The panel discussion aimed to:

- Discuss ways in which migration and migrants impact social change and development in migrants’ sending and destination countries;
- Identify ways in which a wide range of stakeholders can further the potential of development and positive change through migration and examine how policies and specific efforts to promote social cohesion can ease tensions between communities;
- Explore ways in which migrants can retain ties to their country of origin which contribute directly towards fostering development gains.
- Discuss ways in which integration policies can help foster migrants’ contribution to development and change and identify challenges and constraints.
- Explore how faith-based organizations can contribute to the international agenda of cooperation and direct engagement with migrants, to ensure that migration contributes to development.

IOM’s Director General Mr. William Lacy Swing opened the session thanking the UNAOC for the invitation and opportunity to devote a thematic session to the topic of migration which so closely intersects with the main objectives of the UNAOC. His PowerPoint presentation highlighted IOM’s commitment to partnership with the UNAOC through the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations, partnership in projects such as Plural + Film Festival, the Inter-ethnic Cities seminar held at UNHQ and the recent Online Community on Migration and Integration. Mr. Swing set the migration and development scene, emphasizing the importance remittances play globally, in particular for developing countries, within the context of the era of greatest human mobility (214 million international migrants, 740 million internal migrants).

Mr. Luis Paulo Barreto, Minister of Justice, Government of Brazil, followed with remarks highlighting Brazil’s own rich migration history and experience of cultural diversity. He reflected also on the fact that though we live in a globalized world, the movement of people is not treated in the same way as the movement of goods and services. He further pointed to the inadequacy of current legal frameworks considering the nature of migration flows today which extend beyond refugees to labor migrants and to irregular forms of migration such as trafficking. Mr. Barreto acknowledged the growing negative attitude towards migrants and migration which often criminalizes those who move. Migrants move for a variety of reasons and by building barriers to migration only further discrimination and hatred will persist which is in contradiction to what is shown in mainstream media of an open and prosperous world. Finally, an open discussion and dialogue is needed to ensure people can migrate with dignity if we are to have a truly globalized world.

Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, Executive Secretary, Comunidade dos Países de Lengua Portuguesa (CPLP) began with highlighting the global spread of lusophone speaking countries and that migration is key to his organization. He emphasized that there is a clear migration and development nexus. The MDGs require acceptance of a multi-ethnic approach. Culturally diverse societies are needed which presents the first challenge. Though migrants may study and work abroad thus interacting with the local population, integration remains a challenge as fear of the other continues. In addition, Diasporas offer a promising opportunity for development in the home country and can work to offset skills loss. However, migrants also need to be offered the opportunity to do so in the host country and therefore the need to fight against discrimination and xenophobia is key if migrants are to be able to contribute to their home/host country.

Ms. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, UK-based Independent Journalist and Author, based her remarks on both recent books she has published as well as her own experience as a migrant and the current situation in the UK where she has lived now for the last 30 years. She emphasized that migration needs to be
grounded in principles of equality and human rights. She highlighted that not all people are equal when they want to move; there will always be a group that is persecuted or criminalized for this. She further stressed that integration needs to be a true 2 way process that is however often shaped by the perceptions, needs and desires of both migrants and the host country. In order to gain acceptance and not be turned against in political discourse, migrants are often expected perform better than the best, despite the fact that there will always be a small number of migrants that will not be models of integration, as in the non-migrant population. At the same time both migrants and host societies need to change and not be afraid of integration – neither the migrant himself in the host society, nor the host society toward the migrant.

Mr. Enrique Iglesias, Secretary General, Secretaria General Iberoamericana (SEGIB) began by drawing attention to the two migration streams of importance to Latin America, 1) intra-regional and inter-American migration and 2) migration to Europe, mainly Spain. These two streams have not had the same results in terms of integration – Mr. Iglesias noted that integration has been relatively more successful in the first case than the second. The right to integration is essential and the public needs to understand that migrants contribute socio-economically among other ways. Linked to integration is also the respect for human rights. A more positive and collective agenda is needed among relevant stakeholders.