

Latest round of UN-led global consultations spotlights migrants' contributions to development

24 July 2017 – Although the net benefits of migration far outweigh its costs, the public perception is often the opposite, a senior United Nations official pointed out today, as the latest round of consultations on a global compact for migration began in New York.

“Such public perceptions and attitudes negatively influence sound migration policy choices,” said Louise Arbour, UN Special Representative for International Migration, in her remarks to the session, which wraps up tomorrow at UN Headquarters in New York.

“This must be reversed so that policy is evidence-based and not perception-driven. Policies responding to false perceptions reinforce the apparent validity of these erroneous stereotypes and make recourse to proper policies that much harder,” she added.

The consultation is the [fourth](#) in a series of six thematic consultations that will take place this year and feed into the drafting of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration ([GCM](#)), expected to be adopted by UN Member States in 2018.

An outgrowth of the [New York Declaration](#), adopted at a 2016 UN Summit on [refugees and migrants](#), the Compact will be the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the UN, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a comprehensive manner.

The current consultation, conducted by representatives of Member States, UN agencies, civil society, migrants and diaspora, examines the challenges and opportunities in leveraging the economic and social contributions of migrants to countries of origin and destination.

Ms. Arbour pointed out that in 2016 migrants sent \$429 billion to their countries of origin – one of their most tangible contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) in developing countries.

More than three times larger than official development assistance (ODA), and more stable than other forms of private capital flows, remittances – as such transfers are known – to developing countries have lifted millions of families out of poverty, she said, while stressing the need to lower the associated transaction costs to leverage remittances for development.

Migration also provides substantial development benefits to places of destination, for both developed and developing countries, particularly through the contribution of labour migrants of all skills levels, she argued.

However, there can be upfront adjustment costs in the short term that need to

be addressed, she added.

In his remarks, Director General of International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) William Lacy Swing emphasized the advantages of making sure migration is considered in development planning.

He cited the need to ensure that migration is seen as an issue affecting all aspects of human development, including human rights, and the importance of mainstreaming migration in the broader development strategy.