

Statement of *United Cities and Local Governments* IOM Council 2016, Geneva 5 December

Delivered by Emilia Saiz, Deputy Secretary General of UCLG

Excellencies,

Allow me to start by expressing our gratitude for being given the opportunity to bring the voices of mayors, councilors and local leaders from around the world to this distinguished gathering.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the world organization of local and regional governments and their associations, and represents their interests on the world stage.

Originating in 1913 our network includes over 240,000 towns, cities, regions and metropolises, and over 175 associations of local and regional governments in 140 countries. Our members represent over 70% of the world population.

Among our strategic policy priorities, UCLG promotes local democracy, sustainability and human rights. In the coming period we will particularly focus on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, enhancing local finance, innovating in urban development, social inclusion and city diplomacy.

Although migration is not a new phenomenon --- it has occurred throughout human history --- it is currently a global trend with tragic circumstances that are getting unprecedented media attention and impacting at multilateral, regional, national and subnational levels.

In a context where human mobility is becoming the norm and where urban areas are home to over half the world's population, policy makers are faced with a very complex topic with great domestic repercussions.

More than ever before, migrants are playing an important role in the global urban shift, and in driving cities' development agendas.

Local governments will need to create opportunities, value the contributions of newcomers to local development and encourage understanding of migration among their communities.

Without the full involvement of local communities and policy makers, it will not be possible to guarantee the development of the

multicultural social fabric needed to build diverse, creative and resilient societies that can welcome those seeking a better future.

In a joint declaration in October, over 3500 local leaders gathered at the UCLG Summit in Bogotá agreed that, despite its challenges, the current context should be seen as a moment of unprecedented opportunity that needs bold undertakings. These include: the renewal of governance models; a new social contract and a shift in the priorities of governments at all levels to eradicate inequalities, including those related to migration.

Local and regional governments will need to be at the center of policy processes, translating normative ideals into concrete policies that will remake human settlements as the primary driver of a new, sustainable era.

We believe the collaboration between *United Cities and Local Governments* and the *International Organization on Migration* will be instrumental to change the global narrative on migration.

We are convinced that the answers generated within urban settlements and territories will pave the way for global solutions, and we are committed to undertake our responsibility to improve conditions for a better future for all.

We are therefore honoured to take part in the work of the International Organization for Migration and to be able to contribute as observers to the meeting of this Council.

Allow us to end by congratulating the Organization on its 65th anniversary and for becoming part of the United Nations System. The constituency of local and regional governments we represent is willing and ready to support the crucial work that you do.