

Keynote Remarks: Orderly Migration in a Disorderly World

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MODEL INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY DECLARATION WORKSHOP

FEBRUARY 2019



Orderly Migration in a Disorderly World

Ambassador William Lacy Swing



Ambassador William Swing gave a keynote address titled “Orderly Migration in a Disorderly World” to a large crowd at Perry World House the evening before the Model International Mobility Declaration workshop.

INTRODUCTION

A. Honor. It is an honour to be invited to share with you today some reflections on the past, present and future of the multilateral governance of migration. I do so in the context of the “Model international Mobility Convention and Declaration”.

B. Appreciation. I wish to thank the University of Pennsylvania for hosting this important Workshop. I am especially grateful to Professor Michael Doyle of Columbia University and Professor William Burke-White of the University of Pennsylvania and their teams for initiating and organizing the Commission, the Workshop, the Convention and the Declaration. I greatly respect their wisdom on the issue of human mobility and value their friendship.

C. Congratulations. I also wish to congratulate Professors Doyle and Burke-White for the timeliness of their initiative — an initiative that follows closely on the heels of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) approved by 164 nations at Marrakesh on December 10.

In a very real sense, the GCM and the Convention and Declaration represent a denouement and culmination of several decades of efforts to establish migration governance as one of the most important priorities of our time.

D. Three Worlds. I wish to make three points: (1) First, to speak to you about migration and migrants’ contributions in historical and contemporary terms. (2) Second, to reflect on migration in today’s world which is largely at odds with itself on migration and finds



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itself in the midst of a “perfect storm”; and, (3) Third, to look at a future in which there is global consensus and commitment to the protection of all those on the move and embracement of a global trend toward most societies becoming, inexorably, more multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious.

In effect, I want to describe to you three worlds — in two of which we live today and which are at odds with one another — and a third that we need to create. To establish that Third World, the “Model International Mobility Convention and Declaration” are highly relevant.

I. A WORLD ON THE MOVE

A. From humankind’s earliest days — when the human species moved from Africa to people Europe and later the world — migration has been a common feature in all our lives. Migration is the central thread in our common history. A universally - shared DNA.

As a colleague reminds us: Greek colonization and Roman and later European expansion depended on migration, as did the Mesopotamian, Inca and Zhou empires. Millions of others saw migration as their lifeline to escape stagnant economies. The Irish famine alone caused more Irish to migrate to the US in the 19th and 20th centuries than the current population of Ireland.

As the Convention and Declaration astutely observe: “throughout history, human beings have been defined by their mobility.” (In fact, human mobility is a more accurate term than that of migration, as the MIMC notes.) Almost every society —especially ours—has been built and continues to be built on the backs of migrants and with their brains. Historically, migration has almost always been overwhelmingly positive for our societies and economies. For example, in a recent study,

the McKenzie Global Institute and IOM demonstrated that although migrants constitute only 3 per cent of global population, they produce 9 per cent of global GDP — which is 4 per cent more than they would have had they stayed at home. As John Kenneth Galbraith once said: “Migration is the world’s oldest poverty - reduction strategy.”

B. Regular Migration. Today, more than ever, we live in a world on the move. In sheer numbers, there are more people migrating, both internationally and domestically, than at any other time in recorded history.

— Ours is an era of unprecedented human mobility. Numerically, there are some 258 million International migrants (Although that’s likely a gross underestimate.) If one adds the 750 million internal or domestic migrants, there are today at least 1 billion migrants in our 7 billion global population. Thus, one of every seven persons in our world is a migrant.

— On the other hand, as I mentioned, the number of international migrants represents only 3% of global population — a figure that has remained fairly constant over the past half-century. The actual number of international migrants is greater than ever before because of a demographic phenomenon, namely, that the world’s population quadrupled in the 20th century for the first time in history — a phenomenon that is unlikely to reoccur in the lifetime of any of us.

As the MIMC correctly observes: were the 258 million international migrants to form a single country, “Migration-land” would be the fifth or sixth largest country in the world — with a population slightly larger than Brazil’s and somewhat smaller than the population of Indonesia,. By mid-century — when the world’s population will approach 8 billion — the total number of international migrants is expected to double to 450 million — a prospect that adds urgency to this workshop, designed as it is to expand protection of



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migrants to all categories. Migration is the human face of globalization.

The “GDP” of these migrants in the form of remittances or money sent home — last year, for example, more than \$500 billion — is roughly equivalent to the GDP of a small size European country. Annual migrant remittances far exceed total foreign aid. Migrant remittances are roughly equal to all foreign direct investment annually. For a number of developing countries, migrant remittances are the principal source of their GDP.

As regards internal migration — which is not the subject of this workshop — China alone has more domestic migrants than the world international migrants. And, these internal migrants face some of the same challenges as do international migrants: anti-migrant sentiment; language barriers; family separation; etc.

C. Forced and Irregular Migration. The majority of all human mobility occurs regularly, voluntarily, and safely. Unfortunately, increasing numbers of persons are being forced to migrate, owing to a number of driving forces or “root causes”. In reality, today, there are 67 million forced migrants — a greater number than at any other time since the Second World War. Again, the MIMC makes a valid point that “failing to provide legal pathways for migrants indirectly encourages irregular migration.” And, it is not the rich countries who bear the burden of the forcibly displaced; on the contrary, as the MIMC notes, 85% of those forced to move are being hosted by a dozen or so developing countries.

The push factors forcing people to leave their country against their will are many. There are a dozen or so of these “Drivers”, or “root causes”. For quick recall, I have conveniently grouped these under the letter “D”.

— **Disparities.** A growing socio-economic divide between the industrialized world and the less developed economies is leading

increasing numbers of people, especially youth, to migrate in search of work and a better life. A World Bank/IMF report projects that large-scale migration from poor countries to richer regions of the world will be a “permanent feature of the global economy for decades to come as a result of major population shifts in countries.” These population shifts will reshape economic development for decades and — while posing challenges — will offer opportunities as well.

— **Demographic trends.** Essentially, the aging industrialized Global North needs workers at all skill levels; and a youthful, largely unemployed Global South needs jobs. Global North is rapidly aging, has a negative replacement rate, with declining fertility and increasing life expectancy. In other words, in virtually all OECD countries, more people are dying than being born, facing so-called “demographic stagnation”. And, even if birthrates were suddenly to soar, the newborns would not enter the labor market for another 20 years.

In contrast, a Global South has a soaring, largely unemployed youthful population, turgid job creation and high birth rate. In West Africa, for example, the average woman gives birth to six children and the median age of the population is 15 years, whereas Europe’s median age is 50. It is estimated, for example, that Japan will lose a third or more of its population well before the end of the century.

— **Disasters.** As noted earlier, we also live in an era of the so greatest forced migration — more than 67 million — since World War II. We live in an era of unprecedented simultaneous, complex, protracted armed conflicts, proxy wars and humanitarian emergencies such as hurricanes, earthquakes and typhoons —with intra-state fighting from the Western bulge of Africa to Southeast Asia. These armed conflicts include Syria, Libya, Nigeria, the DR Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition, 1 million Rohingya have been forced to flee Myanmar



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and take refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. Moreover, there is little hope on the horizon that any of these wars are likely to be resolved in the short to medium-term. Therefore, more and more people will die or be forced to migrate — especially given the appalling dearth of political leadership or courage to resolve these conflicts. This in turn has led to a shocking decline in international moral authority, as witness the UN Security Council. In disasters and crises, migrants are always among the most affected. Migrants are always among the most vulnerable. Migrants are largely “invisible” when a crisis occurs.

— **Desperation.** People move in many instances, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, Venezuela or Central America, because they have given up on the economy and the government; are victims of gang violence; or otherwise see no hope in remaining at home.

— **Demand for labor.** The issue is basically one of labor shortages in the Global North versus labor surplus in the Global South. Labor migration is actually the largest single category of international migration today with some 150 million persons seeking work abroad.

Yet, an ILO convention on the rights of labor migrants, adopted in 1990, has yet to be adopted by any industrialized country. Again, the MIMC makes the point that although “nearly half the world’s migrants are migrant workers, labor migration remains under a very weak international legal regime that has not been adopted by destination countries.” The global North will find itself increasingly in need of additional labor, while a global South has a dearth of jobs and an excess of labor — not all of which can be absorbed through South - South migration even though South - South migration is as large as that of South - North migration.

— **Degradation** of the environment. Climate change is already forcing increasing numbers of persons to migrate. Our current forecast, however, is that most climate — induced

migration will be internal. On the other hand, at least one Pacific island nation has already purchased land in a neighbouring country to take its people when the ocean waters rise a further meter. (This will create a new category of stateless persons, namely, those not rejected by the state, but who, physically, lost the state owing to climate-change.)

— **Digital revolution.** At the turn-of-the-century, only 300 million people were connected to the Internet. Today, there are more than 3 billion Internet users, moving rapidly toward 4 billion and beyond. People have access to instant information, know what is going on, where to go and where to avoid and can be in regular contact with family members left behind.

— **Distant-shrinking technology.** Besides the Internet and instant connectivity, budget airlines enable us to get anywhere quickly and cheaply.

— **Descent upon the cities.** Urbanization is a major magnet for migrants. The overwhelming majority of all migrants — both international and domestic — seek to establish themselves in cities. After all, that is where the jobs are, social services, and many of their nationals who preceded them. No matter where they come from — even the most remote rural areas — migrants will almost always end up in cities which are a powerful magnet for those seeking a better life. This is why the role of Mayors in managing migration is so critical. (You will recall that the year 2010 was the first time in recorded history in which more people were found to be living in cities rather than in its rural areas. (Migrants were important actors in this development.)

These then are some of the major forces in the world today that are driving migration. These are some of the “root causes” that will ensure that large-scale migration remains a “mega - trend” of this century. (In this regard, Time Magazine’s February 4 edition carried a Special Report and Front-Page Story entitled “Beyond Walls” and subtitled “Why the



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Forces of Global Migration can't be stopped.”)

The issue before us then is that there are virtually no legal instruments for the protection of persons on the move other than for refugees and stateless persons. It is too simplistic to categorise everyone who does not qualify for refugee or stateless protection as an “economic migrant”.

The Model International Mobility Convention usefully lists various categories of unprotected migrants. These include: victims of trafficking or smuggling; unaccompanied minors; the sick and the elderly; pregnant women and those traveling with children; persons seeking to reunite with their families; those fleeing armed conflict, gang warfare or devastated economies. All are persons with different needs, but all need to be treated with dignity.

In this regard the Model International Mobility Convention and Declaration are designed to ensure that all persons on the move, whatever their category or circumstances, are protected. The Convention and Declaration are comprehensive and unprecedented in scope, covering all persons on the move; balanced in calling for the human rights of all mobile persons to be respected and protected, especially those of women, children and other vulnerable persons on the move.

The authors have also tried to ensure that the Convention and Declaration are integrated with the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Convention and Declaration are also farsighted, visionary (climate change, e.g.), inclusive, fair, humane and sensitive to those most vulnerable, both while on the move and after arrival at their destination.

In spite of all these “drivers” or “root causes”, migration remains not so much a problem to be solved or a crisis to be resolved — but rather, migration is a human reality to be managed. The MIMC’s vision, as I understand it, is one of a world in which human mobility is well governed, according to shared



Professor Michael Doyle introduces Ambassador Swing, noting the importance of advocating for a comprehensive regime for international mobility.

principles and shared responsibilities by all. Today, however, the world in which we live is vastly different. And this brings me to my second point.

II. A WORLD AMIDST A “PERFECT STORM”.

In the face of these driving forces, we live in a second world, simultaneously — one built on the fear of the “other”. This second, very disorderly world has adopted a countercyclical response to mobile people. This second world in which we live is in disarray, confused and has largely lost its bearings in the middle of this “perfect storm” — the likes of which I’ve not witnessed in my long life. Among the elements constituting the storm are:

- The greatest forced migration since World War II, as we noted earlier. Some 24 million refugees, and 43 million internally displaced persons (IDP’s). (Bear in mind that not more than 1% of the world migrants are resettled annually; that returns are at a 30 year low; and that the average refugee camp time is 26 years.)
- A further 75 million people are living precariously only one meter above sea level.
- Unprecedented anti-migrant sentiment and xenophobia which manifests itself in anti-migrant policies, harmful and misleading



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public pronouncements and actions that perpetuate stereotypes which endanger migrants lives and deny us their contributions.

— Human traffickers and smugglers — the “Travel Agents of Death” — indirectly subsidized by governments’ anti-migrant policies — earn \$35 billion annually off the backs of migrants.

— A decline in public confidence in government’s ability or will to manage migration.

— An appalling dearth of political courage, leadership and vision;

— A serious erosion of international moral authority, with the UN Security Council perhaps the prime example:

— Violations of international humanitarian law by all sides in the numerous armed conflicts.

These, then, are a few of the many elements, together with the root causes, that constitute a “perfect storm”.

In effect, this second world in which we live is building walls rather than bridges. A populist, nationalist world that has turned inward. A world that is decidedly anti-migrant. A world that is afflicted with “refugee amnesia”, often forgetting our own history. — For example, that IOM and UNHCR were founded in 1951 to take Europeans, ravaged by the Second World War, to safe shores and new lives; that 61 years ago, 200,000 Hungarians fled to open arms in Austria and former Yugoslavia. In recent times, world has rarely known such widespread and growing anti-migrant sentiment, negative public discourse and xenophobic policies.

More and more governments — including traditionally migrant countries such as our own — are now pursuing populist nationalist policies feeding people false information about migrants, reviving and espousing stereotypes that endanger migrants whose only fault is to want security and a better life.

Migration has become highly political. Migration today plays a major role in most elections. Following elections, migration is often a deciding element in the formation of government coalitions. Rather than informing and educating the people about migrants and their contributions, political leaders exploit migrants to win votes.

A. Political leaders stereotype migrants for political gain. Some of the more common stereotypes are:

— “We do not need migrants.” This flies in the face of demographic statistics which show that in most OECD countries, more people are dying than being born and, consequentially, an ageing and declining population need migrants in every field.

— “Migrants steal our jobs.” Evidence is the contrary, namely, that migrants actually create jobs, especially in the area of small and medium enterprise. Migrants also do the so-called “dirty, difficult and dangerous” work that our own citizens refuse to do. Migrants are the ultimate entrepreneurs and one of the world’s most powerful agents of development.

— “Migrants are criminals.” Again, statistics prove the contrary, namely, that migrants commit fewer crimes than our own citizens. A migrant’s motivation is to earn money for the family back home.

— “Migrants exploit our welfare system.” World Bank and IMF studies confirm that migrants contribute more in taxes than they consume in social services. Therefore, the sooner a migrant has a job, the sooner that migrant will pay tax. The sooner a migrant becomes a citizen, the sooner that migrant will vote.

— Migrants pose a security threat. Most of the terrorist attacks over the past two years — Paris, Nice, Barcelona, Brussels, San Bernardino, California, Orlando — were “home-grown”, that is, attacks committed by nationals. Moreover, there is no instance of



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any of the 3 million refugees who came to the states since 1980 having ever committed a terrorist act.

There is a crying need to “de – mythologize” migration and migrants in the interest of all.

B. Many political leaders use false or no data to castigate migrants.

— For example, the 1.5 million migrants who arrived in Europe in 2015 by way of Libya in the Mediterranean did not really represent a “crisis” as such. It was a perfectly manageable situation. The 1.5 million migrants constituted less than 1% of the EU’s population of 550 million. By contrast, Lebanon, with a population of 5 million, hosts 1.5 million Syrian migrants in addition to 500,000 Palestinians.

The migrant arrivals in 2015 simply exposed a political crisis in the European Union, namely, disunity on the question of migration and the total absence of a comprehensive, holistic migration policy. If even a few of the 27 other EU governments had followed Chancellor Angela Merkel’s courageous and visionary lead, the situation would have been entirely manageable. Instead, what happened was that one country, namely, Germany, had to handle the entire caseload alone. This led to Chancellor Merkel’s suffering political losses at the polls.

A boatload of 50 persons arriving on the UK shores recently suddenly constituted a so – called “crisis”. Two years ago, I and my UNHCR colleagues, were called to Bangkok to address another “so – called” crisis of several thousand Rohingya from Myanmar on boats off the shores of Thailand and Malaysia and Indonesia. We said to our hosts: “where is the crisis?” Your three countries have a population of more than 300 million, and we have doctors and others waiting on shore to receive and help these people.

This leads me to ask whether you have ever thought about the cruel irony that we have legal instruments, rules and guidelines for almost every area of human activity – – but

no legal agreements or regulations to protect people on the move? Oddly enough, just down the street from IOM headquarters in Geneva is the World Trade Organization (WTO) whose mandate is to ensure “the free movement of capital, goods and services”. Yet, all of this free movement depends on people, and there are to date no rules or legal instruments to ensure their free movement and protection while mobile. As Prof. Doyle states: “the movement of people across borders lacks global regulation, leaving many people unprotected in irregular and dire situations.”

The convention draft has summarised the perfect storm as follows: “following Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, the expulsion of the Rohingya from Myanmar, the bilateral ethnic cleansing in several countries, and the continuing hazards of the Mediterranean crossing, these are not auspicious times for creative, multilateral humanitarianism.”

III. A WORLD ON THE “HIGH GROUND”.

A. A man-made storm. But, this is a man – made storm. It, therefore, doesn’t have to be. When you’re in a storm, seize and capture the “high ground” – and, with respect to migration, seek to capture the moral “high ground”. This is indeed the objective of the draft Convention and Declaration, namely, “to establish a common floor of protections applicable to all persons on the move no matter where they are.” That is, “a minimum framework on which countries unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally can build.”

Such a policy serves three objectives:

1. To address the migration “drivers” to reduce force and irregular migration;
2. To facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration; and,
3. To respect and protect the human rights of all migrants, whether regular or irregular.



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B. Grounds for hope. There is hope on the horizon in all these regards. And, this is why we are here this week. We are here to fashion a “High Ground” or “High Road” scenario for migration and migrants. A “High Ground” scenario designed to protect all persons on the move, irrespective of their status or category.

1. Our gathering today is particularly timely, coming as it does in the wake of the decision of 164 countries to concur in a Global Compact on safe, orderly and regular migration at Marrakesh, Morocco on December 10.

2. We should also take courage in our knowledge that this journey did not begin yesterday. The Global Compact and this Workshop represent further major steps along the pathway that started more than 30 years ago — when it was recognized that there are far more people on the move than those covered by existing legal frameworks such as the Refugee and Stateless Persons Conventions. The steps, far too many to mention in any detail, include:

- Regional Consultative Processes (1984 and continuing — some 30 covering every continent);
- International Dialogue on Migration (2001);
- Bern Initiative (2003);
- Geneva Migration Group/Global Migration Group (2006);



Ambassador Swing outlines steps that have been taken toward the goal of protecting all persons on the move, irrespective of their status or category.

— UNGA High -Level Dialogues on International Migration and Development (2007, 2013, and 2019);

— Global Forum on Migration and Development — GFMD (2007);

— Appointment of a UN SRSG for International Migration and Development (2007);

— UNGA Summit on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants (2016);

— IOM’s Formal Entry into the UN System (2016);

— Global Compact for Orderly, Safe and Regular Migration (2018).

At a minimum, we can take courage in the knowledge that we are at the “end of the beginning”.

C. High ground priorities. In the midst of the “Perfect storm”, the “high ground” lies in well - managed migration. And, this in turn, means a number of priorities, including:

—Saving life. The number of migrants who die or go missing every year is alarming and scandalous. In its annual report “Fatal Journeys”, IOM has documented more than 50,000 migrant deaths along migratory paths since the year 2000. This is probably a gross underestimate since (a) most governments do not maintain statistics on migrant deaths and (b) we have no way of knowing how many more bodies are buried in the sands of the Sahara or on the bottom of the Mediterranean.

— Global consensus on responsibility sharing — a major objective of this workshop;

— A comprehensive, holistic, long-term, multifaceted “whole of government” and “whole of society” migration and asylum policy;

— More legal channels of migration;

— De-criminalization of irregular migrants;

— Conversion of migrant detention centres into migrant reception centres;

— Prosecution of smugglers and traffickers;



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- Establishment of humanitarian border management;
- Multiple or dual nationality legislation;
- Multiple-entry visas;
- Portable Social Security and pension benefits;
- Access to public health services and education;
- Integration of migrants into development and emergency planning;
- Strong protection measures for women, children, the vulnerable and special groups such as domestic workers;
- Government programs of public information and education on the role, rights and responsibilities of migrants and migration;
- Development of effective migrant integration programs.

The Declaration under consideration this week is much more comprehensive than the measures I have mentioned — and are usefully broken down by subject category.

D. The “4-D” challenge. The challenges that I see before us are:

- To Change the Migration Narrative. The public narrative on migration currently is toxic. Our discussion is built on fear, supported by false and damaging stereotypes and lack of, or refusal to accept, the data about migration and migrants, which is overwhelmingly positive. We need to find more opportunities for migrants to tell their own story. A story that highlights the difficulties getting to their destination and even after their arrival; and their aspiration for a better life.

Governments must do more to inform and to educate the people about the contributions that migrants have always made, and to remind them that many of our countries, including our own great country. Changing the migration narrative also means helping people and governments to deal with the question of “identity”.

- To manage diversity. Given the drivers of large-scale migration, it is almost a given that more and more persons will arrive on our shoulders and doorsteps who do not look like us or speak as we do; however, if properly welcomed and given the opportunity to contribute, migrants can and will enrich our societies and economies as, historically, migrants have always done. Migrant integration into our societies and economies will be one of the major challenges that will determine whether our economies will prosper and our societies live in harmony during this century.

There is virtually no mono-ethnic society in the world today. Given all that we know and are experiencing today — including the “drivers” or “root causes” of large-scale migration — all our countries, with few exceptions, are destined to become more multi-ethnic, more multicultural and more multi religious. Even 40 years ago in his book entitled “Ethnicity”, Daniel Patrick Moynihan struggled without success to find a mono-ethnic country.

- To prevent armed conflicts and prepare for natural disasters. There can be little doubt in my mind that a number of the current armed conflicts, such as South Sudan, could not have been prevented by more enlightened and courageous leadership. Fortunately, prevention is one of the UN Secretary-General’s major priorities.

- To conjugate the paradoxes between (1) national security and human security; between (2) national sovereignty and individual human rights; and between (3) populist nationalism and multilateralism.

CONCLUSION

A. I shall conclude as I began. Migration is as old as humankind, yet as new as today. Migration is here to stay. Migration is the world’s oldest poverty reduction strategy, and migrants are effective agents of development Migration is one of the keys to a world on the high ground.



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B. Large-scale migration is:

1) **INEVITABLE** given the driving forces I mentioned that will continue to make migration a “mega - trend” of this century; All countries host a migrant population, and all countries have citizens abroad. Movements internally and across borders will only increase in the years to come, as the world becomes increasingly globalized. At the same time, no country is immune to natural disaster or conflict.

2) Large-scale migration is also **NECESSARY** if jobs are to be filled, skills to be available and economies to flourish; Migrants contribute to economic development — migrants are the quintessential development actors, enriching as they do the social economic and cultural fabric of our communities.

3) In addition, large-scale migration is **DESIRABLE** if governments have the right migration policies — humane, responsible and

fair, including integration of migrants into our societies and economies —migrant-friendly policies that offer migrants the opportunity to contribute and to help ensure a better economy.

Migration is in our DNA. Migration is not an invasion. Migrants do not pose a crisis.

In short, large scale migration is not an issue to be solved, but a human reality to be managed — governed in a manner that is responsible and humane and that works in the interest of everyone — the migrant, their families left behind, and the countries of origin, transition and destination. Managed international migration is a tool to reduce the various gaps between Global North and Global South. In other words, everyone would benefit from greater mobility of labor and skills.

The Model International Convention and Declaration promise to be a major tool with which to manage human mobility.



Following Ambassador Swing's address, he joined Professor Doyle and Professor William Burke-White, Inaugural Director of Perry World House, for a conversation about the human reality of migration and the importance of managing international migration in a responsible and humane way.