Statement

by

H.E. Dr. Amal Mudallali
Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations

at
the Final round of the informal consultations on the

“Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”

New York, Friday, July 13, 2018

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Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY 10017
Dear Representative of the Secretary-General,

Dear Co-Facilitators,

I would like to start by thanking the Co-facilitators the ambassadors of Mexico and Switzerland for the amazing effort that you have put into this endeavour, and throughout the negotiation rounds, till the last minutes of this final round. I would also want to thank you especially for your patience in trying to address the concerns of all delegations, including ours, a task that you have achieved with astounding success.

I want also to thank all those who worked on this issue especially your teams and Member States for their achievement working together and showing that we can still work together and win.

This Global Compact is extremely important for my country. The events of the last 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th century made Lebanon a net exporter of people.

A couple of miles from here on Ellis Island, you see the names of the poor but talented Lebanese who came as immigrants, along the names of the other poor, tired and talented people from around the world who landed here and built this great country.

They were laborers, peasants, learned and educated. One in particular became one of the great poets of this country, Gebran Khalil Gebran, the writer of the Prophet, who was a man without borders, who addressed his fellow Lebanese Syrians at the beginning of the 20th century asking them to tell his new country, America: “Here I am a youth, a young tree whose roots were plucked from the hills of Lebanon. Yet I am deeply rooted here. And I would be fruitful”. And so many became fruitful.

Some others became politicians, members of Congress, and Cabinet secretaries, or philanthropists like Dani Thomas who founded the St. Jude’s hospital for children with cancer. The head of the Jet Propulsion Lab in California that put Curiosity on Mars was a Lebanese immigrant.

But the story of the Lebanese migrants is not limited to America. Today, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese migrants, and millions of Lebanese descendants, live in the Gulf, Europe, Africa, Australia and North and South America. They adapted and integrated in their new and adopted societies, and had immense contributions to the economic and social development of their countries of destination.

- During the difficult political, economic and social turmoil that engulfed Lebanon in the past 3 decades, the Lebanese diaspora provided an economic and financial life line for the country, strengthening our resilience and helping our re-emergence from the successive crises that we faced.

- The yearly remittances of the Lebanese diaspora were estimated by the World Bank to be around 8 billion dollars in 2017 (around 16% of the current GDP, and a much higher percentage during the turmoil years).
- The Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants launched in 2014 the Lebanese Diaspora Energy project with the aim of strengthening the economic, financial, cultural and social inter-linkages between the Lebanese diaspora and those of Lebanese descent with the motherland. In addition to the obvious financial benefits for the country from such a strengthened cooperation, Lebanon also aims to benefit from our diaspora’s acquired knowledge and skills, networks, cultural capital, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. This will help Lebanon in diversifying its economy, attaining higher economic growth levels and achieving sustainable development.

Dear Representative of the Secretary-General,

Dear Co-Facilitators,

Your success and work honor and acknowledge the achievements of all migrants around the world, and help to protect millions more today by providing a compact that honors their experience and our humanity. The challenge now is in implementation. I hope to see you in Marrakech.