



Remarks at the Commemoration of International Migrants Day

**Mr. Alain Sibenaler, UNFPA Representative
and UN Resident Coordinator
18 December 2020, Kampala**

**Our Chief Guest, Hon Minister Hilary Onek
Representatives of Ministries, Departments and Agencies,
The Chief of Mission of IOM, Mr. Sanusi Tejan Savage,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Representatives of UN agencies and civil society organisations,
Local Government Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of the United Nations in Uganda, I welcome you to the Commemoration of International Migrants Day 2020. Since 2001, the 18th of December has been a day when the Member States of the United Nations take time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of migrants to society – both where they originate and where they migrate to.

But today we are also called upon to remember and address the challenges facing migrants or associated with managing migration. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reminded us in his message last year, migration has always been with us. He said: **“Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual’s will to overcome adversity and to live a better life.”**

Today, more than 272 million people across the world live and work outside the countries where they were born. That figure includes hundreds of thousands from Ugandans. As more people migrate, challenges increase. These challenges need to be addressed in view of making Migration safe for migrants and for the countries involved. The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) was adopted by the majority of the UN member-states to help improve the management of migration in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. By actively pursuing the GCM objectives, humanity can reap maximum benefits from migration, while addressing related challenges.

The United Nations stands ready to continue working with the Government of Uganda on the issues captured in the Global Compact’s 23 objectives and particularly supporting stranded migrants (Objective 5); fighting trafficking in persons (Objective 10);

strengthen health in immigration and border management (Objective 11); facilitate returns and reintegration (Objective 21). Amongst significant actions, in July this year the UN and the Government of Uganda launched the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons and National Referral Guidelines for handling Victims of Trafficking.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted greatly on migrant workers. Many Ugandan migrant workers particularly in the Middle East lost their employment but were unable to return home due to travel restrictions. Over the last three months, the UN has returned more than 200 stranded vulnerable Ugandan migrant workers .

The UN System in Uganda would like to thank the Government of Uganda for creating conducive, supportive and collaborative environment for the UN to support on critical issues such as migration. Indeed, the issues in GCM are also addressed in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021 - 2025 , which was launched His Excellency President Museveni in September. It is also worth noting that the Cooperation Framework is properly aligned with the Uganda's priorities outlined in the National Development Plan III.

We appeal to the Government to expedite the approval of the National Migration Policy, which would go a long way towards streamlining issues of migration management.

As I conclude, I would like to thank IOM, the UN Migration Agency, and the Office of the Prime Minister for organising this event. The United Nations remains committed to working with the Government and people of Uganda on management of migration. Migration that is safe, orderly, humane and regular can only bring Uganda tremendous benefits.

I thank you and I wish you a Happy International Migrants Day.