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First Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region

Concept Note

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I. Background

The increased momentum of the global dialogue on international migration over the past decades led to the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants¹ on the 19 September 2016 by the United Nations General Assembly. In this Declaration, Member States committed to launch a process of intergovernmental negotiations that culminated in the adoption of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#) which was formally endorsed by the General Assembly on the 19 December 2018.²

The GCM is a non-binding document based on international law that builds on a set of global frameworks including the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Member States pledged to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.³

The GCM represents a paradigm shift in the approach to migration governance. Putting people at the heart of migration governance, the GCM is anchored in human rights and calls for the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status. Its 10 guiding principles promote a gender-responsive and child-sensitive approach to migration governance and prioritize the well-being of migrants and the members of communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. They also reaffirm national sovereignty and recognize the respect for the rule of law and due process. Rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the GCM reaffirms the potential of migration for achieving sustainable development and simultaneously seeks to limit possible negative impacts. The GCM recognizes that good migration governance can only be achieved through adopting whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches and building strong partnerships at the national, regional and global levels. The GCM, with its 23

¹ [A/RES/71/1](#).

² A total of 152 Member States voted in favour for endorsing the GCM including 19 Arab countries, of which five voted against and 12 abstained from a vote, including Algeria and Libya.

³ Frameworks include: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development ([A/RES/69/313](#)), which also commits Member States to “cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, with full respect for human rights” and “to increase cooperation on access to and portability of earned benefits, enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills, lower the costs of recruitment for migrants and combat unscrupulous recruiters” (para. 111); the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030](#) and its recommendations concerning measures to mitigate risks associated with disasters; and the [Paris Agreement of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#).

objectives and their associated actionable commitments and suggested actions, provides a 360-degree approach to migration governance and offers a road map to help achieve safe, orderly and regular migration.

The GCM comes at a critical moment for the Arab region as it is experiencing unprecedented population movements. In 2017, the Arab region hosted over 38 million migrants (close to 15 per cent of the global migrant population), while the number of migrants from Arab countries reached 29 million persons. The Arab region participated actively during the consultation and negotiation phases that led up to the adoption of the GCM, with 20 Arab countries endorsing the GCM. The GCM objectives reflect most of the migration priority areas that have been identified in several regional events and forums, particularly the 2017 [Regional Consultation on International Migration in the Arab Region](#) and the [Arab position on the GCM issued by the extraordinary meeting of the Arab Regional Consultative process on Migration and Refugee affairs \(ARCP\)](#) in July 2017.

To respond to the increasing salience of migration on the policy agendas of Arab countries, the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region,⁴ co-chaired by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the League of Arab States (LAS), and comprised of 16 additional United Nations agencies, has focused its efforts on building knowledge, increasing awareness on the GCM, enhancing regional dialogue and collaboration and building member States' capacities to work towards its implementation. Since the adoption of the GCM, the Working Group completed several activities, including the 2019 ["Regional Conference on the Global Compact for Migration: Implementation and Policy Implications for the Arab Region"](#). This was followed by a workshop that contributed to enhancing the knowledge and capacity of policymakers from across the Arab region in the area of mainstreaming migration governance in development planning, ensuring policy coherence and aligning national policies with the GCM and relevant global frameworks.

II. Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region

A. Context

To ensure its effective implementation, Member States highlighted the importance that the GCM include a call for voluntary follow-up and review. At the global level, the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), which will be held every four years beginning in 2022, will serve as the primary intergovernmental platform to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all the objectives of the GCM.

Recognizing that most international migration takes place within regions, Member States called upon relevant subregional, regional and cross-regional processes, including the United Nations regional economic commissions to review the implementation of the GCM at the regional level to monitor the progress on its

⁴ The Working Group (WG) on International Migration in the Arab Region was established in 2013 to coordinate the work programmes on international migration of regional actors in the Arab region and to promote joint research on migration. The WG includes 19 partner organizations that aim to promote coordination mechanisms, the exchange of information on migration and the development of programmes, projects and activities related to international migration and development in the Arab region. Members of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region (in alphabetical order) are: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), International Organization for Migration (IOM), League of Arab States (LAS), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), World Health Organization (WHO).

implementation beginning in 2020, and every four years thereafter.⁵ The outcome of regional reviews will inform the IMRF of major regional trends, challenges, successful practices, and emerging issues. General Assembly resolution 73/326 on the modalities and organizational aspects of the IMRF emphasized the importance of engaging with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a whole of government and whole of society approach.

B. Regional Review in the Arab region

Against this backdrop ESCWA, LAS and IOM, in collaboration with the United Nations agency members of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, and with support of the United Nations Network on Migration, will coordinate the Arab regional review process in December 2020.

This regional review will (1) allow governments to undertake a first assessment of progress made in implementing the GCM within the Arab region, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders; (2) highlight challenges and opportunities, identify gaps, discuss regional priorities, trends, approaches and highlight resource requirements required in implementing the GCM; (3) provide a common platform for interaction between all relevant stakeholders and exchange lessons learned and good practices; (4) take stock of inputs from various other regional review processes, including those organized by regional consultative processes and civil society; and (5) facilitate the formulation of key findings and recommendations to inform the 2022 IMRF.

C. The regional review process

To ensure a thorough and inclusive regional review, Member States are encouraged to prepare a voluntary stocktaking ('voluntary national review') of the implementation of the GCM, to be presented during the regional review. A guiding template for the national reviews was prepared in line with that developed by the United Nations Network on Migration (see attachment).

The regional review conference will be organized in December 2020 and will provide a platform for Members States and relevant stakeholders to engage in a regional dialogue on the implementation of all the GCM objectives in line with the 360-degree approach. A regional review report will synthesize the main results of the review, highlighting good practices from country and regional level, and lessons learned, and will be submitted to the IMRF.

This proposal is in line with the General Assembly resolution on modalities, the discussions during the informal consultation on the GCM and its regional reviews, organized by the UN Network on Migration and held in Geneva, Switzerland in December 2019, and the subsequent guidance received from the UN Network on Migration.

The following steps are envisaged to ensure a comprehensive and timely regional review:

January 2020	Member States were invited to appoint focal points on migration to coordinate the review process at the national level.
June 2020	Organize a capacity-building workshop targeting migration focal points to present different options in approaching the review and discuss means to ensure a comprehensive review that adopts a 360-degree approach.
July/August 2020	Collect Member States' initial responses and national reports.

⁵ [A/RES/73/195](#), para. 50; [A/RES/73/326](#), para. 10.

July/August – October 2020	Prepare the first draft of the regional review report consolidating the findings of national reports and circulate to Member States for review.
1-2 December 2020	<p>Regional Review Conference for the Arab Region. The Conference will serve to assess the progress and identify the gaps in the implementation of the GCM across the Arab region. It will provide a peer learning platform for States to present their success stories and share their respective challenges. This will also serve as an opportunity to review the regional trends, priorities and actors that will also inform the discussions and subsequently, the regional report.</p> <p>In the spirit of the GCM and to ensure whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to the review, the Conference will bring together representatives of governmental institutions, including ministers and high-level officials from relevant ministries and National Population Councils, in addition to the ARCP, other regional consultative processes, parliamentarians, representatives of trade unions, the private sector, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, diasporas, local communities, regional organizations, UN agencies, academics, experts, the media, migrants themselves and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance.</p>
December 2020	<p>Finalize the regional review report taking into account the proceedings and findings of the conference and the contribution of all stakeholders through a whole of society and whole of government approach.</p> <p>Finalize the outcome document of the regional review conference.</p>

D. Outcome of the regional review process

The regional review report will synthesize inputs from Arab countries and highlight major regional trends and developments witnessed in the region since the adoption of the GCM;

The outputs of the regional review process will feed into the 2022 IMRF to ensure that the voice of the Arab region contributes to shaping the global dialogue on migration.

In addition, the regional review conference could provide an opportunity to identify and build consensus on a regional road map with some key priorities and targets for the region.

E. Documentation

- New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants [A/RES/71/1](#);
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration [A/RES/73/195](#);
- Format and organizational aspects of the international migration review forums [A/RES/73/326 5](#);
- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [A/RES/70/1](#);
- Regional Consultation on International Migration in the Arab Region, 2017, [outcome document](#);
- Regional Conference on the Global Compact for Migration: Implementation and Policy Implications for the Arab Region 2019, [Report](#);
- [Situation Report on International Migration 2019: The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Context of the Arab Region](#).