
10th UNAOC Global Forum, Cascais, 25-27 November 2024

Thematic Panel 3:

“The contribution of migration in building peaceful and inclusive societies for Sustainable Development: Forging a new social contract, sharing good practices”

27 November 2024, 9:00 – 11:00, Estoril Convention Centre

Draft

Migration is a key driver of sustainable development, benefiting both migrants and their communities¹ by fostering economic, social, and cultural growth in host societies, while also enhancing the livelihoods of their countries of origin through remittances and knowledge transfer.² As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the integration of migrants into societies is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to a well-managed national policy framework that facilitates migrants’ ability to contribute to their host societies, effective local and community-driven approaches can transform diversity into an asset, fostering innovation and cultural enrichment while contributing to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.³

UNAOC has long recognized the importance of migration in building inclusive societies.⁴ Through its various programs, UNAOC has worked to promote positive narratives around migration and counter xenophobia and discrimination. By shifting the discourse from challenges to constructive perspectives that emphasize mutual understanding, cooperation, and growth for both migrants and host communities, UNAOC addresses objectives 16 and 17 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.⁵ Over the years, UNAOC has launched several impactful initiatives that underscore its commitment to these goals, including the #SpreadNoHate initiative, the development of a Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration, the City Dialogues series, and the "News Generation Against Hate" project, which have collectively contributed to shaping a more inclusive global narrative on migration.

¹ The Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, A/69/302, 2014, p.7. Available at: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/UN_Documents/69th_Session/A_69_302.pdf

² IOM, The Contributions of Migrants and Migration to Development: Strengthening the Linkages, 2017. Available at: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Contributions-of-Migrants-and-Migration-to-Developm.pdf

³ Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), Background Paper: Improving the perception of migration in public opinion through narratives, culture, emotion, and rational discourse, 2023, p.2. Available at: <https://www.gfmd.org>

⁴ United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Report of the High-Level Group, 2016, pp. 29-31. Available at <https://www.unaoc.org/who-we-are/high-level-group/>

⁵ Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, 2018, p. 6. Available at: https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

As we reflect on these initiatives and their impact, it becomes evident that the positive integration of migrants into societies is based not only on policy but also depends on the active engagement of host communities, the strategic role of cities and local governments, the influence of media narratives and the participation of youth and civil society.⁶ The session aims to explore how these stakeholders can work collaboratively to harness the benefits of migration while addressing challenges related to social cohesion and sustainable development. In addition, the discussion will explore the important role of cities and local governments in fostering inclusive environments and the specific strategies they can employ to facilitate dialogue and support the integration of migrants at the grassroots level.

Lastly, the session will examine the critical role of media and communication strategies in shaping public perceptions of migrants and will explore how to counter xenophobic narratives and promote positive, evidence-based stories that highlight the contributions of migrants to their host communities. Recognizing the importance of youth and civil society in this process, the panelists will also exchange views on best practices for engaging these groups in creating and disseminating narratives that support social cohesion and inclusion.

This discussion aligns with the Pact for the Future,⁷ which aims to maximize the positive contribution of migrants to sustainable development and strengthen international partnerships for safe, orderly, and regular migration, ensuring the safety, dignity, and human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status.

The speakers will address the following guiding questions:

- How can we further integrate the positive contributions of migrants into national development strategies for achieving the SDGs?
- How can local communities and civil society organizations foster trust and cooperation with migrants to create an inclusive environment that supports peaceful coexistence?
- What specific strategies can local governments employ to facilitate the integration of migrants at the grassroots level, and how can they act as effective facilitators of dialogue and inclusion?
- How can local media and communication strategies be leveraged to counter xenophobic narratives and promote positive perceptions of migrants?
- What are the best practices for engaging youth and civil society in creating narratives that support social cohesion and inclusion?
- How can communities, local governments, media, youth, and civil society collaborate more effectively to maximize the benefits of migration for sustainable development?
- How can digital platforms and new technologies be used to improve communication between migrants and host communities, and what role can they play in countering misinformation and fostering inclusion?

⁶ Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), Background Paper: Improving the perception of migration in public opinion through narratives, culture, emotion, and rational discourse, 2023, p.5-11. Available at: <https://www.gfmd.org>

⁷ Pact for the Future, para. 25(e), p. 7, 2024. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf