

Local actors from Turkey and around the world meet at the Municipal Forum 2019 in Gaziantep

MAYORS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES, DEVELOPMENT ACTORS FROM FOUR CONTINENTS MEET TO ADVANCE SOLUTIONS TO MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

The International Forum on Local Solutions to Migration and Displacement brings together good practices, lessons learnt and experiences of municipalities in Turkey and local authorities around the world aimed at responding to the needs of refugees and migrants while maintaining the quality of their services to host communities and discusses opportunities to promote further international cooperation in response to migration and forced displacement at the local level.

Gaziantep, 26 November 2019 - The International Forum on Local Solutions to Migration and Displacement on 26 and 27th of November is co-hosted by the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality (GMM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), together with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Migration Agency (IOM), the World Academy for Local Government and Democracy (WALD), the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT), and the United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA).

The forum brings together over 60 development actors, including 16 international mayors from 12 countries in 4 continents and 15 mayors from Turkey to discuss and share good practices and local solutions responding to migration and forced displacement under the theme of 'From Emergency to Resilience and Development'.

The event offers an opportunity to showcase and exchange good practices between Turkish municipalities and local authorities around the world facilitating city-level partnerships. The forum also outlines how local solutions to improve the lives of refugees, migrants, and host communities can be replicated and scaled up. The Forum also provides a platform to identify gaps, challenges as well as opportunities to promote further international cooperation in response to migration and displacement at the local level.

Ahead of the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) that Turkey will co-convene and UNHCR will co-host on 17-18 December 2019 in Geneva, the Forum highlights how approaches bridging humanitarian and development responses, such as the New Way of Working, have been put into practice to achieve the goals and objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration (GCM).

Speaking at the Forum, Vice President of the Republic of Turkey, Mr Fuat Oktay said "Globally 71 million people have been forced to migrate. In this process, we always walked next to the refugees. The international community should also walk with us. We highly appreciate this forum which will produce solutions to the impacts of migration and displacement. I wholeheartedly believe that good practices would be featured via this forum."

The Mayor of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Deputy President of UCLG and the President of the Union of Municipalities of Turkey, Ms Fatma Şahin said: “We do not see the works we do as municipality regarding migration phenomenon as philanthropy but as an international and humanitarian responsibility. We accept this phenomenon not as a problem to be solved but as a reality to be addressed.”

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Deputy Director for the Regional Bureau of Europe and the CIS Countries, Ms. Agi Veres said “The number of international migrants has reached 270 million and 90 percent of these movements are because of economic reasons. Not only Turkey, but all of us have important responsibilities in response to migration and displacement. Local authorities have a leading role in integrating newcomers while maintaining social cohesion. The response of Turkish municipalities hosting record numbers of refugees and migrants is an example showing the world how to act. This event is a milestone.”

“As years pass by, the efforts of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality will be understood much better and their response to migration and displacement will set as a good example to the world. Providing education to children and livelihood opportunities to adults are essential for social inclusion. I would like to stress the strategic importance of further support to local authorities” said Director for the Global Refugee Forum from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Daniel Endres at the opening session.

Director of International Cooperation and Partnerships of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Ms. Jill Helke said “While local and national priorities on migration are set according to local context and conditions, international cooperation is key to achieve if progress, including those through the use of mayoral networks and venues to exchange lessons learned such as this meeting.”

UN Turkey Officer in Charge, Mr Alvaro Rodriguez said “I express my thanks and gratitude to the Republic of Turkey for their greatness and hosting the largest number of refugees in the world. Turkey really is a significant example, especially with the efforts of its municipalities. Local development and innovations continue thanks to the municipalities.”

A key outcome of the municipal forum will be the 2019 Gaziantep Declaration reflecting, inter alia, good practices on the implementation of globally and regionally agreed principles on local solutions to migration and forced displacement. The Declaration which will be announced on 27th November will be communicated to the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and its Mayors’ Mechanism, the Global Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development and UCLG Congress to feed in these respective discussions.

As another outcome of the Forum, the UCLG-MEWA Committee on Social Inclusion will establish a Global Task Force on Migration. This Global Task Force will serve as a network to follow up on the commitments of the Gaziantep Declaration.

Forum’s web site: municipalforum2019.org

For more information: *The Metropolitan Municipality of Gaziantep, Derman Kahraman dermankahraman@gmail.com the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Faik Uyanik faik.uyanik@undp.org; the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Selin Unal unal@unhcr.org; the UN Migration Agency (IOM), Lanna WALSH, lwalsh@iom.int; the World Academy of Local Authorities and Democracy (WALD), Ezgi Öziş, e.ozis@wald.org.tr; the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT/TBB), Tuğba Ereken, tugba.ereken@tbb.gov.tr; United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA), Yasemin Alhayek y.alhayek@uclg-mewa.org; UN in Turkey, Ahmet Parla, parla@un.org*