

Migration in the Post-Pandemic World

Luigi Maria Vignali
António Vitorino
José Luís Cardoso
Giorgio Parisi
and Wolfango Plastino

Introduction

Luigi Maria Vignali

Irregular migratory flows in the central Mediterranean are growing rapidly and there is a worrying increase in unplanned departures not only from Libya and Tunisia, but even from countries such as Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon. So, it is indeed important to have opportunities for dialogue and discussion on such a key topic.

In 2019 there were around 11,000 irregular arrivals via the Central Mediterranean. In 2020, that number tripled (around 34,000) and then almost doubled in 2021 (67,000 arrivals). This trend has been confirmed in the current year (+45% of arrivals in the first 8 months of 2022).

Unplanned international migration is a growing phenomenon, and more resilient to the adverse impact of a pandemic crisis than regular international mobility.

Instability of entire regions of sub-Saharan Africa, negative effects of climate change – which jeopardize the food security of entire continents – and population growth, especially accentuated in African and Asian countries, are factors that are likely to fuel an even greater propensity to emigrate in the years to come.

The scale of the challenge is such that no country can cope with it alone, and this is also true for Italy. At the same time our geographic location, which makes us a natural gateway to Europe, cannot be a factor that penalizes Italy in managing the flows, while we are facing our humanitarian tasks of saving lives at sea – which, by the way, is in compliance with international law.

The European Union and its Member States must show concrete solidarity to border countries, not only in receiving those refugees in need of protection, but also in managing all the migrant flows crossing the Mediterranean Sea – including so-called “economic migrants”. The solidarity of the other Member States of the European Union cannot rely only on their willingness to engage in the reception of migrants.

On the one hand, we need a common European mechanism for dealing with migration flows; at the same time, there are also different means, along with or even instead of the mere redistribution

of migrants, to face this common priority. For instance, Italy has repeatedly stressed the importance of funding the external dimension of migration and the European action in third countries of origin and transit as an alternative to migrants' relocations. This would allow for the strengthening of the European dialogue and migration partnerships with those countries, especially in Africa, with a view to fighting migrant smuggling, preventing irregular and uncontrolled migration and ensuring an orderly and regular migration.

This should be our key objective: the replacement of unplanned, unpredictable and unskilled migration flows with regular, planned and skilled ones, also taking into account the economic development needs of the destination country.

To this end, for many years now we have been working with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to boost our cooperation with third countries of origin and transit, which is at the basis of the Italian strategy for the stabilization of migratory flows.

Through the Migration Fund of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), our cooperation with the IOM has been financing projects on: 1. assistance to migrants and refugees; 2. assisted voluntary returns from third transit countries to countries of origin; 3. interventions to address the root causes of migration; 4. technical assistance programmes for the authorities of third countries of origin and transit of flows; and 5. information and awareness campaigns on the risks of irregular migration.

More specifically, I would like to mention two significant results in preventing unplanned migration flows: assisted voluntary returns (AVRs) and awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of irregular migration.

AVRs, one of the cornerstones of our strategy, serve a twofold purpose. First, they offer a free, legal, safe and dignified alternative to return home for migrants stranded in third transit countries, in many cases also providing an assistance package to facilitate their socio-economic reintegration. Second, they contribute to reducing the presence of migrants in third transit countries where they could fall victim to trafficking networks, allowing for a reduction in migratory pressure on these same countries.

From 2017 to the present, through the Migration Fund, the MOFA has supported the IOM's actions in Libya, Niger, Tunisia and Sudan and most recently in Côte d'Ivoire, helping to carry out the assisted voluntary return of over 86,000 migrants who might otherwise have attempted to reach Europe irregularly. This is really a considerable figure.

The Migration Fund has financed extensive community awareness-raising activities on the risks of irregular migration and the opportunities offered through regular channels. Through communication tools (cinema, social media, radio and events such as workshops, theatre performances and photo exhibitions), as well as through public figures (in the countries of origin or diasporas abroad), these awareness-raising campaigns have reached hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom are inclined to leave their homeland irregularly without being at all aware of the risks involved.

International migration, primarily unplanned migration, will continue to be one of the great challenges we will have to face in the future. We will continue to strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and transit, helping them manage the migratory flows while fully grasping the positive contribution of migrants to our societies.

In addressing such a complex challenge, the goal, as Pope Francis has stated, is not only to welcome and to protect, but also to promote and to integrate – a complex task that can be fully implemented only through careful planning and ordered management of migration flows.

Lectio Magistralis

António Vitorino

As the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN agency responsible for migration, I can say that we have become used to disruption as part of our *modus operandi*. Indeed, it is at moments of profound disruption – when systems become overwhelmed – the IOM becomes an even more critical source of essential support for migrant communities.

Moreover, at moments of disruption, we also discover the gaps that exist in the international and national architecture regarding migration, and often take steps forward to redress them.

Indeed, the New York Declaration of 2016, which led to the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by many governments around the world, was born from a sense of crisis in Europe and recognition that there is a need for a common language and stronger international cooperation on migration.

And it is a sad truth that, today, we are becoming all too used to disruptions that test our immigration systems – largely through the unsafe, irregular, and unanticipated movements of people that are taking place across all continents of the world. We have, over time, built some contingency into these systems: indeed, the Temporary Protection Directive that was activated earlier this year to offer support to displaced Ukrainian nationals is a good example of this in Europe, and a welcome reminder of the humanitarian impetus that sits at the centre of the collective European spirit and values.

But the pandemic was a crisis on a global scale, one which brought unforeseen challenges, and responses. From the perspective of cross-border movement, we were not prepared for our travel systems to be brought to a standstill: the absence of movement has been a factor of disruption that surprised the world and continues to have far-reaching consequences on travel and mobility.

This morning, I would like to detail some of the immediate, and lingering, impacts of the pandemic for migrants and displaced

persons, and outline the challenges ahead, in a context where inequalities between communities have become starker since Covid-19 began to spread.

In February 2020, as governments became increasingly concerned about the spread of Covid-19, country- and region-specific travel bans began to be introduced, often with little warning. By late February, governments began placing travel restrictions on travellers from countries seen as high-risk, including Italy.

Over the course of March, several countries began to ban the entry of all passengers, regardless of origin, across all continents of the world, allowing only limited exceptions. Other measures imposed included health screenings at the border or requiring quarantine for new arrivals, in an effort to slow the impact of a virus, about which too little was known, on our societies and, critically, our health systems.

And as you well know and experienced, travel bans were accompanied by extensive domestic lockdowns, limiting interaction outside the household, except for those considered essential for the functioning of key services and meeting critical needs.

Over the past two and a half years, we have seen fluctuations in border closures and lockdowns, as subsequent waves of the virus, and new variants, have emerged, making life – and travel – less predictable. Here in Europe, we have the impression that much of the crisis is over; those who wish to be, are now vaccinated, and our daily life has returned to a cautious normality.

However, as of August 2022, 27 countries around the world were still issuing entry restrictions, while 137 countries have maintained health and other conditions for authorized entry (notably test and vaccination requirements). While the vast majority of people in high-income countries have received at least one vaccination, this figure drops to less than one in four people (23.92%) in low-income countries. The global experience of Covid-19 – and with it the speed of recovery – has varied drastically.

Regardless, at its peak, the impacts on all communities around the world were severe: children were kept from school, elderly people were isolated, and workers were left without income, while the Covid-19 virus left millions dead.

But what were the impacts on migrants?

Many of the impacts for people on the move were immediate. By the middle of 2020, the IOM had estimated that up to 2.75 million migrants were stranded worldwide due to travel restrictions, leaving many in situations where they were at higher risk of abuse, exploitation, and neglect, as they found themselves in irregular situations through no fault of their own.

Still more migrants hurried home at the outset of the pandemic, both independently and through government-sponsored schemes; many returned to countries ill-equipped to offer medical and social support to the arrivals or ensure adequate housing.

Many communities blamed the spread of the virus on foreigners, and the IOM has witnessed an increase in xenophobic and racist incidents directed towards migrants in many countries, including those returning home.

The economic impact for many migrants was swift and severe, and particularly for those migrants employed on precarious contracts, or working in the informal economy. As lockdowns commenced, and many industries came to a standstill, migrants were often the first to lose their jobs, in turn risking their legal status in their countries of residence. Migrant unemployment rates increased significantly in more than 75% of all OECD countries in 2020, a pattern matched in developing economies.

For many of those remaining in employment, the conditions of labour deteriorated: in some sectors, such as agriculture, migrants were warehoused in unsanitary conditions, where basic hygiene and physical distancing measures could not be met, placing their health at risk. During 2020, the IOM recorded numerous incidents of employers taking advantage of migrant workers' vulnerability, withholding wages and threatening to report irregular status to the authorities.

But at the same time, thousands of communities around the world recognized the essential role that migrant labour played in our economies and society. Migrants are overrepresented in key sectors, notably health and care work; migrants delivered food, cleaned public spaces, tended to the sick and vulnerable. Just as many migrants were discarded at the outset of pandemic, others were recognized as vital to pandemic response.

As travel restrictions persisted, for example, many countries sought to carve out exemptions for seasonal and essential cross-border workers, to ensure continued agricultural production or maintain key industries such as mining. We have, perhaps, learned to value migration at all skill levels, in a way that prior to the pandemic had been underconsidered.

In terms of social impacts, migrant communities often found themselves isolated and excluded, more likely to be living in close quarters with poor sanitary conditions and excluded from economic support measures put in place by governments. Pre-existing situations of poverty and marginalization were exacerbated during the pandemic, leaving individuals vulnerable to exploitation, including trafficking in persons. Just as the UN recorded

increases in violence towards women during the pandemic, so migrant women have become particularly vulnerable.

Access to key services, notably health, was disrupted for many; many of those in irregular situations were fearful of accessing much-needed services, for fear of deportation. According to early research, incidence of Covid-19 amongst migrant populations has been consistently higher than for non-migrant groups, including in some high-income countries, due to poorer living and working conditions, and more limited access to health services. In some countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Singapore, migrant groups accounted for the vast majority of cases, due in part to the use of dormitories for migrant workers. Migrants held in detention around the world were particularly vulnerable to Covid-19.

But it is important to note the various efforts made by governments, supported by organizations such as the IOM, to mitigate these impacts.

During the pandemic, many governments recognized the importance of universal access to public health services, and the need to ensure not just that migrants have access to health support in principle, but also in practice.

The reality is that viruses do not check a person's immigration status prior to infection.

Those most impacted were those deepest in poverty, living in more crowded and less sanitary socioeconomic conditions, with fewer opportunities for social distancing, or those unable to afford time off work for social isolation. And migrants were disproportionately represented in this cohort.

Governments have also learned the importance of inclusion – including migrants in socioeconomic measures, in vaccination programming, etc. and the possibilities of innovative adaptation of immigration measures.

As lockdowns took hold, a number of countries, including Italy, offered blanket extensions of residence permits or asylum status to prevent migrants from falling into irregular status, even if they had lost employment. This was critical to prevent migrants from becoming stranded, without support, and contributed to addressing the overall public health challenge.

Some countries also invested in alternatives to detention for migrants, to avoid public health challenges, innovations that could be taken forward even after pandemic.

Governments have also learned the importance of information, and access to accurate information. During 2020, the IOM reached nearly 37 million beneficiaries, including migrants, internally displaced persons and other community members with Risk

Communication and Community Engagement activities. This was undertaken often in difficult contexts when lockdowns and social distancing was common.

For example, the IOM's mission in Italy translated critical Covid safety information into 26 languages during March 2020 – from Bengali to Igbo – to support community groups in their efforts, placed online for diaspora and NGO groups to access and utilize. As vaccinations have become available, we have pivoted to ensuring that migrant groups are properly informed about, and can access, injections, to overcome any hesitancy.

How are migrants – and migration – recovering?

It is too early to make predictions about the long-term impacts of the pandemic on migrants' economic trajectories. But early indications suggest that the recovery will be long, and that – collectively at a global level – we risk disrupting our journey to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Incredibly, during the pandemic, remittances sent by migrants did not drop as dramatically as expected around the world, though this has varied country to country. Having dropped modestly by 2.4% in 2020, we have seen remittances grow globally by 7.5%, with even larger growth (8.6%) in low- and middle-income countries. Many migrants sent money home to address hardships faced by their families during the pandemic. But while remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean increased significantly in 2021 (up 25%), driven by the economic stimulus measures in the United States, remittances have remained less buoyant in East Asia and the Pacific, due in part to ongoing Covid-19 travel restrictions and continuing global economic challenges.

The broader impact of the pandemic has affected countries deeply reliant on migrant labour, in both directions. Developing economies with high numbers of emigrating workers are counting the cost of the pandemic. For example, in 2020, the Philippines saw a drastic 75% reduction in the deployment of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), which constitutes the lowest deployment numbers in over three decades. Meanwhile, the number of Returning Overseas Filipinos reached nearly 800,000 by the end of December 2020, many of whom have struggled to find employment upon return. This has had a significant impact on the economy and society of the Philippines, where migration plays an integral role in development.

However, in developed economies, demand for labour has increased significantly, and governments have highlighted the need to address deep and persistent labour shortages across many sectors. As a result, governments from Germany to Australia are rethinking

their immigration systems at all skill levels, to draw new migrants into the labour market. Some of the shortages stem from a disruption to planned immigration levels in 2020 and 2021, and the inability of visa holders to travel to their destination; other shortages stem from the return of migrant workers home during the pandemic, many of whom are now less inclined to move again.

In 2021, much of the world's mobility recovered. Travel bans were increasingly replaced by health measures, and vaccination became an increasingly important precondition to travel. As variants impacted across the world, regions began to diverge in their responses, with European countries beginning to open up, while Asia and West Africa remained more cautious; airports were more likely to reopen than land borders – as easier to integrate health measures – which has meant an impact on local cross-border mobility in developing countries, essential to sustaining livelihoods.

Global mobility is beginning to rebound, despite significant visa processing backlogs across many systems, and difficulties restarting international travel due (in part) to staff shortages. The UN World Tourism Organization has estimated that the tourism sector recovered almost half (46%) of pre-pandemic 2019 levels during the first 5 months of 2022.

But the rebound is uneven in its effects. The costs of travel have significantly increased, which will continue to have a chilling effect on mobility for those without significant income, and particularly for migrants that cannot afford to meet those increased costs, or those that fear long-term separation from family or once again becoming stranded. Similarly, as many countries still require Covid-19 vaccination and testing for entry, would-be migrants without access to health services may be restricted from travel.

There is a risk that, in the post-pandemic environment, a two-tier system of travel is emerging, whereby those travelling from and to countries with high rates of vaccination find it easier to get around, while those in countries where Covid-19 risks remain significant – notably in developing countries – have fewer opportunities to move. Not only is this risk going to further exacerbate the income inequalities that have sharpened in recent years, limiting regional mobility in parts of the world that would most benefit from labour circulation; but those who continue to lack regular means of travel, may resort to using unauthorized routes, in the hands of smugglers or, worse, traffickers.

It is beholden on us in the international community to find solutions that can fully restore global mobility. This means increasing equitable access to vaccination and legal identity documentation,

as well as bringing governments together to ensure that the infrastructure created to manage health crises at the border is available to all countries in the world.

Thus, we believe that there needs to be a common global space to exchange information, establish common understanding and concepts, and identify gaps in capacity. Without this, borders may continue to open and close on an ad hoc basis, reducing predictability for travelers, migrants, and businesses dependent on mobility, and further deepening economic uncertainty.

To manage safe travel, states will need to find common concepts for integrating health into border management without unduly excluding either states, or migrants and travellers who may not be able to meet additional travel requirements. This is a huge challenge for low-resource countries which do not have the capacity to create new and complex infrastructure, particularly along porous land borders where daily crossing is a part of life; and these states may find themselves left out of the international travel system as a result.

This is particularly important for developing states. Deep political and technical investment has been made in recent years to support the African continent in terms of development and regional integration. It would be tragic if this progress were now reversed. Mobility and trade are inextricably linked. To recover economically, governments will have to re-establish safe means of mobility, and cooperate not only across borders, but across regions, to do so.

Post-pandemic: what are we likely to see in terms of global migration and mobility?

We have seen that our collective impetus to travel is elastic; however, some parts of the world are rebounding more quickly than others, which is having a deleterious effect on economic recovery in those parts of the world. But to understand the impacts of the pandemic on migration, we must look also at the other factors which are impacting how, when and where people move.

Covid-19 led to millions of deaths, catalyzed soaring levels of global debt and inequality, and limited cross-border mobility to an unprecedented degree for modern times. While the number of deaths is now reducing, the world faces significant economic disruption, linked to inflation and increased cost of living, and reduced fiscal flexibility.

With the world facing a global downturn, a significant number of countries, comprising a significant proportion of the world's population, are at risk of debt default. This, in turn, will affect political stability, and raise the risk of social unrest, as household

costs increase with uncertain government response, and potential migration and displacement.

However, economic constraints – from the macro to the household level – may also further polarize attitudes to migrants and refugees and increase scepticism towards current concepts of protection and support, even while demand for migrant labour at all skill levels persists.

The international community will be called upon to respond to increasing needs in developing and fragile countries, with less financial support, as long-standing and protracted crises are joined by new situations of acute humanitarian concern, and proliferating food insecurity.

Climate change will continue to intersect with continued inequality, demographic change, and economic factors to affect the way people move and where they move. Investments in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation will be critical to address environmental drivers of migration and prevent forced displacement, and the costs of global response will increase. While most climate-related mobility is expected to remain internal, we cannot discard the likelihood of further movements internationally.

The situation in Ukraine exemplifies how conflict, both civil and transnational, can affect broader migration and displacement patterns across regions, and can have serious spill-over effects for regions that are seemingly unconnected.

On the one hand, the response to those fleeing Ukraine highlights the capacity and willingness of governments, supported by the international community, to manage large-scale movements. However, in other parts of the world, this capability is far weaker, and in contexts where the speed of mobility threatens to overwhelm existing management systems, quick protection responses are needed to avert humanitarian disaster.

Cities are already home to most international migrants and continue to attract internal migrants. Rapid and unmanaged urbanization will increase vulnerabilities, fuelling for instance an increased informalization of labour and growing exposure to disaster risk, as mobile urban populations move to environmentally fragile areas. The demographic weight of youth in areas most vulnerable to climate impacts will likely increase future out-migration of young people, notably towards urban areas. Thus, the role of local government actors, and the leadership of mayors, will become ever more important, both in terms of managing change, and planning for the future.

I have offered you here a gloomy outlook, post-pandemic, and I believe we must urgently, and soberly, view these overlapping

crises, and not shy away from the challenges they present to human mobility, the rights of those most vulnerable to their impacts, and the prospects for ensuring safe, orderly, and regular migration.

But there are also new opportunities to connect migration to economic growth, social cohesion, and human development.

Our experience with remote work during the pandemic has opened up a new area of exploration: when should people move, when should skills move, and how might remote work help revitalize declining regions?

How might we create links between those countries experiencing sector shortages and the needs of those in climate-impacted regions to build new livelihood strategies, including through migration?

How can we ensure that people who find themselves impelled to undertake dangerous journeys, including across seas and oceans, have access to safer alternative pathways?

How can we channel humanitarian and development funding to create maximum impact and build not just individual but community resilience, offering the next generation better opportunities?

The IOM is working towards solutions in all of these areas; they have been impacted by, but stretch far deeper than, the Covid-19 pandemic itself, and will deeply affect the next decades of migration and mobility worldwide. I look forward to discussing with all of you the challenges and opportunities of the post-pandemic world, and its impacts on migration.

Discussion *

António Vitorino, José Luís Cardoso, Giorgio Parisi
and Wolfgang Plastino

Wolfgang Plastino: *What lessons should we learn from the Covid-19 pandemic from a migration perspective?*

António Vitorino: To begin I will say in a nutshell that for the first time there has been recognition that migrants are essential workers, for a number of critical activities, to the benefit of the entire community. The ones who took the health risks were the migrants; they were the ones in the front lines, but the beneficiaries were the entire community.

Secondly, we were not prepared for the pandemic. And we need to prepare for the next pandemic. Let's be very honest: there will be a new pandemic one day. If the public opinions of our countries have accepted that, to a certain extent, we have run after the disaster – I mean, we have tried to respond to the pandemic, because we were totally ignorant of the impacts of the pandemic – when there is a new pandemic I think that the public opinion will not have the same tolerance and the same patience towards the public authorities. And there will be a need to show that we have learned the lessons from the previous pandemic, and that we are prepared for the next one.

And last but not least, I think that one has to recognize that universal health care is not just a tribute to the fundamental rights of migrants and a sign of respect for their human dignity, but at the same time it's in the key interest of the host communities; because if we allow migrants to become a source of spreading the virus because we do not allow them to have access to healthcare, of course we are creating stigmatization against the migrants – that's quite clear – but at the same time we are putting the entire community at risk. So it is in the name of the self-preservation of the

* The text below is the full transcript of the roundtable that followed the *Lectio Magistralis* by H.E. António Vitorino, Director General of the United Nations International Organization for Migration.

entire community that we need to make an effort to guarantee that all migrants, irrespective of their legal status, have access to healthcare, and particularly now in the present moment to vaccinations.

José Luís Cardoso: First I would like to thank the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei for this kind invitation to participate in this roundtable. It is indeed a great honour and a pleasure to take part in this discussion, and my greetings to professors Plastino and Parisi and President Antonelli from the Accademia dei Lincei, and to all Excellencies present at this *colloquium*. And allow me to single out my special *cumprimentos – muita estima* – to the Director General, António Vitorino.

In his presentation, Director General Vitorino has given a very rich picture and a broad presentation of all the problems we will be discussing at this roundtable. So I guess that a certain amount of overlapping is unavoidable, although by repeating some of the things that have been said we might get a stronger message from this roundtable. Although a bit gloomy, as Vitorino said, this does not mean that his presentation was not realistic, and especially that he has not presented how to respond to the challenges and the problems that the pandemic has created as far as the issues surrounding immigration are concerned.

For the benefit of brevity, I would like to stress two particular points which I believe are the key lessons from this Covid-19 pandemic in terms of the consequences for migration issues.

The first one, as has already been emphasized by António Vitorino, is the need to include migrants in social and economic recovery plans. And this means putting forward not only legal channels that give migrants the possibility to benefit from inclusive public policies, special health policies; this is not only an issue of legal measures, but it is a process of including migrants in the recovery plans in each country that accommodates and receives migrants due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Also, I believe that one of the lessons to learn here is urgency. We come to realize how urgent it is for us to achieve rapid responses regarding the efforts to foster transnational cooperation, namely in vaccination plans and the activation of public health practices. And the transnational message, which I would like to focus on here, might be the outcome of something we've realized with Covid-19, but which was not born with the Covid-19 pandemic: namely, the great divergence that exists between rich countries, or high-income countries, and low-income or low-resource countries. And if, when we try to understand the reasons

for economic growth in different countries, we talk about this great divergence that occurred in the long 19th century, I think that this divergence may be becoming greater again, and all these phenomena, like the pandemic, are unavoidably, and unfortunately, making things much worse than they were in the past.

But there is another point that I would like to stress here, which is that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish what are the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, as far as migration issues are concerned, and what are the consequences of other factors explaining migration, including other factors explaining the attitude toward migration. One of the lessons that I think is very important is the risk of anti-migrant sentiments, especially in rich and high-income countries. The reason I am referring to this risk is that sometimes Covid-19 explains only some of the reasons why this sentiment is getting more complicated and more difficult to deal with. This is a political issue, of course. We know – as António Vitorino has discussed – how the war in Ukraine might raise new challenges in need of a strong response, and especially as far as the sentiment of insecurity of migrants goes. Sometimes political contexts and political decisions are much more relevant than the simple or difficult effects originated by the pandemic.

What I mean is that there is a risk at the moment, not only due to the pandemic, but also due to the situation of war in which we are living, and the situation of defaulting which some economies are facing at the moment; all of this creates a sentiment of aggressive nationalism which renders the lives of migrants much more difficult than before. So when discussing the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, I guess that we should not forget the consequences for the lives of migrants that come from the political arena in which we are living now in Europe.

So this is my quick answer to the difficult question that Professor Plastino has invited us to discuss.

Giorgio Parisi: I think that this question from Wolfango was deeply discussed by the two previous speakers. I would like to add in any case some viewpoints from our special observatory, Italy, which is an important country, but with some of its own peculiarities.

First, I would like to recall a document that has been prepared by the Accademia dei Lincei more than two years ago, in May 2020, in which we stressed the need to avoid labelling migrants as illegal immigrants, because one should try to provide some kind of official recognition of the people that are present in the country;

they should have the possibility of accessing all types of health programmes, without having to be treated as illegal immigrants. And therefore it's clear that, while in principle in Italy everybody has the right to the national health service, people who are in some kind of illegality may refrain from making use of it, and therefore we made a document which stressed the need for this type of official recognition of migrants. This is also, as His Excellency stated, related to the things that were happening at that time in Singapore, because in Singapore there had just been the first wave of Covid-19, which was more or less controlled, but then there was a second wave of Covid that essentially ripped through the places where migrants were sleeping; these migrants lived in high-density housing, and in unhygienic conditions, so there was a greater possibility of airborne transmission of Covid to other people, and so it was clear that this explosion in Singapore was due to the poor conditions of migrants. But this explosion of Covid amongst migrants later affected society as a whole, because afterwards it spread to other sectors of society.

Concerning the effects of Covid, first of all, we have to understand that Covid has shown that our hyper-connected world, the world of the global economy, is very fragile. Once our supply chain become extremely long, even planet-wide, it's clear that everything becomes more difficult, and disruptions of the supply chain may have a dramatic effect that would not play out if we had local short chains. I think of the beginning of the pandemic, when Europe discovered that there was no company that was producing individual-protection facemasks, and these had to come from very far away, and this was not easy, because there was a worldwide shortage.

Coming back to the consequences for migrants, one thing that happened because of the Covid pandemic was that an incredible strain was placed on the healthcare and medical services in Italy, and this had a number of negative consequences, because the working conditions of doctors worsened, and what happened in Italy is a phenomenon that already existed in the past: namely, that many Italian doctors emigrated abroad. So we have in Italy, thanks to the combination of a somewhat low number of medical school graduates and a strong overseas migration, a decrease in the number of doctors, and this is dramatic, because there is a serious staffing shortage in many public positions, especially in emergency rooms, because these are one of the worst places of work from many points of view, beginning from the stress of it. And so it happened that in this particular

case, Covid had a dramatic effect on Italy, exposing it as a country short on healthcare workers due to emigration, which was already a well-known characteristic for Italian scientists; but this was something still more dramatic, because it is something that affects our society as a whole.

Wolfgang Plastino: *What role does data play in understanding migration dynamics?*

António Vitorino: It plays a crucial role, because if we want to prepare policies based on evidence, we need to collect data. It's quite a challenge, because as you can imagine, not all governments worldwide are equally equipped to collect data. IOM collects data; we have our system, which is the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM; it's an awful name, I *do* recognize that). DTM is deployed in one hundred countries all over the world, particularly in countries which are more relevant in terms of the source of migratory flows. So we collect the data, and we analyze the data, but we are always in search of a more and more granular understanding of the data. We have data on stocks of migrants, and data on flows. But we need to go the extra mile, and disaggregate this data, for instance by gender, by age, by some specific characteristics, like disability, because that's the only way we can understand the flows. And it would be desirable to use big data and artificial intelligence in forecasting. We are doing forecasting now, with all the precautionary measures that forecasting human mobility and human nature requires.

But I think that the progress in technology has been extremely relevant. We have changed lots of things that we have done historically, by switching to online, embracing technology, and now we have kept those processes in the house. That will allow us to have a better capacity to collect and to analyze data. But – and there is a big but – of course in the developing world, many countries do not have the capacity to collect data. And so we need to invest in supporting them in two critical areas: first, data collection, having data statistics and the capacity to collect reliable data; and second, legal identity. I will not elaborate on this point, but having legal documents is extremely important. There is a large number of countries that do not have a civil registry, that do not have identity cards, and in order to promote lawful migration, we need to guarantee that people have access to legal identity and to legal documents. It's worth supporting those countries in those two areas: data and legal identity.

José Luís Cardoso: Of course I agree that data is instrumental for the design and implementation of foreign policies, and managing data is paramount for politicians to make the right decisions and justify their choices; this is obvious. Also because data is fundamental in order to render political problems and political issues and political decisions as technical ones. The only way of presenting something as the outcome of evidence is to have data, and I do believe that the work being done by the IOM is absolutely fundamental for this purpose, and I also agree that national statistical institutes or bureaus should be compelled or should be required to provide adequate data allowing for the monitoring of migration policies.

It's not only an issue of quantitative data. I would like to raise an issue that should not be forgotten: we also need qualitative data on this for the development and monitoring of migration policies – namely, migration as a source that can explain the change and transformation of labour regimes and business activities. And it is important to understand how migrants can bring this change to the countries in which they come to work, and so this data on the change of labour regimes and the participation in different business activities, I believe, is quite important.

Another point is to understand migration in diasporas as channels of transmission of cultural, economic and social innovations. And so a better understanding of these plural identities that migrations bring to the new countries that receive them is also fundamental to understand the dynamic process of migration.

So I would not stress only quantitative data, which is absolutely paramount for the design of public policies, but we also need a better understanding of migration in terms of the changes and the transformations that migrants bring to the cultural, economic and social world in which they are now living.

Giorgio Parisi: I think that data are crucial, because otherwise without any carefully taken data – because one also has to be careful to try to understand the biases that might be in the data – one can only rely on prejudice in making decisions.

And of course, the higher the quality of the data, the more we know about the immigrants or what they do, the more data available on their socio-economic situation of their country before becoming immigrants – all this is extremely important, because it provides us also with some information on the kinds of migrants that have been integrated into society and those that have not been integrated. Of course, this kind of data is extremely difficult to gather, but it is important, however tentative.

However, speaking of general arguments on data, I think that it is extremely important that this data, as far as possible, should be made public; I mean that people from universities, from institutes of research, from all kinds of activities, that want to understand what is happening, should be able to access it. It's wonderful to use modern technologies to make predictions, but of course there could be different ways to make predictions, different ways to analyze the data, and if you want to sum up this kind of prediction that you are making in scientific predictions, you need the data to be open to the whole of the scientific community. And opening the data to the scientific community is not simple, because you need first of all to decide to open them, you need an organization that organizes the data in such a way that they can be made open, and of course there are all the privacy concerns and so on, so it's a big effort to open the data, but I think that it is absolutely essential. The more people can get their hands on what the data are and what the data imply, the less noise there will be about immigration, and the more facts about it.

Wolfgang Plastino: Often we talk about migrants, but not with migrants. What are your views on engaging the diaspora in conversations about migration, and contributions to both country of origin and destination?

António Vitorino: You have touched upon a very critical issue. I think that IOM now has given an absolute priority to organizing the diaspora, thanks to the very good example that we have of engaging the diaspora, not just supporting the integration of new generations of migrants in these societies, but also in terms of the development of countries of origin.

There is a lot to be done in this respect, I must say. But I can give you one very concrete example. Ukraine is a country that has a very strong diaspora all over the world. There are 20 million Ukrainians all over the world who are very well organized as a diaspora and who have been extremely relevant in supporting the Ukrainians that have left Ukraine after the breakout of the war. That's why in May of this year, in Dublin, together with the government of Ireland, we organized a global diaspora summit that approved a declaration, which has been subscribed to, up to now, by thirty countries all over the world; this declaration was channeled to the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum, and was endorsed by the UN General Assembly.

The agenda is precisely how can we mobilize the diaspora in terms of fostering the development of countries of origin.

I have given you the figures of the remittances. This year the remittances will surpass 700 billion US dollars. That's 700 billion US dollars. The remittances are more than foreign direct investment and external health assistance together. So we are talking about a huge potential to use that money not just to support the families back home (which is of course very important) but also to channel it into the development of the countries of origin. I believe that the international financial institutions, starting with the World Bank, should be much more focused on how to make that money, that huge amount of money, more productive, to address the deep-rooted causes of migration in the countries of origin.

José Luís Cardoso: I believe that, even more important than talking about migrants and talking with migrants, is listening to them, and giving them the voice they need to express their problems, their feelings and their motivations. So I think that we should foster the construction of narratives, allowing a new awareness of the role of migrants to contribute to economic recovery in their destination countries, and also their contribution to social demographic imbalances, as is the case of Portugal, where there is the problem of decreasing population. I think that we should rely on these kinds of new forms of argumentation based on facts and life stories, justifying their interests and explaining their claims. We should give the migrants a stronger and a louder voice.

The narratives of resilience, for instance, denouncing the suffering which is associated with the pandemic but also with their difficult conditions of living, and the solutions that they can propose. By doing this, we give an alert to the world on issues that have global impact, I believe.

These narratives and giving migrants a voice is also, as António Vitorino was just stressing, a challenging instrument of diplomacy, since these narratives allow the expression of the voices of citizens who are most of the time marginalized or even denied, and who therefore have no possibility of expressing their problems in the political and diplomatic arenas. So again, there is a political issue here: the relevance of the political context and the political constraints that may or may not allow migrants to raise their voices. And this is of course a question of rights, the constitution of organizations that are representative of migrants; it is a matter especially of insisting on the Human Rights acts and the freedom of expression that we should give them.

Migrants are not merely workers. They are persons, and their narratives can better explain the world and the problems of the world we live in.

Giorgio Parisi: I think that this idea that we have of listening to migrants is extremely important, because immigration is a very important phenomenon in these days, as we know, and we are observing most of it from our viewpoint, which is clearly a partial viewpoint. There are so many, many things that we do not understand. For example, why, in some countries, immigrants from some countries have been more integrated than immigrants from other countries, without any clear evidence of this being related to the socio-economic conditions of the initial country. One has to understand what are the real factors which make it difficult for some communities to integrate, and we have to remove these.

The other extremely important thing in speaking with migrants is to understand what the motivations that brought people to decide to immigrate to our countries actually were. It's clear that in most cases, the migrants were not satisfied with their position in the countries where they were, but knowing exactly what were the most difficult problems that they faced, we could maybe try to help them, in order to construct a better life in the place where they come from. It's clear that if that country has some specific issues, we should push to help this country in that particular direction. But being a scientist, my idea is always that the more we know, the more we have the power to understand the world and to change it.

Wolfgang Plastino: *The climate change will have an impact on patterns of mobility, and we need to address this comprehensively. What does that mean in concrete terms?*

António Vitorino: If you want concrete terms, I'll give you concrete terms. In 2021, we estimate that 23.7 million people were forcibly displaced because of extreme weather events, natural disasters and slow-onset environment degradation. This shows us that climate change is ever playing a more crucial role in putting people on the move. Climate change is ever more and more associated with food and security, because climate change changes the conditions of life above all in rural areas. If you look at the African continent, you will see that there is a strong trend of urbanization, people moving from rural areas to the city, cities that are not prepared for such an inflow, and many of the reasons why people

move is because the traditional way of life in the rural areas is no longer viable because there is a shortage of water, because there are constant floods or because there is drought. Just look at what is happening today: 30% of Pakistan is flooded. That's almost the territory of Germany. You have a terrible drought that has displaced millions of people in Somalia, in Ethiopia and in Kenya.

This is true also in Central America. It was very interesting when Professor Parisi was speaking about motivations. We do screenings about motivations, and one critical motivation for Central Americans to migrate to the United States is clearly family reunification. But then, historically speaking, the second reason was violence by gangs. What we see today in our surveys is that climate change and the impacts of climate change in Central America and in the Caribbean is surpassing violence of gangs as a reason to migrate. It is expressly assumed by migrants, who say they could not go on living the way they were.

So the challenge is first to understand that we need to build resilience in these communities. I am not saying that the solution is to migrate. In fact, the figures that I've just given you, 23.7 million people, in the vast majority of cases, do not become migrants, they become internally displaced people. They move inside the same country. The point being that, once you start moving, you can easily cross one international border, and no longer be an internally displaced person, but also an international migrant by definition.

So we need to address the impacts of climate change. Just read the Groundswell Report that was published by the World Bank. The World Bank is very clear: if we do nothing in building the resilience of these communities, by 2050, we might have something like 260 million people on the move because of climate change.¹ The priority now is to look at the fragile sites, those places where we have rising water, persistent drought, or constant floods, typhoons, cyclones, which are becoming ever more frequent and harsher; we need to plan in those areas to build resilience in the communities, to invest in adaptation, and in mitigation of the impacts of climate change. Otherwise, the impulse to movement will be unstoppable.

José Luís Cardoso: The quick response is of course that climate change is not fake news, and that we should not accept climate

¹ World Bank Group, *Groundswell: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*, Part 2, 2021 (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248>).

change being denied by politicians. Every day we are confronted with the terrible news of the lack of water in some countries, excessive rain in others, hot temperatures, coastal erosion, the increasing CO₂ emissions, and of course the increasing vulnerability of the populations that are left behind, escaping from floods and natural catastrophes, but also escaping from wars, starvation and malnutrition.

There is this idea that the environment cannot be controlled as it was supposed to be in the recent past, and there is also this growing concern with the capacity of human beings to create or keep the conditions for securing their future on Earth. These human predatory activities are a permanent threat to a sustainable planet. Of course, as far as migrant dynamics are concerned, we have to accept people's expectations for safety and of well-being, and the prospects that they have to lead a dignified life in their area of origin or in their potential destination area, where they are moving. There are of course these processes of adaptation and mitigation, and we believe that rich countries should embrace the responsibility of taking care of those who suffer more from the losses caused by extreme phenomena associated with climate change.

Here, I would like to come to one of the gloomy visions presented by Director General António Vitorino when he referred to the risk of not being able to reach the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda in 2030. I think that the political response to this is to trust that this agenda of sustainable development goals – for everything is there in these 17 goals – should be reinforced, and politicians should be encouraged in their countries to put forward the measures that face the big issues that the United Nations and also the European Union Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals have identified, so that they can be really reachable in 2030.

Without that, there will be terrible consequences, and of course migrants are undoubtedly amongst those who suffer the most.

Giorgio Parisi: I think that the effect of climate change on migration is one of the worst effects of climate change. The problem, as has been pointed out, is that climate change has the effect of changing the global atmospheric circulation; more water is evaporating, because it's hotter, and so there is more rain, and this rain is now falling preferentially over soils where it fell less before, while some other places are much drier than before. So it's clear that this may produce effects that are a complete disaster for agriculture, and the point is that it's very, very difficult to predict exactly what's going to happen, because it's very difficult to predict weather effects.

Something that I hope we will never see, but which is an open possibility, is that the effect of climate change will stop the Gulf Stream. If the Gulf Stream is stopped, we will see many climate migrants from Norway, Scandinavia, England, and many parts of Europe, because that will correspond to a ten degree fall in the temperatures in Northern Europe. So it's clear that this has possible effects that are difficult for us to quantify and to predict in advance.

In any case, it would be best to make forecasts, as much as possible, five years or ten years ahead, and to try to do what is needed; and it's clear, for example in the situation of Pakistan, that there is very little that you really can do. I mean, it's difficult to understand exactly how to improve such a situation. Of course, we should try to watch everything, water and so on. But it's definitely not easy.

Wolfgang Plastino: *What advice would you give to the next generation of migration scholars?*

António Vitorino: For the next generation of migration scholars, I have very good news: you will not be out of a job! There are so many things we need to understand and to learn, and we need to be very humble and recognize that we do not know. You will have plenty of work and plenty of jobs.

This is not advice, it's only a suggestion: be as multidisciplinary as possible. Because what we see in real life is that the causes of migration intersect with one another, and they are very diversified. There is no one-size-fits-all system, so we need to go to the field and to understand this deeply human phenomenon that is migration. Therefore we need economists, but we need data analysts; we need social scientists, but we also need anthropologists, who have a key role to play to explain to us the interaction of the different peoples worldwide. Be as multidisciplinary as possible; no one alone can achieve everything. Joint work, teamwork, sharing experiences and sharing knowledge – that would be my strongest suggestion.

José Luís Cardoso: This is not the one-million dollar question, but the two-million dollar question that you have raised. Of course, I agree with what Director General António Vitorino has just said. I think that we need to understand that the study of human mobility is the study of the difference between high-income countries and low-income countries, and the study of social inclusion and

exclusion and social and economic inequalities. Of course, we need academia and we need scholars to raise these issues again and again.

We especially must have no doubts about the defence of the principles of citizenship and basic human rights. Without the defence of these principles, we cannot understand how to incorporate migrants in our societies. These principles are sacred, I would say.

Also, we need education against xenophobia, against racism, against all the varieties of social discrimination, and we need to voice very loudly these basic principles of our life in democracies.

Then, there is the political fight, within the rules of the democratic game, against the discrimination and inequality of course affecting the migrants' lives. I believe that, apart from all the contributions from the different social sciences and from different scientific fields, we also need a political response; we must understand that migrants are not those who should be always left behind, but those who should live and share the well-being of richer societies.

Giorgio Parisi: What I would like to say to them is very simple: there must be many of you. We need many scholars, climate scholars, so there should be many of you because there will be an incredible amount of work to be done.

But let me add that in order to have many scholars on climate, that have all the characteristics that we have stressed before, for instance interdisciplinarity and things like that, it's clear that the university must start to contemplate preparing them. There should be a doctorate, some kind of interdisciplinary doctorate, in order to prepare people to do this kind of job. Because if we do not prepare people to do interdisciplinary jobs on migrant movements, migrant scholarship, if we do not prepare migrant scholars we will have just a few of them. If there are to be many of them, I think that we have to ask our universities to prepare many of them. Otherwise, we will have a shortage, and if we have a shortage, we will not be able to understand what is going on.

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