



## Talking Points:

### “World Migration & Displacement Symposium”

Welcome Remarks - Luca Dall'Oglio, USA for IOM CEO (4 min)

11 May 2021

#### Welcome

Good afternoon from Washington, D.C. and good evening and good morning everyone around the world. Thank you for joining us.

First, I would like to give special thanks to Professor Xiao-Li Meng as Editor in Chief of the Harvard Data Science Review, Associate Editors Liberty Vittert, Marie McAuliffe and Rita Ko from USA for IOM and USA for UNHCR who led the planning of this event. It is also a pleasure for this inaugural opening to highlight this first-time tripartite partnership between Harvard Data Science Review, USA for UNHCR, and USA for IOM.

#### USA for IOM Priorities

As the name indicates, USA for IOM is the International Organization for Migration's nonprofit partner in the United States. Our Mission is to raise awareness about global migration issues, priorities and IOM's role in tackling them. At USA for IOM we focus on selected issues with humanitarian and human rights based implications, issues which call for urgent response, such as migrants fleeing complex emergencies, conflict, and economic crisis; and forced migration induced by natural disasters; and on assistance to victims of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

Our goal is to mobilize action and investment for IOM to address migration initiatives around the world by fostering and expanding partnerships with academia, philanthropy and the private sector AND mobilizing support from the American people.

As migration has become a whole-of-government or rather a whole-of-society issue, we believe that the active participation of the broadest possible range of stakeholders is crucial to gain a comprehensive view of the migration phenomenon and its implications. In the process, unbiased, accurate information is essential to inform the migration policy debate and contribute, to the extent we are able to, to public opinion's perception of international migration.

We are confronted with increasing challenges faced by migrants today, challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic – and cannot remain indifferent to the broad public discourse on migration.



Amid this public health crisis, as the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has put it, we are witnessing a parallel “misinfodemic”<sup>1</sup> within the pandemic.

This is why USA for IOM is investing -- its admittedly limited resources -- to help quell these harmful narratives fueled by fear and extreme politicization. Disinformation has become an equally critical virus to contain, a virus with far ranging consequences undermining social cohesion, and that is why we are here today.

### **Why We Are Here**

We find ourselves at a novel point in history where a wealth of information is a click away and we are more inter-connected than ever before; disinformation is also propagating at rapid pace, affecting public sentiment, and in turn, government policies.

Increasing social, economic, health and environmental drivers of migration significantly impact human mobility and exacerbate already fragile situations. Migrants, refugees, displaced persons, and other vulnerable populations easily become victimized by these false narratives.

Although xenophobia is at the crux of the problem, stigma and false narratives reinforced by digital disinformation campaigns further marginalize an already vulnerable population. This has been amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

IOM is committed to doubling down on disinformation by taking a leading role in evidencing migration through its flagship publication, the World Migration Report, which recently launched a new data visualization platform that connects fact-based narratives on migration with interactive data visualizations of some of the latest global migration data and trends.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, and as you will hear in further detail from IOM’s Director General, Antonio Vitorino during Thursday’s Fireside Chat, IOM recently adopted the Migration Data Strategy which is aligned with the data strategy of the UN, aiming to foster the individual and collective strengths of the United Nations system agencies.<sup>3</sup> Access to high-quality, accessible, disaggregated, reliable and timely data is essential to inform policies, action and public opinion. The capacity of researchers and practitioners to communicate to policy makers in a manner that is mutually understandable is also part of the issue.

### **USA for IOM’s Role and Importance of Partnering Across Sectors**

USA for IOM and IOM actively engage with research institutions, think tanks, and academic institutions to bolster partnerships across sectors with the intent of facilitating access to information, and with the private sector to harness the power of innovative solutions in our programming.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19\\_analytical\\_snapshot\\_19\\_-\\_misinformation.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_19_-_misinformation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.iom.int/news/world-migration-report-launches-dynamic-new-data-visualization-platform>

<sup>3</sup> <https://dmsportal/sites/GOV/StandingCommitteeOnProgrammesAndFinance/027%202020/S-27-4%20-%20Summary%20of%20the%20IOM%20Migration%20Data%20Strategy.pdf#search=data%20strategy>



USA for IOM is honored to be included alongside our partners and contribute to this incredibly timely symposium intent on fostering a space for dialogue and collaboration amongst industry experts, data scientists, academia, UN agencies, and all relevant interlocutors and stakeholders invested in combatting disinformation.

### **Closing**

Once again, on behalf of USA for IOM, I would like to thank our partners, the Harvard Data Science Review and USA for UNHCR for their collaborative spirit in coming together with us to convene this impressive panel of experts. We will follow with interest the future directions of this critical and timely topic and will be doing our utmost to give increased visibility to these fora on collaborative solutions on how to combat disinformation.

I am looking forward to a meaningful and enlightening exchange over the next three days.

### **Introduction of Next Speaker**

Without further ado it is my honor to introduce my colleague, IOM's **Marie McAuliffe**, Head of IOM's Research Division, who will be moderating the first panel of this event. Thank you.