On 15–16 January 2018, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) organised the first-ever International Forum on Migration Statistics. The Forum's partner organisations included Eurostat, ILO, UNECE, UNHCR, UNODC and the World Bank/KNOMAD Group. The Forum was hosted by OECD and attended by over 500 participants (240 of whom were speakers) from 90 countries, representing national governments, international organizations, universities and research institutes, the private sector and the civil society.

*This **Migration Data Brief** focuses on the key messages of the inaugural International Forum on Migration Statistics.*

What were the key messages of the International Forum on Migration Statistics?

1. Significant migration-data gaps exist

Migration has risen to the top of countries' political agenda and has gained increasing attention in the media, yet the paucity of migration data in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness and comprehensiveness, and the insufficient use and sharing of existing data are still persistent.

2. Migration data are important for the SDGs and Global Compacts

The formal inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the forthcoming adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact for

Refugees have heightened the need for reliable, timely and internationally comparable data to support their follow-up and review. This point was particularly stressed by Louise Arbour, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, William Lacy Swing, Director- General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

A joint note prepared by UN DESA, IOM and the OECD as an input to the consultations for the preparation of Global Compact for Migration provided concrete recommendations on how to improve migration data from national population censuses, household surveys and administrative

sources, how to leverage the potential of new data sources or 'big data' to track mobile populations, and how to monitor progress in the implementation of the migration-related targets of the SDGs (https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/stocktaking_un_iom_oecd.pdf).

3. National Statistics Offices take the lead on innovative approaches to migration data

The Forum underlined the unprecedented pressure on data producers, notably National Statistics Offices (NSOs), stemming from the increased urgency, and broadened scope, of the demand for migration data. NSO representatives shared concrete and innovative actions they are taking to fill the main data gaps and respond to the increasing demand for timely and disaggregated data.

4. Disaggregation of migration data is crucial

The Forum highlighted the need for disaggregated migration data on specific groups. A parallel session on "Child and youth migrants" sought to understand the extent to which existing data sources facilitate the identification and counting of child and youth migrants, particularly those in precarious legal situations, and how migration statistics can be improved to take into account the specific experiences of children on the move.

Other parallel sessions focused on the gaps in migration data with regard to displaced persons. IOM's session on "Migrants in vulnerable situations and the left behind" highlighted the potential of using innovative approaches such as the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix to gather timely data on often-hidden populations. A parallel session underscored the gaps in data on refugees, the challenges in measuring refugee wellbeing, and the need to improve the coordination and integration of systems for collecting data and producing official statistics on refugees. Additional parallel sessions considered the challenges of measuring internal displacement and human trafficking.

Parallel sessions also highlighted the need for thematic disaggregation of migration data for formulating more targeted migration policies. Speakers presented research underlining the importance of disaggregation by geography, skill level and country of origin, among others. A parallel

session on "Data analysis on migrant integration at a local level" sought to contribute to the development of new indicators and analysis on migration issues at sub-national level and to exchange experiences on how to use such information to design, implement or monitor different strands of public policies, ranging from integration to regional development policy and education policy.

A parallel session on "International students and temporary skilled workers" provided a comparative discussion of the available data and global trends of international student enrolment, their labour-market outcomes, analysis of administrative data on high-skilled visas, and a longitudinal survey of college graduates.

Sessions also highlighted the importance of disseminating and analysing data on the origin of international migrants. The UN Statistics Division's sessions on "Measuring migration in the context of the 2030 agenda" and on "Population censuses as a source of migration data" underscored the need for disaggregating data by migratory status, including country of origin, and shed light on the use of censuses to capture emigrants.

5. Capacity building and international cooperation are necessary for improving migration data

The increasing demands for timely and disaggregated migration data represent a challenge for data producers, notably NSOs, particularly across the Global South, where resources dedicated to the collection, analysis and dissemination of migration data may be limited. Providing such resources, facilitating knowledge transfers and enhancing international cooperation will be key to improving the migration evidence base in low- and middle-income countries. The parallel session on "Improving migration data for policy" highlighted the need for data innovation and capacity-building at the national, regional and global levels. More generally, the Forum aimed to contribute to the exchange of knowledge on migration.

6. Effective communication of data is necessary for overcoming public misperceptions of migration

Improving the evidence base on the costs and benefits of migration, on migrants' characteristics and integration outcomes is also key to addressing common misperceptions about migration and rising antagonism towards immigrants in many countries. As highlighted in one of the plenary session, realizing the developmental potential of migration and ensuring the success of migration policy reforms hinge on an understanding of how public opinions are formed and the extent to which these can be shaped by well-communicated facts. A parallel session on "Communicating data on migration" contributed to the understanding of public opinion on migration by considering strategies to improve data literacy and data usage by decision makers and the general public.

7. Big data and other innovative approaches can help fill data gaps

While more can be done to exploit existing traditional data sources, we should also harness the vast, untapped potential of new technology-driven sources of migration data as well as of innovative methodologies based on public and private administrative data. New systems and partnerships are needed to facilitate data innovation while also addressing legitimate ethical, methodological and quality concerns raised at the Forum. Parallel sessions on digital traceability and mobilising big data to measure highly-skilled migration underpinned the discussion of innovative approaches to migration data.

8. The Forum will provide a regular space for exchange on migration-data issues

The Forum aims to become a regular event that will contribute to the exchange of information on migration measurement issues, promoting mutual learning, facilitating cooperation among relevant stakeholders, and mobilizing expertise from a wide range of disciplines. IOM will take the lead in organizing the next International Forum on Migration Statistics in 2020, in coordination with the OECD and UN DESA.

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