



Rabat Process

Euro-African Dialogue on
Migration and Development

Thematic Meeting:

Sustainable reintegration and development: strengthening synergies

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**Outcome
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Overview

Co-chaired by **Switzerland and Tunisia**, the thematic meeting intended to solidify a shared understanding of the mutually reinforcing relationship between reintegration outcomes and development conditions.

Bringing together over **80 representatives from 28 Dialogue partner countries**, as well as regional and international organisations, the meeting enabled in-depth discussions on the reintegration–development nexus, the multidimensional nature of sustainable reintegration, and the importance of ownership of reintegration processes by countries of origin.

The meeting aligned with the **Cádiz Action Plan**, in particular Area 5: Return, Readmission and Reintegration, Objective 10, which encourages programmes aimed at ensuring safe return and supporting the sustainable reintegration of migrants, with full respect for their human rights and dignity. It also aligns with the **Joint Valetta Action plan**, in particular Domain 5 which calls inter alia to promote programmes on assisted voluntary return and reintegration and strengthen the capacity of countries of origin and transit in managing voluntary returns and supporting the reintegration of all returnees.

Specific objectives:

- **Enhance a collective understanding of the factors shaping reintegration outcomes**, including the interaction between structural development conditions in countries and communities of return and individual migration experiences, in order to inform more effective and context-sensitive reintegration policies.
- **Explore how reintegration programmes can contribute to local and national development**, and how development cooperation can in turn support sustainable reintegration and effective migration governance.
- **Discuss challenges and learn from experiences and best practices** among Rabat Process partners on designing development-oriented reintegration policies and programmes.
- **Examine the efforts currently underway to strengthen ownership and better coordinate reintegration support** with national and regional development strategies and local development priorities.
- **Strengthen cooperation between migration and development stakeholders**, including governments, international organisations, local authorities, civil society and the private sector as well as ensure the effective engagement of all actors to strengthen the link between sustainable reintegration and development.

Opening ceremony

On behalf of Switzerland, **Cristina Probst-Lopez** expressed her sincere appreciation to Tunisia, noting that this year marks the celebration of 70 years of bilateral relations between the two countries. She highlighted that leveraging the synergies between sustainable reintegration and development, in a spirit of mutual benefit, calls for a comprehensive whole-of-route approach. While development conditions in countries of origin and within returnee communities play a significant role in shaping reintegration outcomes, well-designed reintegration programmes can, in turn, contribute meaningfully to both local and national development. She further emphasised that the relationship between sustainable reintegration and development is multifaceted and influenced by a wide range of factors. Addressing this complexity, she noted, requires adopting a broad and inclusive perspective that brings together all relevant stakeholders - from public institutions and the private sector to local communities and the most vulnerable groups - in order to ensure coherent, inclusive, and effective policies and programmes.

On behalf of Tunisia, **H.E. Ambassador Slah Salhi** expressed his deep appreciation to Switzerland and the European Union. He noted that this marks the first time Tunisia has chaired a thematic meeting within the Rabat Process, describing it as an important milestone reflecting both the progress achieved and the constructive role Tunisia seeks to continue playing within this Euro-African dialogue platform. He underscored that, for Tunisia, the Rabat Process goes well beyond a multilateral consultation framework, representing a key pillar of the strategic dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean, grounded in the principles of solidarity, shared responsibility, and a renewed commitment to promoting safe, orderly, and dignified migration. He further called for a strengthened sense of collective responsibility and reaffirmed Tunisia's commitment to ensuring that human dignity and safety remain at the heart of all migration-related decisions.

On behalf of the European Union, **Aurélie Sgro** expressed her sincere appreciation to the Swiss chairmanship and the Tunisian Co-Chair for convening this very timely meeting, and to the Secretariat of the Rabat Process for its support in shaping an agenda that enabled timely exchanges on key operational questions, including ensuring the coherence of reintegration approaches, strengthening a whole-of-society engagement, and advancing on the operationalisation of national reintegration systems. She recalled that two complementary dynamics have progressively emerged at the European level. On the one hand, a migration management perspective, aiming to establish effective and credible return systems - an essential component of the Pact on Migration and Asylum - where reintegration serves both as an incentive for return and as immediate support for stabilisation. On the other hand, a development-oriented perspective, which seeks to embed reintegration within national systems and broader sectoral policies, with a view to fostering sustainable reintegration of returnees into their communities. In this regard, she referred to the [EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration](#) (2021), which underlines the central role of countries of origin in creating sustainable economic and social opportunities for their nationals, including returnees. She once again commended the contribution of the Nigerian Presidency for the [Abuja Knowledge Paper](#), which highlights the importance of nationally owned reintegration systems. She further noted that the extensive discussions held under the auspices of the Rabat Process and other forums reflect the growing maturity of the topic. In this regard, she called for building on existing achievements and continuing to move forward in translating shared commitments into effective action.

On behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), **Amadou Ba** commended the co-chairs for organising the meeting and expressed ECOWAS's appreciation to Switzerland for its ambitious programme focusing on protection, as well as return, readmission, and reintegration. He welcomed the relevance of these priorities in the context of the 20th anniversary of the Rabat Process, highlighting their strong alignment with ECOWAS priorities. He further highlighted that, one year earlier, ECOWAS had officially adopted its [Strategy and Action Plan on Labour Migration](#), marking an important milestone towards more coordinated and rights-based governance on labour mobility in the region. He recalled that this strategy is structured around five key objectives: promoting safe and regular migration, protecting the rights of migrant workers, maximising development outcomes, strengthening regional governance, and advancing gender equality and social inclusion in migration policies. He also emphasised that the reintegration of return migrants, and its link with development policies, has become increasingly important in West Africa, and is now being integrated into national development strategies, notably through the valorisation of skills and support to local development initiatives. Finally, he underlined the introduction of the [ECOWAS identity card](#) which aim to facilitate regional mobility and contribute to enhanced regional integration.

On behalf of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), **Monica Zanette** expressed her sincere appreciation to Switzerland and Tunisia for their commitment to the success of this meeting, as well as to the European Union for its unwavering support. She noted that the meeting builds on strong foundations of dialogue, cooperation, and knowledge-sharing that have been steadily developed over the years under the auspices of the Rabat Process. It follows, in particular, the [thematic meeting held in Yaoundé](#) in April 2023, which underscored the importance of ownership in reintegration processes and highlighted the need to strengthen synergies between reintegration and development. These reflections have been further enriched by the [Abuja Knowledge Paper](#), published in January 2026. This important contribution, which has concluded the Nigerian chairmanship, offers valuable recommendations for strengthening national ownership of reintegration systems and enhancing coordination among partners. She concluded by stressing that reinforcing synergies between

reintegration and development - at structural, community, and individual levels - and firmly anchoring reintegration within nationally led systems and sectoral policies can significantly enhance the sustainability of reintegration outcomes, support inclusive economic growth, foster social cohesion, and contribute to broader stability and resilience.

Session 1: Strengthening synergies between sustainable reintegration and development

Moderated by **Nazanine Nozarian**, Senior Thematic Specialist, Return, Readmission and Reintegration at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), session 1 discussed how reintegration programmes can contribute to local and national development, and in turn, how favourable development conditions can support sustainable reintegration. Session 1 also explored ways of strengthening synergies and coherence between initiatives aimed at facilitating sustainable reintegration and development outcomes.

Nazanine Nozarian commended the Swiss Chairmanship for dedicating its first thematic meeting on exploring the intersections between sustainable reintegration and sustainable development - building on the 2026 Abuja Knowledge Paper. Ms. Nozarian recalled that, for many years, return and reintegration programmes were primarily designed as tools of migration management. Assisted voluntary return was mainly presented as a dignified alternative to forced return, offering migrants unable or unwilling to remain in host countries a safe pathway home. Reintegration support, where available, was largely individualised, short-term, and disconnected from broader development frameworks. She emphasised that this historic model has gradually evolved over the past decade, supported in part by development funding. Today, both evidence and policy discussions increasingly recognise that reintegration cannot be understood as a one-time intervention focused solely on the individual returns. Rather, it is a multidimensional and context-dependent process, deeply shaped by the communities and structural conditions to which migrants return. Ms. Nozarian noted that while the influence of sustainable development on reintegration outcomes is relatively clear, the contribution of returnees to development is less immediately visible. Nevertheless, growing and tangible evidence suggests that, under the right conditions, reintegration can contribute positively to sustainable development, particularly at the local level and notably when returnees are adequately supported. She emphasised that the transfer of skills, knowledge, and networks acquired abroad as well as investment in micro-enterprises can contribute to local labour markets, strengthen social cohesion, and support community-led initiatives. However, she stressed that this potential is not automatic. Realising it requires greater coherence between reintegration programmes and local development priorities, stronger coordination among funding instruments and institutional actors, and better alignment between short-term return assistance and longer-term structural investments in communities of origin.

On behalf of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), **Jonathan Chaloff** emphasised that if many countries are now expressing an intention to align migration, return, reintegration, and development policies, this ambition is not yet consistently realised. He stressed that before a true whole-of-government approach can take hold, there must first be agreement on shared objectives across policy domains, which remains a significant challenge. From the OECD's perspective - largely grounded in destination countries' perspective - return and reintegration programmes have historically been driven by the objective of ensuring the sustainability and credibility of the entire migration system. Public funding and spending for reintegration have been often primarily justified to support orderly migration governance, ensuring that entry and return processes remain manageable and effective. By contrast, development cooperation actors have traditionally pursued different objectives, centred on long-term socioeconomic development in partner countries. He emphasised that bridging these distinct policy logics is not an easy or straightforward process and requires deliberate coordination and proactive efforts. He noted, however, that one emerging area of convergence is the shared interest in maximising the impact of public spending. Faced with budgetary constraints, many OECD countries are increasingly seeking to leverage synergies between development cooperation and reintegration programming, aimed at improving efficiency while ensuring that migration-related interventions contribute to broader policy goals. In this regard, he noted that, to some degree, alignment is already taking shape and that migration issues are increasingly being injected in broader development dialogues as well as in bilateral development-oriented engagements between countries of origin and destination. Even though alignment is rarely driven directly by national development strategies in partner countries, development programmes are increasingly identifying

returnees as a relevant target group, creating opportunities to link reintegration support funded by migration programmes with ongoing development initiatives and capacity-building efforts. On the other hand, he also emphasised that progress remains uneven across OECD countries. While many European countries are moving toward increased alignment, others - particularly outside Europe but also within - continue to question the value of investing in reintegration support as part of development cooperation initiatives. As a result, he described the current period as one of experimentation, learning, and gradual transformation rather than full and consistent policy alignment across systems. M. Chaloff also emphasised that funding is where alignment becomes most concrete, but also where some of the most significant challenges arise. He noted that while Official Development Assistance (ODA) is increasingly being retasked to contribute to the sustainability of migration systems, this marks relatively new territory for many ministries responsible for migration and raises practical questions around familiarity with what qualifies as [ODA-eligible spending](#) and how to design reintegration programmes that genuinely pursue development objectives. He observed that, to date, very few case examples of such programmes have been formally submitted for [OECD Development Assistance Committee inclusion](#) in the [DAC casebook](#), reflecting a broader difficulty among actors in clearly articulating and aligning their objectives when ODA is involved. At the same time, he stressed that while this represents an obstacle, it is not insurmountable, and there are already identifiable mechanisms that can support better alignment. These include pooled funding arrangements and joint budget allocations that bring together migration and development resources, as well as joint programming initiatives. In terms of how to operationalise this, he pointed to several practical approaches, including joint needs assessments or the establishment of multi-year strategic cooperation frameworks with predictable funding. He further raised the critical question of alignment versus duplication, noting that return and reintegration programmes and ODA-funded development initiatives often support activities that appear very similar. Without deliberate coordination, this can lead to fragmentation and inefficiency. True alignment, he argued, requires that such overlaps are intentional and mutually reinforcing, creating a multiplier effect toward shared objectives, rather than to be considered competing or parallel efforts. Finally, he highlighted a major gap: the lack of robust evaluation frameworks. He observed that programme evaluations are almost uniformly positive, which raises concerns about how success is being measured. He stressed the importance of evaluating programmes against realistic and clearly defined objectives, rather than retroactively framing returnees as development actors. In his view, this is essential not only for improving effectiveness, but also for ensuring the political and financial sustainability of reintegration and development efforts.

On behalf of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), **Corantine Groccia** highlighted that returnees could contribute meaningfully to development when certain conditions are in place. These include, inter alia, psychosocial wellbeing, recognition of skills, strengthened local resilience, and access to sustainable economic opportunities. She emphasised that sustainable reintegration requires joint ownership, with strong leadership from countries of origin. She further stressed the importance of a whole-of-government approach in countries of origin to ensure both horizontal coordination across sectors and vertical coherence from national to local levels. Equally important is a whole-of-society approach based on coordination and partnerships, as no single actor can effectively support such multidimensional process alone. To strengthen the migration–development nexus, she noted the need for greater coherence among the various return and reintegration approaches that currently coexist. To this end, she emphasised that IOM has standardised and mainstreamed sustainable reintegration practices across its programming. Even within short-term individually focused Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) projects, IOM seeks to connect returnees to referral pathways, essential services, and longer-term opportunities by building on broader country-level engagement. Where possible, IOM integrates return and reintegration programming into wider national and regional responses, linking these efforts with governance, capacity development, recovery, and community stabilisation initiatives. Beyond IOM, she emphasised that programmes focused on individual-level support should consciously connect with broader development frameworks by integrating them into existing coordination structures and utilising available services rather than creating parallel ad hoc systems. Ms. Groccia also shared concrete examples of successful reintegration programmes that have generated broader development benefits. Under the [EU–IOM Joint Initiative](#), IOM implemented a wide range of community-based interventions across several countries in East and West Africa, including psychosocial support, rehabilitation of local infrastructure, cash-for-work activities, access to markets, and income-generating initiatives. She stressed that programme evaluations across these contexts have provided IOM with a strong evidence base on what works and under what conditions. Across countries, the most

consistently reported outcome by both returnees and non-migrants was improved income and livelihoods. Vocational and business-related training was identified as particularly effective. Where training was combined with productive assets and access to markets, participants reported higher incomes, reduced economic stress, and greater ability to sustain livelihoods beyond project periods. She also emphasised that improvements in income and economic stability are often the first necessary step to support progress in psychosocial wellbeing and social cohesion. Another major outcome of IOM interventions was improved relationships between returnees and host communities. She linked it to [IOM's community-based planning approach](#) which, by involving returnees and community members and jointly identifying needs and solutions, help reduce perceived competition over jobs and services and addressed stigma towards returnees. She finally emphasised that counselling, mentoring, and awareness-raising activities on return experiences contributed to stronger social cohesion and reduced isolation and stigma. In concluding, she made several key recommendations. First, community-based interventions are most effective when they are not implemented in isolation. They should be complemented by targeted individual support and anchored within local governance systems, public services, and policy frameworks. Secondly, community interventions require time, strong market linkages, and sustained involvement of local authorities, the private sector, and other stakeholders to remain effective. Thirdly, community connections must, to the extent possible, be genuine rather than created solely for cost efficiency. In some cases, investing in shared infrastructure, training, or value chains may be more effective than promoting collective businesses. Finally, she underscored that community interventions must remain inclusive, participatory, and firmly anchored in local systems in order to achieve sustainable, locally driven development outcomes.

On behalf of the Centre for Migration Studies of the University of Ghana, **Professor Leander Kandilige**, recalled that the management of return and sustainable reintegration remains highly political and mandate driven. He emphasised that while governments tend to focus on implementing return agreements and ensuring that returns are carried out with due respect for migrants' dignity and human rights, development partners place greater emphasis on supporting returnees' long-term reintegration. This includes ensuring economic self-sufficiency, social stability within host communities, and psychosocial wellbeing to address the drivers of (re)migration. He highlighted that the African Union (AU) has developed Guidelines on Return, Readmission and Reintegration, as well as sample return and readmission agreements, Standard Operating Procedures, and National Coordination Mechanisms. He recalled that these instruments aim to foster sustainable socio-economic development for returnees and their communities of origin by establishing common standards, principles and collective action to guide Member States in harmonising policies, regulations and laws related to return, readmission and reintegration. He emphasised that the AU guidelines note that reintegration is more sustainable when it takes into account the interests of both returnees and host communities, including through pre-arrival engagement with communities of return. He further stressed that reintegration programmes that promote voluntary return and readmission and offer various tailored and needs-based interventions have a higher success rate than a uniform programme, and that this requires balancing the interests of countries of destination, origin and transit and the fundamental human rights of migrants. He noted that the AU guidelines further underline that destination countries should not deprive returning migrants of property, social security or insurance rights lawfully acquired abroad, except in accordance with national law, and that such rights should not be arbitrarily nationalised, confiscated or cancelled. The importance of conducting health assessments prior to return, ensuring continuity of care, and avoiding returns that may aggravate existing health conditions was also stressed. Professor Kandilige further noted that the AU guidelines call for all return agreements to be ratified by national parliaments in countries of origin, with a view to promoting transparency and enabling scrutiny by non-state actors, including civil society organisations. The guidelines also require the development of care plans for vulnerable individuals, prohibit the return of minors without adequate family tracing and reception arrangements, and emphasise that migrants should not be returned to countries other than those of their nationality. Overall, he underscored that the AU framework clearly defines the responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination, and seeks to strengthen the nexus between reintegration and development in a more comprehensive and rights-based manner. On the question of whether return migration is merely a policy aspiration that places unrealistic expectations on returnees, or whether it can genuinely contribute to local development, Professor Kandilige noted that portraying returnees as automatic drivers of development can indeed reflect an unrealistic policy expectation. Many return under constrained or involuntary circumstances, often with limited resources, weakened social networks, and psychosocial challenges. From his perspective, expecting them to immediately generate

development outcomes overlooks the realities of reintegration and places undue responsibility on individuals already facing significant difficulties. He explained, however, that there is a well-established migration–development nexus shaped by several key factors. Remittances - both financial and social - represent one of the most visible links. For example, Ghana received approximately USD 7.8 billion in remittances in 2025, accounting for over 13% of GDP and surpassing both Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). He highlighted that these flows could contribute to household incomes and improve access to education, healthcare, and other essential services. In addition, labour migration can ease labour market pressures in countries of origin, by enabling individuals who might otherwise face unemployment at home to secure productive employment abroad. On the other hand, Professor Kandilige stressed that although return migration has clear potential to contribute to socioeconomic development, such outcomes are not automatic. Their impact depends on enabling conditions within countries of origin, including political and economic reforms aimed at reducing corruption, stabilising macroeconomic conditions, and creating reliable investment environments. He also highlighted the importance of demographic dynamics, social transformation, and infrastructure development in supporting reintegration, entrepreneurship, and sustainable migrant-led initiatives. In conclusion, he underscored that while migration presents important opportunities for development, its positive impact depends on deliberate policy choices and supportive structural conditions rather than occurring automatically.

Key takeaways from the panel discussion

- **Returnees can contribute meaningfully to development when enabling conditions are in place, including psychosocial wellbeing, recognition of skills, strengthened local resilience, and access to sustainable economic opportunities.**
- **Reintegration programmes offer important opportunities for positive development outcomes in countries of return. However, these positive impacts are not automatic, they depend on deliberate policy choices and supportive structural conditions.**
- **Unlocking the developmental potential of returnees requires greater coherence between reintegration programmes and local development priorities, between funding instruments and government actors, and between short-term return assistance and longer-term structural investment in communities of origin.**
- **Strengthening the migration–development nexus requires greater coherence among the various return and reintegration approaches that currently coexist. Even within short-term, individually focused Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes, efforts should be made to connect returnees to referral pathways, essential services, and longer-term opportunities.**
- **No single actor can address reintegration challenges alone. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach is needed, and this requires shared objectives across policy domains as well as predictable funding, joint initiative and multi-year strategic cooperation frameworks.**
- **Establishing evaluation frameworks based on realistic and clearly defined objectives is key to ensure that reintegration programmes are assessed against their intended development outcomes rather than retrospectively framing returnees as development actors without proper evidence. Monitoring can improve programme effectiveness, strengthen accountability, and support the long-term political and financial sustainability of reintegration and development efforts.**

Session 2: Ownership building, progress, challenges and next steps

Moderated by **Aurélie Sgro**, Policy Officer and Programme Manager at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) at the European Commission, Session 2 explored progress and remaining challenges in strengthening national ownership of reintegration processes, with a view to building inclusive and sustainable systems that move beyond project-based approaches.

Aurélie Sgro highlighted the European Commission's sustained efforts to support nationally owned reintegration systems, notably through the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). She emphasised the importance of a strategic shift away from fragmented project-based interventions towards long-term system-building, enabling partner countries to design, lead and manage their own reintegration frameworks. Central to this approach is the strengthening of national schemes and referral mechanisms so that returnees can access mainstream public services, rather than being redirected towards parallel support structures. She underlined that this priority has consistently guided DG INTPA's engagement over the past decade, driven by three key considerations. From a social perspective, reintegration assistance must be inclusive, covering both assisted and non-assisted returnees, while ensuring equal access to opportunities for nationals, in order to prevent tensions within communities of return. From an institutional standpoint, it is essential to avoid the creation of parallel service delivery systems and to ensure that national authorities remain firmly in the driver's seat of reintegration system. From a financial perspective, she stressed that individual reintegration packages are not sustainable in the long term, and that a transition towards public service-based approaches is necessary to optimise resources. She recalled that EU support in Sub-Saharan Africa has evolved through two main phases. The first phase, initiated around 2016–2017, focused on laying the foundations for stronger national ownership, notably through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative and the ongoing Migration Protection and Reintegration Programme (MPRR). Together, these initiatives have supported the return and reintegration of nearly 280 000 migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa, with EUR 613 million mobilised by DG INTPA since 2021. The second phase, progressively launched three years ago, seeks to consolidate and deepen these achievements by scaling up national programmes, integrating returnees as a target group within sectoral policies and interventions, and strengthening community-based approaches. She further noted that DG INTPA is currently supporting or preparing to support the national reintegration systems of 11 African partner countries of the Rabat Process. While each support programme is tailored to specific national contexts, they share common features, including: the integration of reintegration into national and territorial strategies supported by dedicated and predictable budgets; the development or revision of standard operating procedures; strengthened cross-sectoral coordination and partnerships; the deployment of digital tools to track reintegration progress and map available services for returnees; capacity-building and institutional strengthening measures; as well as community preparedness, including social cohesion initiatives and efforts to reduce the stigmatisation of returnees. She highlighted that Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Ghana have been identified as pilot countries to support the transition towards fully nationally owned reintegration systems by end of 2027. Using Ghana as an example, she outlined a phased transition plan co-designed with national authorities, which foresees, by the end of 2026, the strengthening of governance frameworks, the enhancement of national capacities, and the operationalisation of a National Reintegration Mechanism. This will be followed by the progressive transfer of the lead responsibility for post-arrival assistance. By the end of 2027, a gradual transfer of responsibility for reintegration services is envisaged, beginning with psychosocial support and extending to socioeconomic reintegration. From 2028 onwards, full national ownership is expected to be achieved, with national authorities leading all aspects of reintegration. The European Union will continue to provide targeted support in complementary areas, notably skills development and employment opportunities in migration-prone regions, in order to sustain and consolidate these efforts. Finally, she noted that an EU-led survey on the Ghana transition plan demonstrated broad national support, with 75% of national stakeholders considering it feasible with minor adjustments. At the same time, the results of the survey underscored that successful implementation would depend on key enabling factors, notably strong political commitment, adequate and predictable financing, and clear institutional mandates.

On behalf of the Belgian Agency for International Cooperation (Enabel), **Raffaella Greco Tonegutti** first highlighted that, since 2024, Enabel has been supporting several West African countries in their efforts to shift the paradigm of reintegration. The objective is to move away from an approach focused solely on the individual

support of returnees -who have returned whether voluntary, assisted, forced or spontaneously without assistance -, towards a more systemic vision, in which reintegration is embedded within public policies, sectoral strategies, and existing service delivery systems at the territorial level. She emphasised that this transformation aims to avoid the creation of parallel systems dedicated exclusively to returnees, as well as the outsourcing of reintegration interventions to external organisations that substitute national actors. Instead, it promotes strong ownership by national and local institutions, ensuring that reintegration is sustainably anchored within existing frameworks, services, and territorial governance mechanisms. In this perspective, reintegration mechanisms should not be understood only as referral systems towards existing national services, but more broadly as part of a process to integrate reintegration into the services present on the territories. To achieve this, several key conditions must be met. First, these services need to be accessible to returnees so that they can genuinely benefit from them. Second, responses must be adapted to the diverse profiles, needs, capacities, and opportunities of returnees, acknowledging that not all individuals are vulnerable- while some face significant challenges, others bring valuable skills and resources that should be leveraged. Thirdly, this also requires recognising that reintegration depends on actors whose core mandate is not migration, including those working on training, employment, social action and territorial development. Finally, it is essential to ensure the sustainability of these mechanisms through their structural and long-term integration into national and territorial planning and budget frameworks, moving away from ad hoc responses triggered by sporadic return operations. To support this paradigm shift, four complementary lines of action are required. The first consists of strengthening the understanding of the reintegration ecosystem by clarifying concepts, roles, and responsibilities, and identifying key challenges. The second shall focus on actively engaging national and local stakeholders by recognising existing practices and fostering co-creation processes with all relevant actors, including public institutions, local authorities, civil society, and the private sector. The third pillar relates to adapting systems and services through concrete adjustments, including the harmonisation of mechanisms, the improvement of data collection and analysis systems, the strengthening of inclusive territorial planning, coordination and monitoring frameworks, and ensuring that employment, socio-economic insertion and psycho-social support services are inclusive and adapted to returnees' specific needs and vulnerabilities. Finally, the fourth axis aims to anchor these changes sustainably by combining individual support with structural institutional strengthening, enhancing local ownership while reinforcing state leadership in coordination, monitoring, follow-up and strategic steering. Raffaella Greco Tonegutti also highlighted that Enabel is currently implementing projects and programmes in several countries to support the empowerment of national stakeholders and ensure the sustainability of reintegration approaches, notably in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and The Gambia. In several of these contexts, particularly in Senegal, Guinea, and The Gambia, Enabel plays a leading role within Team Europe consortia, working alongside other European agencies to strengthen coordination, avoid duplication, and enhance complementarity and overall impact.

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Ivorians Abroad of Côte d'Ivoire. **Dr. Koutoua Samson Gnui** presented the National Programme for the Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants of Côte d'Ivoire. Dr Gnui recalled a context marked by an important increase in migrant returns, which has placed considerable pressure on national reception and reintegration systems, as well as generating socioeconomic and institutional challenges. Firstly, Dr. Gnui noted that the assessment of existing mechanisms revealed the absence of a reliable mapping of employment opportunities, limited traceability of beneficiaries' socio-professional pathways, the still marginal and insufficiently structured involvement of the private sector, and the persistence of vulnerability situations marked by limited employment opportunities and socio-economic precarity, increasing the risk of remigration. In response to these constraints, and with the support of the European Union, the Directorate General for Ivorians Abroad (DGIE) has developed a national reintegration programme based on three strategic pillars: (1) social protection, (2) reintegration, and (3) monitoring and evaluation. This includes ensuring access to health and psychosocial protection services ; structuring academic, professional and economic reintegration pathways; strengthening the engagement of public and private stakeholders within an economic inclusion framework; and establishing an efficient system for monitoring, evaluation and traceability. The implementation of the programme is structured around three complementary and successive phases. The first phase, focused on social protection and prevention, is dedicated to stabilising returning migrants, notably through administrative identification, access to universal health coverage, and appropriate psychosocial support. The second phase, dedicated to reintegration, aims to support their educational, professional and socio-economic

reinsertion. Finally, the monitoring and evaluation phase relies on the establishment of a digital system enabling beneficiary profiling, tracking of individual pathways, and the production of data and evaluation. The programme is supported by key structuring tools, including a national mapping of enterprises to identify employment and internship opportunities, a digital platform ensuring data centralisation, management and strategic oversight, and a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) designed to strengthen coordination among public institutions, international organisations and civil society in order to ensure effective support for returning migrants.

Director General Helmi Tili of the Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE) presented the national socio-economic reintegration scheme, *Tounesna*. Launched in September 2019, *Tounesna* programme benefits from technical support from Expertise France and the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), as well as of €3.9 million in funding under the [ProGreS Migration programme](#) financed by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund. Its objective is to ensure the sustainable reintegration of returning Tunisians by combining both social and economic support. The programme is built around a referral system that enables comprehensive, integrated support. Social assistance includes access to essential rights and services- such as healthcare, education, and social protection- as well as targeted support for housing, health, and disability. Economic reintegration measures encompass skills assessments, guidance towards employment, training or entrepreneurship, financial support for business creation, and temporary wage subsidies to facilitate labour market integration. Particular attention is given to vulnerable returnees, with reinforced support provided during the first 12 months following return. *Tounesna* is based on a strong partnership approach involving several key actors: the Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE), which ensures overall coordination; [the National Employment Agency \(ANETI\)](#), under the Ministry of Employment, responsible for labour market integration; and the [General Committee for Social Promotion, under the Ministry of Social Affairs](#), in charge of social support. An interinstitutional task force oversees coordination, the development of tools, and the monitoring of implementation. The programme also operates through three regional offices in Tunis, Sfax, and Médenine, with a gradual expansion to additional regions, including Le Kef, Monastir, Kairouan, Bizerte, Gafsa, and Tataouine. *Tounesna* has already delivered tangible results, including strengthened institutional capacities among key stakeholders; improved management and monitoring tools, notably through digitalisation and database development; expanded networks of national and international partners; gradual territorial extension to new regions; enhanced social and economic support mechanisms. Overall, these achievements have significantly improved the programme's effectiveness, interinstitutional coordination, and national visibility. Today, *Tounesna* stands as an innovative model of reintegration in Tunisia. Its main challenges include ensuring long-term financial sustainability, achieving full territorial coverage, strengthening interinstitutional coordination, and maintaining the engagement of international partners. However, the significant progress achieved at the institutional, capacity, and organisational levels provides a solid foundation for a progressive exit strategy, supported by an efficient referral system and a new digital platform designed to streamline information sharing and enhance operational efficiency.

Key takeaways from the panel discussion

- **Ownership of reintegration processes by countries of origin is critical to increase the sustainability of reintegration outcomes and go beyond project-based approaches.**
- **Reintegration succeeds best when it is nationally owned, evidence-driven and supported by the collective effort of governments, development actors and international partners working in alignment with countries of origin' own priorities.**
- **There is a clear opportunity to further transition from fragmented, project-driven interventions towards more comprehensive national reintegration systems designed, managed, and implemented by national authorities.**
- **Advancing this transition entails continued efforts to strengthen national schemes and referral mechanisms, enabling returnees to access mainstream public services rather than parallel structures, while ensuring: 1) social inclusion, through equitable access to opportunities for**

returnees and nationals; 2) institutional coherence, by reinforcing national leadership and limiting duplication of services; 3) financial sustainability, through the integration of reintegration into long-term national and local planning and budgeting frameworks.

- **Ensuring greater engagement of various stakeholders beyond the migration sphere - particularly in employment, vocational training, social services, and local development - can reinforce the sustainability of reintegration efforts.**

Session 3: Roundtables

Group 1: Promoting sustainable reintegration that incorporates social protection measures and complies with human rights provisions

Context: Group 1 discussions focused on ensuring that reintegration is comprehensive and sustainable, so that returnees are not left unsupported after their return.

Challenges identified: Several key challenges were identified. A major issue identified was the limited political will to ensure sufficient budget allocation and invest in structures that could support returnees. While social protection systems and reintegration frameworks exist, they were described as often underfunded and overwhelmed, limiting their capacity to absorb returning migrants. Another major challenge identified was the lack of effective data and information sharing between countries of destination and origin. Due to data protection constraints, origin countries frequently receive insufficient information before return, leaving them unprepared to assist individuals with medical, psychological, or other vulnerabilities. Additional constraints identified included the limited availability of transit or reception centres, particularly in African countries, and the issue of fragmented funding, where financial resources exist but are dispersed across different ministries and frameworks (such as humanitarian affairs, gender, or social services). This fragmentation makes it difficult for returnees to clearly identify and access available support.

Recommendations: Group 1 recommended: 1) a **clear political commitment to human rights and to addressing migrants' vulnerabilities, supported by appropriate funding**; 2) Strengthen **coordination and synergy** across existing reintegration **programmes and funding streams** to reduce fragmentation and improve access to adequate services for returnees; 3) Reinforce **monitoring, evaluation, and case management systems** to ensure continuity of support across borders (this includes improving **data and information sharing** between countries of destination and origin in line with data protection standards); 4) Increase **investment in reception and support capacities**; 5) Leverage **diaspora engagement** as a complementary source of support, investment, and expertise.

Group 2: Voluntary returns and measures to encourage voluntary returns.

Context: Group 2 noted that generally systems support two different categories of voluntary returnees: those who voluntarily return after completing their migration project with relatively fewer needs, and those returning in situations of distress and high vulnerability, requiring more substantial assistance.

Challenges identified: Several challenges were highlighted, including the lack of a clear and shared definition of voluntary returnees and weak data management and tracking systems, which together hinder consistency in programming and limit the ability to monitor reintegration outcomes over time. Another challenge identified was the insufficient access to information for returnees, who often need guidance to reintegrate into a context that may have changed during their absence. Finally, the issue of social stigma was emphasised: returnees can face negative perceptions within their communities, as they are often expected to return stronger and more successful than when they left - an expectation that can be particularly difficult to meet when they come back in conditions of vulnerability.

Recommendations: In terms of good practices, the group highlighted a range of incentive measures to **encourage voluntary return**, particularly for migrants wishing to invest or start projects in their countries of origin. These included **tax reductions, investment support, housing assistance, and programs supporting small and medium-sized enterprises or employment opportunities**. Countries like Niger, Tunisia, and Guinea were cited as examples. The importance of **early identification and registration mechanisms upstream - before migrants return - was also stressed**, as this helps to better prepare reintegration support and avoid logistical and administrative challenges upon arrival. Overall, participants emphasised the need to strengthen data systems, improve coordination, and **tailor support to the diverse profiles of return migrants**.

Group 3: Circular mobility.

Context: Discussions highlighted a range of successful bilateral agreements and pilot projects, which often define specific sectors and annual quotas. Circular migration was widely perceived within the group as a promising alternative to irregular migration, as it enables migrants to gain skills abroad and transfer them back to their countries of origin.

Challenges: It was emphasised that the success of circular migration depends on identifying key sectors that meet the needs of both origin and destination countries, ensuring mutual benefits. Several challenges were identified, particularly the mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas, which remains complex despite efforts to align training standards with international benchmarks. Another key topic was the portability of social rights, which often exists in bilateral agreements but is underutilised due to limited awareness and administrative barriers that hamper access.

Recommendations: The group underlined that successful circular migration requires **comprehensive and continuous support across the entire migration cycle** - before departure, during the stay abroad, and upon return. This includes strengthening and professionalising support services and improving coordination among stakeholders to **maximise the benefits of skills acquired abroad for both migrants and countries involved**. The importance of **identifying key sectors for circular migration** was also highlighted, **while ensuring sufficient flexibility to adapt to evolving labour market needs**. Finally, the discussions emphasised the value of **skills circulation**, whereby migrants contribute to host economies and return with enhanced skills and experience that can support development in their countries of origin.

Session 4 : Coherence in reintegration approaches

Moderated by **Camille Le Coz**, Director at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe, Session 4 examined how to strengthen the coherence of reintegration policies, with a particular focus on improving coordination, communication, and complementarity among the diverse range of actors and initiatives involved. The discussion focused on how to overcome challenges linked to the fragmentation of approaches, and explored avenues to ensure greater alignment across local, national, regional, and international levels.

Camille Le Coz highlighted that countries of origin are increasingly assuming a central role in shaping reintegration agendas, marking a shift from earlier periods. This evolution calls for whole-of-government approaches at the national level, requiring enhanced coordination across ministries and sectors. At the same time, there is growing recognition that reintegration efforts should be embedded within existing local systems and services, rather than implemented as stand-alone interventions. She also noted that the reintegration landscape has significantly expanded. Where previous support was driven by a relatively limited set of actors -often involving the International Organization for Migration and civil society organisation, it now involves a much broader ecosystem, including EU agencies, development actors, and a wider range of implementing partners. These actors operate with diverse mandates, priorities, political considerations, and timelines, which increases both opportunities and complexity. In this context, the need for convergence, coordination, and effective communication has become more pressing, particularly amid tightening financial resources and increased

scrutiny around impact and efficiency. However, achieving coherence, she noted remains challenging due to the diversity of actors, the proliferation of approaches, and the multiplicity of funding streams. A key issue raised was how to strike a better balance between individual reintegration support - such as grants provided under Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes, which have yielded mixed results - and longer-term structural approaches aimed at strengthening systems in countries of origin. While the latter offer more sustainable outcomes, they require sustained investment and longer time horizons. Across all dimensions, funding emerged as a central concern, including the diversity of financing channels, differing timelines, and the role of key decision-makers. Ultimately, strengthening coherence will require not only enhanced technical coordination, but also deeper strategic alignment of objectives, resources, and partnerships across the migration–development nexus.

On behalf of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration of Spain, **Ana Hernández Rodríguez** began by presenting the recent adoption of [Royal Decree 316/2026 on extraordinary regularisation](#), which establishes a legal pathway for regulation accessible to certain foreign nationals in irregular situations on the Spanish territory. This measure reflects, she noted, a pragmatic response to the reality that many migrants, despite lacking legal status, are already well integrated into Spain's economy and social fabric, contributing to key economic and social sectors. With a population of approximately 49.6 million, including over 7.2 million foreign nationals, Spain also acknowledged the presence of an estimated 700,000 individuals in an irregular situation. The regularisation aims to reduce this irregularity with a view to prevent social exclusion, facilitate labour market integration, and provide legal certainty in line with Spain's constitutional values and international human rights commitments. In parallel, Spain continues to implement voluntary return and reintegration programmes, in place since 2009 and delivered in cooperation with NGOs and international organisations. These programmes target vulnerable third-country nationals and are based on the principles of voluntariness, dignity, safety, and non-refoulement. Spain has 2 types of programmes: [Assisted Voluntary Return](#), which supports safe return and initial reintegration, and [Productive Voluntary Return Programmes](#), which focus on longer-term economic reintegration through entrepreneurship. Beneficiaries receive a comprehensive package including counselling, psychosocial support, personalised reintegration plans, travel assistance, and financial support. Particular emphasis is placed on the productive dimension of reintegration, considered essential for sustainability. This is why the Productive Voluntary Return Programme, includes pre-departure training, business start-up grants ranging from € 1000 to € 6 000, and post-return technical support implemented with local partners in countries of origin. Senegal was highlighted as a key partner, with around 580 Senegalese who have benefited from the programme since 2009, engaging in sectors such as artisanal fishing, poultry farming, small commerce, and transport services. She concluded by noted that these initiatives contribute not only to individual reintegration outcomes but also to local economic development, job creation, and community stability in countries of origin.

On behalf of the European Commission (DG HOME), **Gabriel Alonso Frieria** recalled that EU efforts on return and reintegration are guided by the [EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration \(AVRR\)](#) adopted in 2021. He recalled that this strategy has been instrumental in promoting a system where voluntary return is coupled with effective, humane, and sustainable reintegration. He emphasised that sustainable reintegration is critical to reducing the risk of re-migration and ensuring that return leads to a positive development outcome. He highlighted that one of the core objectives of the AVRR strategy is to strengthen cooperation and continuity across all stages of the return process, bringing together Member States, EU agencies, implementing partners, and partner countries. The aim is to ensure that returnees receive not only immediate assistance but also access to a broader range of services that support their sustainable reintegration. Within this framework, he outlined several key pillars of the strategy, including the promotion of voluntary return, the enhancement of counselling and referral mechanisms, the strengthening of partnerships with third countries, improved coordination at EU level, and increased digitalisation. Particular emphasis was placed on the growing role of Frontex, which has become a central actor in the reintegration landscape through the delivery of operational assistance and counselling services. A key achievement in this regard is the launch of the [EU Reintegration Programme \(EURP\)](#) in April 2022, now covering 41 countries. The programme provides a structured support package consisting of post-arrival assistance, delivered shortly after return and covering immediate needs such as accommodation, transport, and urgent care, as well as a post-return package, extending up to 12 months and encompassing a broad range of services. These include business support, housing assistance, psychosocial, legal and medical

services, job placement, education and training opportunities, as well as financial assistance, reflecting a shift towards more comprehensive and sustainable reintegration support. Recent developments also include the introduction of a dedicated medical support package targeting vulnerable returnees, further reinforcing the inclusiveness of the system. At the same time, he stressed the importance of ensuring stronger synergies between EU-level programmes, such as EURP, and national reintegration schemes. A key priority is to facilitate smoother transitions for returnees from EU-supported assistance to existing services and opportunities in countries of origin, thereby strengthening long-term outcomes. He also highlighted the importance of advancing interoperability and information-sharing systems. In this regard, digital tools such as [the RIAT case management system](#) are expected to play an increasingly central role in managing reintegration support and tracking outcomes over time. More broadly, he emphasised that return, and reintegration must be understood within a whole-of-route approach, linking EU actions both within and beyond its borders, and strengthening connections with development cooperation programmes. Efforts are ongoing to better connect reintegration support with development initiatives, with a view to improving sustainability and impact. Finally, he underlined that the role of Frontex in reintegration is likely to continue evolving. Overall, he stressed that reinforcing partnerships, enhancing coordination, and making better use of existing tools and resources will be key to ensuring effective and sustainable reintegration outcomes across the EU system.

On behalf of the Ministry of African Integration, Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, **Aissatou Teigne Diouf-Niang** highlighted that effective reintegration of return migrants requires a combination of complementary approaches addressing different dimensions of returnees' needs. She emphasised first the psychosocial approach, focusing on well-being through psychological support, trauma care, and the rebuilding of life projects. She also pointed to the economic and empowerment approach, promoting access to sustainable livelihoods through entrepreneurship, employment, and finance. In addition, she underlined the importance of a community-based approach, which treats reintegration as a collective process, involving host communities, reducing stigmatisation, and strengthening social cohesion- particularly relevant in Senegal, where community dynamics are central. A territorial approach was also highlighted as key, ensuring that interventions are tailored to regional realities and aligned with local development policies to enhance ownership and sustainability. Building on these perspectives, she stressed that sustainable reintegration requires a holistic, multisectoral approach integrating economic, social, health, education, and legal dimensions, with strong coordination across actors. In this regard, Senegal has developed, with the support of IOM, a [National Referral Mechanism \(Mécanisme National d'Orientation – MNO\)](#), which serves as a multisectoral coordination framework. The MNO facilitates cooperation among state and non-state actors involved in reintegration and operates through coordination platforms and technical working groups covering key areas such as arrival assistance, reintegration, protection, and mental health and psychosocial support. The mechanism aims to ensure effective cooperation among state and non-state actors involved in economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration, under the coordination of the relevant national authorities. It includes the establishment of coordination platforms and technical working groups addressing key areas such as arrival assistance, reintegration, protection, and mental health and psychosocial support. The MNO is designed to ensure the coordination of interventions, the provision of appropriate tools to stakeholders, the systematic referral of returnees to competent service providers, and the monitoring and follow-up of cases to ensure effective support. It also enables the periodic evaluation of services and the adjustment of interventions as needed. The mechanism brings together a wide range of sectors, including security, health, education, employment, entrepreneurship, social protection, agriculture, justice, as well as civil society organisations and migrant associations. In terms of expected outcomes, she highlighted that the MNO seeks to improve the quality of referrals, ensure comprehensive and adapted support for returnees, and ultimately create the conditions for sustainable reintegration, while enhancing the economic, social, and psychosocial well-being of migrants upon return.

Key takeaways from the panel discussion

- **The number and diversity of actors involved in reintegration - ranging from international organisations and EU institutions to national governments, development actors, and civil**

society - have increased significantly over the last decade. While this creates new opportunities, it also adds complexity and coordination challenges.

- **Differences in mandates, funding streams, timelines, and approaches continue to limit coherence across programmes and governance levels (local, national, regional, and international). Strengthening coordination, including through robust platforms, is therefore essential to enhance complementarity and reduce duplication. Greater alignment of priorities, tools, and funding frameworks is equally important to address fragmentation.**
- **Structured referral systems play a key role in ensuring continuity of support, improving service delivery, and strengthening linkages between stakeholders. In this regard, digitalisation - through case management tools and information-sharing systems - can further support coordination, monitoring, and follow-up.**
- **Multisectoral approaches are critical to achieving sustainable reintegration outcomes. Effective responses should address economic, social, psychosocial, health, education, and legal dimensions of reintegration, while taking into account both individual and community-level needs.**

Session 5: Diversification of the reintegration ecosystem

Moderated by **Cristina Probst-Lopez** on behalf of Switzerland, Session 5 highlighted the need to mobilise all stakeholders and strengthen synergies in order to support sustainable reintegration and contribute to development, including through the creation of new forms of public-private partnerships. It also emphasised the role and potential of the private sector in reintegration, integration, and circular migration programmes.

On behalf of the Tunisian Swiss Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ms. **Ahlem Bel Hadj Ammar** presented the bilateral chamber, which is one of the 19 chambers active in Tunisia. The Chamber represents both Tunisia and Switzerland and primarily brings together Swiss multinationals established in Tunisia. Switzerland holds an important position in the country, ranking 5th in terms of direct job creation and 10th in terms of foreign direct investment, with 14 800 jobs for around one hundred companies active on the Tunisian market and operating in sectors such as textiles, IT, agrifood, pharmaceuticals, and medical tourism. The Chamber supports these companies in their development and expansion, while seeking to strengthen economic ties with Switzerland. This is reflected in the upcoming opening of a Tunisian Swiss Chamber office in Geneva, as well as through the Focus Market Tunisia event, which aims to promote the advantages for companies of establishing a presence in Tunisia and to position the country as a fertile ground for investment. Convinced of the importance of public-private partnerships, the Chamber works closely with Tunisian institutions such as [the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency \(FIPA\)](#), the [Tunisia Investment Authority \(TIA\)](#), and [CEPEX](#), playing a key role as a mediator and facilitator for companies wishing to establish themselves in Tunisia. The Chamber also organises events aimed at promoting dialogue and investment, particularly on foreign direct investment and the business climate in Tunisia, bringing together public and private stakeholders.

On behalf of the Moroccan National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (ANAPEC), **Achraf Lftah** emphasised that, for the agency, sustainable reintegration must be understood through a multidimensional perspective, combining the economic, social, and psychosocial autonomy of returnees with the resilience of host communities. In this regard, reintegration is conceived as a genuine driver of local development, grounded in strong institutional ownership and the active mobilisation of the private sector. Particular attention is given to tailored entrepreneurial support, as well as to promoting self-employment and very small enterprises, in order to transform return into a sustainable economic opportunity. This approach is also supported by structured international cooperation, notably with partners such as Germany, Belgium, and Spain, as well as organisations

including GIZ and the European Union. These partnerships aim to strengthen employability and entrepreneurship while promoting regular migration pathways and sustainable reintegration. Operationally, this vision is implemented through the [Centres for Migration and Development](#) and the [Moroccan-European Information Spaces for Mobility and Professional Integration \(EIMEA\)](#). These platforms provide integrated, territorially anchored support, including information services, individualised counselling, job placement, and socio-economic reintegration assistance, through a nationwide network of local offices. To date, seven EIMEA centres are operational in Morocco (Casablanca, Oujda, Tangier, Béni Mellal, Fez, Agadir, and Rabat). The programmes developed under this framework adopt an integrated and personalised approach, combining psychosocial support, economic inclusion, and access to financing for income-generating activities. In addition, initiatives such as the [WAFIRA II project \(“Strengthening the Impact of Circular Migration in Morocco”\)](#) and the [THAMM Plus programme](#) demonstrate how migration -particularly seasonal migration - can serve as a lever for sustainable development. These programmes contribute to strengthening migrants’ skills, economic empowerment, and entrepreneurial capacities, while reinforcing cooperation between countries of origin and destination. Overall, ANAPEC’s approach reflects a holistic and structured vision of reintegration, based on strategic partnerships, individualised support, and strong territorial anchoring. It positions migration as a driver of resilience and development, offering a relevant and potentially transferable model within the framework of international cooperation.

On behalf of the World Bank and the Joint Initiative of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), **Michel Botzung**, underlined that his intervention draws on lessons learned working with refugees and internally displaced persons, and their engagement with the private sector. He emphasised that these insights could offer valuable guidance for the design and implementation of policies on return, reintegration, and circular migration. From a private sector perspective, he highlighted the importance of understanding what companies are actually looking for. In this regard, migrants- including returnees- can be seen through three main lenses: 1) as a relevant labour force, bringing valuable skills, experience, and language capacities; 2) as potential entrepreneurs and contributors to local value chains, particularly in sectors such as tourism or agribusiness; and 3) as clients and users of services. He stressed that this third aspect is often overlooked, despite the significant role it can play in integrating returnees into local economies. He further underlined that sustainable engagement from the private sector requires a clear business case. Companies are unlikely to engage unless they clearly understand the potential added value of working with returnees. In this regard, governments, NGOs, and intermediary organisations have a critical role to play in bridging the gap by raising awareness, facilitating understanding, and demonstrating the economic relevance of returnees. At the same time, he noted that private sector actors are often cautious, particularly due to reputational risks, which must be carefully addressed to encourage their involvement. Beyond the private sector dimension, he stressed the importance of integrating returnees into national systems, including access to identification, education, healthcare, housing, and employment services. Without such integration, returnees risk remaining confined to the informal sector or limited economic opportunities. He also highlighted the importance of supporting companies that engage with returnees, through practical measures such as access to financing, technical assistance, or targeted incentives. However, he cautioned that such support should not rely solely on subsidies to encourage reluctant actors, but rather on rewarding companies already convinced of the value of engagement, as this tends to lead to more sustainable and genuine partnerships. Finally, he stressed that reintegration remains an emerging and evolving field with regard to private sector engagement, requiring stronger efforts in monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge-sharing. He called for the development of mechanisms to track outcomes across different contexts to understand what works and what does not, and to foster a community of practice among stakeholders.

On behalf of the International Social Service (ISS), **Olivier Geissler** focused his intervention on children and young migrants, highlighting the importance of ensuring their protection and reintegration through transnational cooperation, which lies at the core of ISS’s work. He recalled that ISS is a long-standing global network, established in 1924 and now active in over 120 countries, dedicated to addressing complex cross-border migration situations. He emphasised that ISS’s work is guided by a fundamental principle: when people cross borders, protection and solidarity must follow. In the absence of a fully effective global framework and network linking child protection and social systems across countries, ISS plays a crucial role in bridging this gap by

connecting actors in countries of origin, transit, and destination. Through transnational case management, ISS brings together social workers, public authorities, and civil society actors to respond to the individual needs of children and families. He underlined that children and young migrants constitute one of the most vulnerable groups when moving, often exposed to risks such as violence, exploitation, trafficking, detention, family separation, and psychological trauma. In this context, they must be treated first and foremost as children before migrants, with their rights fully respected. He recalled that this principle is strongly reaffirmed in the [Global Compacts on Migration](#) and [Refugees](#), which stress that children should never be reduced to their migration status, that detention should be avoided, and that all solutions should be based on the best interests of the child. ISS supports the development of referral systems and coordinated case management frameworks, enabling actors to work together across borders in a structured and efficient manner. They provide legal and psycho-social assistance, support collaboration between professionals from different countries, and lead joint advocacy actions. In conclusion, he stressed that migrant children not only cross geographical borders, but also institutional and administrative ones, and that whenever systems fail to coordinate, children risk falling into protection gaps. Strengthening cross-border cooperation, harmonisation of standards, and long-term partnerships is therefore essential to ensure a continuum of care and to guarantee that the best interests of the child remain at the centre of all interventions.

Key Takeaways from the Panel Discussion

- **Promote reintegration pathways that respond to the diverse needs of returnees while building on their skills, experience, and potential through a combination of employment services, entrepreneurship support, psychosocial assistance, and access to finance, while also strengthening the resilience of and economic opportunities in host communities.**
- **Private sector engagement can be critical to successful reintegration outcomes and should not be seen only as a source of employment, but also as: 1) an investor in local economies; 2) a partner in skills development and training; 3) a supporter of entrepreneurship and value chains; 4) a provider of goods and services.**
- **However, private sector engagement is not automatic and depends on a clear understanding of the economic value of returnees. Returnees shall be increasingly recognised as active economic contributors to strengthen their perceived value for private sector actors. They shall be promoted as: 1) skilled workers with international experience and language capacities; 2) entrepreneurs capable of generating businesses and employment; 3) consumers who participate in and stimulate local markets.**
- **Building a strong business case demonstrating the added economic value of returnees – through advocacy and sensitisation led by governments, international organisations, and intermediaries - can encourage the sustained engagement of the private sector. Intermediary institutions can play an important role in connecting stakeholders, easing administrative procedures, and fostering trust. Efforts could focus on sustainability, prioritising companies already willing to engage in order to long-term partnerships rather than short-term incentive-driven involvement.**
- **As there remains limited evidence on effective models of private sector engagement in reintegration, strengthening monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge-sharing including through community of practices will be key in identifying good practices and scaling up successful approaches.**

- **Finally, participants underscored the importance of strengthening transnational child protection systems by enhancing cooperation, coordinated case management, and referral mechanisms among migration, child protection, and social service actors to ensure continuity of care across borders. They also highlighted the value of facilitating access to integrated legal, psychosocial, and social protection services tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children and young migrants, in full respect of the principle of the best interests of the child.**

Participation

The meeting attracted over **80 representatives** from **19 African Dialogue partner countries** and **9 European Partner countries**, as well as regional and international organisations. Participants particularly valued the meeting as a platform for exchange, networking, and collaboration between National Focal Points and stakeholders, highlighting that in-person discussions and working groups strengthened relationships, enabled sharing of experiences, and enhanced operational cooperation and synergies among countries of origin, transit, and destination. Participants expressed high overall satisfaction with the meeting, with **88.6% declaring to be “very satisfied”** and 11.4% “somewhat satisfied”.