



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Speech IOM Chief of Mission Mr. Antonio Polosa

Occasion: Annual IOM New Year's reception (13 Feb 2020)

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, welcome and Happy New Year to you.

First of all, I would like to express my most sincere thanks to all of you for being here tonight.

We are glad that you could make the time and join our annual reception today. Most of you are based in The Hague but some of you made their way from different parts of the Netherlands and from Brussels.

The theme of International Migrants Day last December was Social Cohesion. We therefore chose to focus on this topic for this year's New Year's reception, in recognition not just of migrants' contribution, but also of the communities they form part of, in which they can and do flourish.

Too often, when we hear debating whether migration, it is good or bad thing, with much emphasis on the costs and precise contribution migrants make to our lives.

While certainly legitimate and much welcome to research and assess migration impact, we should equally recognize that migration as is very complex phenomenon and not an accounting practice: to do so is to reduce it to a fraction of its whole.

Migration is an evolving – often challenging and at times even controversial phenomenon – yet, it is still an integral part of our societies, also enriching them in multiple, tangible as well as intangible ways.

Too often, we forget that migrants are already part of our lives, their contributions woven into our daily interactions. Just look around you during your daily routines!

The communities that thrive and grow are those that understand and embrace change and crucially take adequate measures in adjusting to it. But communities cannot adapt alone or let change be guided by random case.

They need support from governments bodies, NGO's, private sector and... organizations, such as IOM.

Therefore, in line with today's reception theme, we have invited Niloufar Rahim, chair of the Afghan diaspora organization KEIHAN, and Yordanes Lassooy Telke, one of the migrant ambassadors of our PROTECT project, today as examples of how migrants can contribute to social cohesion together with IOM. I am sure their observations will be thoughts provoking and also help to view such topic from a broader and yet very personal and concrete perspective.



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Now, when looking back at 2019, we can say that our operational support to migrants in need of assistance has grown increasingly demanding.

For example, our colleagues at the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration program are faced with complex health needs of our beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, under the auspices of such program, funded as you may know by the Dutch government, we've assisted 3035 returning migrants in 2019. Worth to mention, this number has only been achieved 7 times since 1992, when IOM started this program.

Besides that, IOM NL (Schiphol airport Unit) has also assisted a total of 1962 migrants arriving to the Netherland and 4709 transiting via the Netherlands to further destinations within Europe and beyond.

For 2020 we envision increased responsibilities towards the fields of diaspora engagement and integration.

IOM NL colleagues of all departments and areas of expertise are present here today, so please to not shy away from meeting them tonight.

Your Excellencies, dear partners and friends,

Before closing my speech and giving the floor to our "migrant ambassadors", I would like to express my gratitude for your crucial and effective support in the past year.

IOM can only do its work in close cooperation with its partners: diplomatic representations, governmental counterparts, other international organizations, NGOs, the private sector and migrant communities.

Last but not least, none of this work and its remarkable achievements would have been ever possible without the committed hard work and dedication of my entire team, that I wish to acknowledge and thank here, wholeheartedly!

A warm welcome to you all, let us raise our glasses on our continued cooperation in 2020.