings. But now more than ever we have to insist on building the evidence needed to understand how to make migration work for everyone – origin and destination countries, as well as migrants themselves.

3.   IOM's recent efforts on migration data and data capacity-building

- *Conclude* remarks by mentioning a few recent examples of IOM's activities in relation to migration data and data capacity-building, in partnership with others.

  - *First,* in the humanitarian context, understanding mobility in crisis situations has been one of the major priorities for IOM operations over the past years. For instance, the humanitarian community at large uses IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to adjust programming during its implementation. The data produced from these exercises, covering some 40 countries and millions of displaced individuals. The DTM is a key example of how an effective migration data management system can inform better decision-making in crisis situations.

  - *Second*, in December 2017, IOM launched the Global Migration Data Portal, a one-stop-shop for international migration statistics – the first of its kind. The Portal represents IOM's response to the need to promote better migration data collection and enhance migration data sharing, but also to improve communication about basic migration facts, which is crucial given today's often toxic debate on migration. The Portal allows anyone interested in migration to easily navigate the complex world of migration statistics. I take this opportunity to thank the German's Foreign Office and the US Department of State for providing financial support for the implementation of this ambitious project.

  - *Third,* IOM's Data Analysis Centre is just about to launch a report on the value of migration data, produced with analytical support by the Consultancy McKinsey&Company. The report urges governments to put data at the centre of the debate on migration using a "value-driven approach". The innovative aspect of this report is that it provides concrete examples of how investments in migration statistics can maximize the value of migration for human development, and tackle the challenges it presents. It also provides guidance on where data investments should focus to achieve the greatest impact in communities of origin, transit and destination.

In closing, I would like to emphasize how **the overall improvement of data on migration cannot be achieved by any one organization alone: we need to work together in partnership for real progress to be made**. This first forum exclusively dedicated to migration statistics provides a timely and much welcomed opportunity to promote dialogue and effective cooperation on this important issue. We value our partners and believe that effective collaborations will be crucial to enhance the data landscape, deepen our knowledge on migration and appropriately act upon it.

So let me warmly welcome you all again and wish you a very fruitful discussion over these next two days.