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Remarks in session 2 of GFMD Closing Ceremony: Honouring Key Contributions to the GFMD

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Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

This past year has been an extraordinary and challenging year for all of our communities, and this has been especially true for those more vulnerable. Migrants have often been at the receiving end of the worst that the pandemic has had to offer, and this situation is exacerbated when we talk about women and children migrants.

Migrants' rights and women's rights, perhaps two of the most affected populations by the pandemic due, in a large amount, by the nature of the work that they carry out, are some of the most affected during the outbreak and it is essential to carry a holistic approach to this crisis guarantee the protection of some of the more vulnerable populations and their place in the recovery.

As a local leader, and as member of UCLG I have seen how, no matter what part of the global, local and regional governments have been, working to overcome this divide, working to build bridges where there were only divisions, and ensuring migrants are seen as neighbours, as part of our communities.

Allow me to take a moment, in this context, to thank the UAE for their Chairmanship of the GFMD, which -in a critical time- has allowed to open spaces for the participation of the mechanisms into the forum and has been agile enough to adapt to the pandemic and allow us to discuss the implications of COVID-19 on migration in an innovative and inclusive manner.

In this regard, I would like to thank you once again for inviting us to this space. As local leaders, the GFMD provides a unique space for us, to move forward in regard to advancing a joint policy on migration. Its inclusivity and informality are essential to build partnerships and identify new ideas for action and collaboration. It has also allowed us to exchange, identify synergies with national governments, civil society, and the private sector, to improve our coordination at all levels.

The GFMD has also allowed us to discuss the latest and most pressing issues and has proven to be a flexible space to bring people together to address what the challenges are on the ground and to assess the multilateral instruments to ensure better preparedness in future events. Finally, as a multistakeholder process that is led by national governments, the GFMD

has allowed us to enhance coordination and take into account local realities on the ground in the discussion on legal frameworks on migration.

We are entering 2021 with the need to understand and take to heart the reality that migration is neither a new nor a reversible phenomenon, and that migration flows will increase in the coming years. The threat -or rather, the reality of climate change and disasters- will have an undoubtable effect in our societies and in population flows in the future. It is up to us, now , to develop the frameworks and the attitudes to make migration work for all , ensuring it remains a key lever for innovation and sustainable development.

For this reason, as a representative of the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments and from the perspective of the Mayors Mechanism, I am convinced that spaces like the Global Forum for Migration and Development are essential to overcome fearful and bordered-center approaches to migration that have proven inefficient, unfair and harmful for many communities in countries and cities of origin, transit and destination.

Many steps have been done to recognize the role of local and regional governments since 2014 when the first Mayoral Forum was held in Barcelona. However, much remains to be done to have a seat at the decision-making table. We are not mere implementing partners and we have demonstrated why, by contributing with our experiences and values in each of the spaces of dialogue that were opened to us in this process.

The pandemic, as well as many other, disasters, conflicts, trends that have shaped human mobility flows in the past years, have widely demonstrated why quick, innovative, informed and coordinated responses are key to limit the scope of such crises and pursue sustainable development. States and stakeholders need local governments as much as local governments need them to make migration work for all.

The Mayors Mechanism is committed to continue to pursue this dialogue and foster alliances to make sure that migration remains a right, an opportunity and a choice for everyone. Acknowledging the important state led character of the GFMD, we hope to see in the future a continued commitment to open the door to the mechanisms throughout its activities.

We are equally convinced that this process remains timely, relevant and legitimate , enabling cross learning, fruitful debate and policy development. To do so, are thankful for the work of the GFMD Support Unit for proactively building bridges between the different GFMD constituencies over the years with professionalism and grace.

As 2021 is looking up to be a COVID-19 year, we remain convinced that equal access to health, to basic services for all of our populations is of the utmost priority, that needs to be

undertaken by all spheres of government. Migration governance, and the access by migrants to basic services, needs to build on local knowledge, and consider our experiences and values.

It is high time to transform how decisions are taken, to put our communities in the centre of the processes. Dear mayors, it takes a community to do this, to ensure that migration becomes a right, that migrants are seen as our neighbours, and that we truly leave no-one and no place behind.

Thank you Chair,