Background Paper for Roundtable 2.1
Migration, Diversity and Harmonious Society

One of the preconditions for a nation, to develop, is living together in harmony, respecting cultural diversity. The effects of globalization can be witnessed today almost all around the world. Among the consequences, it is necessary to underline the co habitation of diverse, more and more heterogeneous, populations of different origins. Today, it is rare to find a homogeneous and mono-cultural country.

Like people everywhere, migrants, as social beings, belong to multiple networks that respond to personal, national, religious, socioeconomic, professional or broader associative needs and obligations. Two of these networks are of particular importance in terms of their impact on the nature of the migrant experience: the one existing in the society of the country of origin and the one in the society of the country of destination. Migrants' relations, with the host country largely determine their migration experience (i.e. whether it is positive or negative). In this background paper, the focus is on the migrant's relationship with his or her host society.

Migrant's insertion and settlement in the host societies as a multifaceted phenomenon:

There are around 1 billion internal and international migrants around the world, co-existing with some 6 billion natives striving to develop shared understandings as a means to create harmonious and peaceful societies. This process, however, is dependent, to some extent, on appropriate policy frameworks and sound integration policies.

Three main policy models have been implemented and discussed over the years: *assimilation*, *integration* (including interculturalism) and *multiculturalism*.

Each of these concepts has many variants and probably none of them has existed in a "pure" form but, in brief:
- ➢ Assimilation is the process through which migrants are expected to adapt to the host society, with a view to be completely identified with the native population. They have to relinquish important parts of their cultural and/or religious identity in order to fully do so. The best indicator of assimilation is the total disappearance of migrants' national and cultural specificities in the public sphere. It requires them to undergo an overall transformation by adopting its norms, values and ways of life (by implication, setting aside their

original set of life references) in order to be recognized as equal members of the society. Assimilation leaves no room for heterogeneity and diversity and refers to nation-states with mono-cultural, mono-ethnic and mono-religious characteristics.

➢ The multicultural model allows for the existence of a plurality of communities living side by side with a rather low level of interaction between them and with the receiving community (thus sometimes referred to as "communalism"). According to this concept the preservation and development of the cultural and social life of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities – and thus diversity – should be preserved. Multicultural policies have actively encouraged immigrants to retain their identities. Some might say that this has led to segmented societies, threatening social cohesion (multiple parallel societies or ethnic enclaves made up of first, second, and third generation immigrants with different cultural values and ways of life with a possible risk of conflict with host societies norms), whereas others argue that flourishing cultures of different origin within cities are part of the social fabric that make them dynamic.

➢ Integration is a two-way process of mutual adaptation of migrants and the host society, i.e:

- The willingness and an *individual* effort to fit and to adapt oneself to the host society by migrants (person's integrability)
- The integrative capacity of the host *society* (including by its members) to adapt to a changing society.

The integration approach aims to create harmonious societies by enhancing social cohesion and to encourage a "living together" in peace and mutual understanding. Integration calls for sound integration policies enhancing the integrative capacity of the host society. The process of integration can succeed only by protecting, at all costs, the social cohesion of the host society and vice versa. The social cohesion is at risk in the absence of social integration. According to a report by the OECD cohesive societies are those that "*works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust*, and offers its members the *opportunity of upward mobility*".[1]

The model of social integration, in its preliminary conception aimed at avoiding the societal segmentation (parallel societies) caused by certain forms of multiculturalism(s) and the political reactions of certain communities to assimilative pressures, inequalities and segregation they experienced on the grounds of their race or culture. One tool adopted to managing diversity in a way which does not undermine the policies of migrants full integration is

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[1] OECD (2012) *Perspectives on Global Development 2012: Social Cohesion in a Shifting World*, http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/development/perspectives-on-global-development-2012_persp_glob_dev-2012-en" \l "page19"

intercultural dialogue, "an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect"[2]. The Intercultural approach to diversity through dialogue goes beyond equal opportunities and respect for existing cultural differences (and communities), to the pluralist transformation of public space, institutions and civic culture through a cross-fertilization across all boundaries, between "majority" and "minority" cultures, dominant and "sub" cultures, localities, classes, faiths, the business sector, diasporas etc. as the source of cultural, social, civic and economic innovation.

The intercultural approach strives to stick, according to Emile Durkheim, to the main pillar of social cohesion, the internalization of common norms and values of individuals through a collective consciousness and social control. We should add at this stage that these norms and values should be agreed and accepted by all parties (migrants and foreign born citizens included), given that social cohesion does not apply anymore to mono-ethnic and mono-cultural societies, as was the case in the era of Emile Durkheim, but to multi-ethnic and multicultural societies of today.

There are social divisions when a group excludes itself or is excluded from the society: the social bond is affected, with risks of social segmentation and that groups ignore, reject or dispute the political system and social peace of the receiving society.

The sequence of applying these models is partly a historical one. **Assimilation** was popular in the fifties and sixties, when the world was a much larger place, and travel to a distant location meant almost complete isolation from one's former country, family and friends.

The move towards integration came with the development of transport and technology as well as with the recognition that it was neither possible nor desirable for migrants to shed their past selves in order to become an indistinguishable part of their host society and that it was more realistic to aim at **mutual adaptation**.

While some countries initially adopted the assimilation model, others were promoting **multiculturalism;** hosting a multiplicity of ethnic groups practicing particular lifestyles, cultural traditions and language; and maintaining social support networks. The multiculturalist approach meant countries allowed the co-existence of different migrant groups with nationals, promoting their structural integration, through access to the labour market while refraining from policies that would try to address cultural differences. Integration is currently the dominant model. Nonetheless, these are broad categorisations of approaches and their application tends to vary according to country-specific contexts.

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[2] White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue

Regardless of policy frameworks that are in place, our global living environments – our cities especially – are moving relentlessly towards greater, not lesser, diversity in the era of globalisation. Demographics indicate that most countries of the world will in future become more multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious. The challenge for migration policymakers everywhere – and, hence**, the objective for this roundtable of the GFMD – is (to explore) how to obtain positive outcomes from that diversity**.

Promoting social cohesion and diversity

There is increasing recognition of the fact that, if well governed, diversity brings opportunities, such as skills, social capital, entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity. In this context and further to the social issues migration raises, a dilemma remains unresolved: what makes a society hold together? Following are some of the key issues and concerns that may have to be addressed to determine the best way forward.

1. One enduring and largely unresolved question is the location of the onus for change. At various times in the past, responsibility for the adjustment has been placed on the shoulders of migrants or on those of the host society. As an alternative, perhaps we might need to face the possibility of shared responsibility and solutions coming up through cooperation, understanding and mutual respect.

2. Every migrant is a human being with inherent rights that should be promoted and protected, without discrimination, including with respect to their nationality, religion and migration status or other grounds. Nevertheless, migrants often face precarious working conditions and lack of respect of their rights, with xenophobia and racism influencing the political and public discourse in many countries. They experience discrimination, marginalization and exclusion from the societies they have joined. They often carry along vulnerabilities that are related to a variety of factors, including the situation in the countries they left, conditions they have faced on their ways to or upon arrival as well as vulnerabilities based on other characteristics (age, gender, disability etc.). Achieving effective participation of migrants means that societies and states embrace diversity through protection of migrants that is in full compliance with international human rights standards. The core international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers or the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination provide the international legal framework for States to protect and promote the human rights of all migrants in a non-discriminatory manner. Other relevant covenant and conventions, including the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions as well as non-normative multilateral efforts, such as the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, promote efforts to harmonize the coexistence between migrants and host societies worldwide.

3. The issue of the perception of migrants requires careful attention: The current migration "debate" is largely one-sided, with emphasis on short term issues and a

strong security focus, driven by mounting fears of the otherness and negative stereotypes. As such, the positive economic, social and cultural contributions of migrants have been overlooked or ignored, leading to an unbalanced and harmful public discourse. There is an urgent need to consider effective ways to change the negative migration narrative to one that is rights-based, historically more accurate and giving credit to migrants for the constructive role they have played in building national economies sustainable growth and development in the host countries. It is equally important to counter growing racism and xenophobia at all levels, and to shape a public narrative that is based on diversity, equality and mutual understanding. The key role of cities in migrant integration is paramount given the propensity of many of them to promote their own unique and innovative ways to ensure migrant integration and to promote social cohesion in local societies. Cities are in many cases less influenced by broad negative public perceptions, and national government discourse on migrants, tending to respond to real needs at the local level.

4. Security concerns must be addressed directly. Violent extremism is an issue of universal concern and cannot be ignored. There are multiple levels and types of concern that require dispassionate and objective examination, having to do with the management of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations, the management of xenophobia, social, religion and race-based exclusion as well as other forms of discrimination, and marginalization as well as with issues of youth radicalization and disaffection, but above all the need for preventive measures with a view to create a sense of belonging among those at risk of becoming marginalized or alienated.

5. While governments clearly have a very important part to play in the development of overarching policy frameworks, it is local authorities, the private sector and in particular employers, as well as the civil society, including migrants themselves that are engaged in ensuring positive migration outcomes. Moreover, more than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas with the majority of migrants and displaced populations also moving to urban areas. Cities can act as locomotives of social inclusion, but often are not well equipped to do so. The consequences are mostly felt at the local level, through the effect on issues of social cohesion, societal tensions, problems in the labour market and the need for public service provision. Moreover, some migrants may feel that they are belonging more to the cities of destination or origin than to the corresponding states. Local authorities are therefore becoming increasingly responsible for many aspects of managing diversity and should adopt an urban governance that facilitates the integration of migrants and guarantees social sustainability, by promoting equality of opportunities and mitigating xenophobia, thus ensuring social cohesion and successful integration. It is therefore, through people to people encounters in workplaces, schools, community centres and out in the streets at the local level that harmony can also be produced out of diversity and policy interventions must be directed to that level as well, or as Saunders put it: "(Arrival cities) are not just the sites of potential conflict and violence but also the neighbourhoods where the transition from poverty occurs, where the next middle

class is forged, where the next generation's dreams, movements, and governments are created"[3]

The way forward?

The issues of welcoming social diversity and achieving social harmony, must be placed in a broad context that extends far beyond human mobility, and is based on the protection and promotion of migrant`s human rights, if solutions are to be explored and found. For a wide variety of reasons, including but not limited to mobility, social spaces all over the world are becoming increasingly diverse.

There is much evidence to suggest that today's challenge is to achieve harmony *in the midst* of diversity. The question then arises whether a new policy paradigm is needed. Perhaps one that would uphold a core of fundamental, universal values to which everyone could adhere to: human rights and equality, democracy, the rule of law and respect for all (part of the democratic regime), might be examples of universal aspirations that could lay the foundation for harmonious societies. Within the upcoming New Urban Agenda that will be created within the framework of the Habitat III proposals for sustainable urban development will also be globally agreed. Rights-based, non-discriminatory and inclusive urban planning as well as good management of migration and displacement at the local level are considered as a success factor for achieving sustainable urban development more broadly. Moreover, the newly formed Sustainable Development Agenda also vies for the planned and well-managed implementation of migration policies, including other migration related targets under a number of goals and more specifically the one calling for cities to become inclusive. For achieving inclusiveness, policies taking into consideration country specific values, cultural norms, codes of conduct, shared histories and customs as well as common meeting places might enhance social bonds in the receiving society.

Preliminary Recommendations

1. Promote structural integration through the insertion in the labour market of migrants and refugees, based on the principle of equal chances, of non-discrimination and the respect of social and economic rights;
2. Promote access to citizenship and the encouragement for migrants and their descendants' participation in the civic and political life;
3. Adopt sound legal frameworks to combat xenophobia, racism, segregation and inequalities between the foreign born and the native population;
4. Promote education that respects other civilizations and cultures and a curricula addressing the multicultural population of pupils and students (including courses in mother tongues of non-native children);
5. Adopt policies that are open and tolerant to cultural particularities, without institutionalizing cultural differences or promoting assimilation to the predominant national culture;

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3 (Saunders, 2010)

6. Promote an intercultural dialogue that dissociates culture from radicalism, terrorism and criminality;
7. Media should be encouraged to give room to diversity including through documentaries and facts;
8. Promote diversity management at local, national and supranational levels, while ensuring that diversity policies are designed and adopted through dialogue and a bottom up approach, involving all stakeholders, local communities, migrant communities, the civil society and the private sector.

Guiding Questions

1. *What **legal, institutional and practical measures** are in place to ensure a **peaceful, non-discriminatory and inclusive society** in your country at both the national and local levels, in particular with reference to:*
   - *Facilitating the economic, social, cultural inclusion and political participation of people from varied cultural backgrounds, including migrants.*
   - *Stakeholders involvement in increasing community participation, fostering a sense of belonging among migrants and building social cohesion in the face of growing cultural diversity.*
2. *How could **regional and international institutions and processes, including local involvement**, be better geared towards cooperation and collaboration on inclusive and harmonious societies?*
3. *What is the **relevance/role of local authorities and actors**, especially in cities, in creating an enabling environment for migrant inclusion, access to services, ensuring civic participation and social cohesion? What are successful examples of urban projects and policies in this regard?*
4. *What is necessary to **promote broader appreciation of co-existence of different cultures and counter xenophobia and negative perception of migrants**? What are successful practices in your countries (e.g. educational curricula and pre-departure programmes) in supporting cultural and social cohesion, human rights and gender equality and addressing the perception challenge in collaboration with governments, media, civil society and the private sector?*
5. *What are possible preventive policies / measures to address **security concerns and prevent violent extremism** through proactive and long-term integration measures?*

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