Summary of key messages from the Mixed Migration Review 2020

- **Frontline cities – the urban reality of mixed migration:** International migration is irreversible and predominantly an urban affair. International regular labour migrants as well as asylum seekers, refugees, and irregular migrants flock to cities all over the world. A majority of refugees and IDPs live in cities. As such, this year's MMR is dedicated to urban migration, promoting the notion that while migration policy may be polemical and discussed at the national level, the lived reality of settlement and integration is explicitly local and urban. Whether those on the move are doing so internally or across borders, regularly or irregularly, or in a voluntary or forced manner, as long as they continue to concentrate in cities and towns, the outcomes and fate they face in these arrival cities will primarily be the product of choices made by those that run municipalities.

- **Keeping track:** as every year, the MMR offers a full update on last year's most important mixed migration trends and policy developments from around the world (**p. 14-62**).

- **Urban voices:** a series of in-depth interviews with refugees and migrants in Bamako, Bogota, Kuala Lumpur, Nairobi, Teheran, Tunis and Turin present the human face behind urban migration (starting from **p. 72**).

- **A wealth of unique, primary data, including on the impact of Covid-19:** as always, the MMR provides primary data from the world's largest data-set of in-depth surveys with refugees and migrants, MMC's 4Mi programme. In keeping with the urban focus of this year's MMR, the first section (**p.98-111**) looks at differences in profiles, intentions and drivers between people migrating from rural versus urban areas, why people stop in cities and what are the most dangerous cities on mixed migration routes, based on almost 5,000 interviews. In March 2020 when face-to-face activities came to standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic, MMC was fast to adapt its global data collection programme to focus on the impact of Covid-19 on the lives of refugees and migrants and conducted thousands of remote interviews all over the world. Data from 8 selected major cities features in the MMR (p. **112-119**).

- **Covid-19, migration and cities (essay on p. 210, interview on p. 206):** the Coronavirus had three new consequences, different from previous pandemics: first, a concentration in migrant districts of cities in the global north; second, modern history's largest urban to rural return migration across the world – more out of fear of the economic effects of lockdowns than the virus itself; and third, the desperate situation of migrant workers in cities all over the world, vulnerable to lock-downs and economic closures. Traditional policies designed to control movement, settle migrants, and supply labour are inadequate to address the humanitarian, economic and security needs of tens of millions of refugees and immigrants and the cities that host them. There is an urgent need to develop a new approach to managing and providing for these populations during major global crises, because those populations have emerged as this pandemic's most prominent victims.

- **Smugglers' paradise – cities as hubs of the illicit migration business (essay on p. 152, interview on p. 160):** Just as cities operate as hubs for licit trade, they are similarly crucial to global illicit trade. Cities, with their infrastructure, connectivity and anonymity, play a key role as hubs in the facilitation of migrant smuggling, a central component of contemporary mixed migration. Connectivity between and the growth of cities and the opportunities they offer to the shadow economy, drives "deviant urbanisation", strengthening the pivotal role played by smuggling cities in global illicit flows. In many cases it is these illicit activities by urban-based migrant smugglers – despite the rights violations and abuses they are also guilty of – that offer so many refugees and migrants the opportunity to reach their intended destinations and from which, using regular channels, they would normally be barred.

- **Urban spotlights:** from dangerous cities, to exclusion cities, construction cities, sanctuary cities, smuggling cities, boom cities and welcoming cities, the MMR this year offers 17 mini-case studies (from **p. 142**) from cities all over the world, exemplifying the many roles that cities play in the urban mixed migration field.

- **Unsafe havens – displacement within and between cities:** despite being the predominant destinations for refugees and migrants, cities are far from risk-free. When crisis strikes or events turn against them, many

have no choice but to move on again. Every year across the world countless thousands of people are displaced within or between cities, for example due to armed conflict, urban development projects and disasters, but forced (and often secondary) displacement within or between cities, affecting IDPs, refugees and international migrants, is an often-overlooked topic within the field of mixed migration. The MMR 2020 re-directs some much-needed attention to this issue (**p. 164**), which should be understood better and taken into account in urban policy planning and development as well as in humanitarian responses.

- **A perfect storm? The complex interplay between migration, cities and climate change:** most climate-induced mobility involves internal migration to cities. However, two-thirds of the world's megacities - many with sizable populations of refugees and migrants - are in regions vulnerable to the impact of climate change, such as increased rainfall intensity, storm surges, flooding, rising sea levels, reduced groundwater and drought, meaning many who came to the city to seek refuge and opportunities face new climate threats in cities. Where in the city they live and work will define the level of impact and their vulnerability to climate change. The essay on **p. 190** also asks whether in terms of resilience, adaptation, and mitigation we will witness new era of dysfunctional nations being eclipsed by the rising power of cities, finding their own solutions and cooperating across borders.

- **Normalisation of the extreme:** as in 2019, the MMR 2020 provides a sobering overview (**p. 250-258**) of what MMC has come to label as 'normalisation of the extreme': policies, actions and attitudes to mixed migration that were considered unacceptable some years ago, but are becoming increasingly normalised and mainstreamed. The growing prevalence and range of such measures and the use of the cover of Covid in 2020 to justify some of these actions, remains highly concerning. By documenting these annually, MMC aims to create awareness and contribute to changing the narrative, responses and policies to mixed migration.

- **City solidarity or pragmatic rebellion?** The essay on **p. 222** explores the rising number of sanctuary and solidarity cities around the world, that strive to cater to the needs of all their residents, regardless of immigration status and reject the more exclusionary migration policies of some national governments. The essay explores the ethical, political and practical reasons for some cities to implement different, often more progressive approaches to migration and integration. Although migration policies are designed at national level, most refugees and migrants ultimately end up in cities, which are the first responders and main providers. As such, cities should be given a greater voice in the design of effective migration and refugee policies at the national, regional, and global levels.

- **Cities of opportunities and risks:** cities across the world face myriad challenges living up to the hopes and needs of their migrant and refugee populations, especially when it comes to providing work, services, and protection in informal settlements. Refugees and migrants in urban settings also often face greater dangers, including crime, discrimination, and harassment, than other residents, but also frequently stand accused of bringing criminality to their cities of destination. Two essays (on **pages 178 and 200**) explore the various risks, obstacles and opportunities that refugees and migrants face in urban areas around the world. The cities that offer the best examples of good practice are those that have built collaborations between civil society, city leaders and refugees and migrants themselves, to enable effective responses and promote integration.

- **A warmer welcome – city planners preparing for future mixed migration:** Trends in rural-to-urban migration spurred by climate change and increasingly unsustainable rural livelihoods, combined with moves prompted by broader economic aspirations, are driving people to cities at an unprecedented rate. In 2018, 55 percent of the global population lived in urban areas, a figure that is predicted to rise to 68 percent by 2050. With mixed migration trends set to continue, cities cannot afford to ignore the needs of migrants and refugees in their planning, whether in transit or settling more permanently. The essay on **p. 234** explores how cities are planning for current and future arrivals of migrants and refugees in their municipal jurisdiction. It concludes that to fully support refugees and migrants of varying backgrounds, legal status, and long-term aspirations, comprehensive migration policies are required, including pathways to regularity and residency. Mayors, local governments, and other city planners must take the initiative to work towards a welcoming city.