



**United Nations  
Network on Migration**  
*Working Better Together*

**United Nations Network on Migration**  
**Coordinator's Opening Remarks**  
**Regional Review Conference of the**  
**Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region**

**24 February 2021 10am-4pm (Cairo time) hours (Virtual)**

(Check against delivery)

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues,

Allow me to (add my) welcome (to) you to the Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region. We are meeting at an uncertain time in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has prevented me from being able to join you in person, much as I would have preferred to have done so.

The United Nations Network on Migration, jointly with the League of Arab States, has supported the Member States of the League of Arab States for their first regional review of the GCM. It has provided a platform for Member States in the region to discuss progress and challenges in implementing the GCM, while ensuring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Our gathering today is one of a series of regional discussions that will feed into the International Migration Review Forum in 2022. Last year, the United Nations Network on Migration supported the Member States in Europe, North America and Central Asia in their regional review. Member States and stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific are meeting early next month, followed by review meetings in Latin-America and Africa.

Excellencies,

The GCM is the principal text to guide Member States' collective efforts to improve international cooperation on migration to benefit governments, communities and migrants themselves. Aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and supported by core guiding principles, the GCM not only addresses migration in all its dimensions, but also incorporates wide-ranging partnerships both within governments and across society.

I believe we starting to see significant progress towards meeting the objectives of the GCM. What has been emerging through the preparations for regional reviews -- and as the Secretary-General of the United Nations described in his first report on the GCM implementation, from Promise to Action – is a framework laying down strong roots.

National implementation plans are being developed; promising actions inspired by the GCM are being put in place; the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund has financed its first seven joint programmes; and system-wide migration coordination structures are being set up at regional and national levels.

In the Arab Region, we now have seven National United Nations Networks in Bahrain, Djibouti, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, making impressive progress on the system-wide coordination, providing technical support to Member States and assistance to migrants. While progress might not be linear, it is visible.

Particularly promising has been the positive response to our call for the GCM 'Champions'. Now representing all regions – including the Arab region -- these Champions are a group that we hope to expand – supported by the global, regional and national United Nations Networks on Migration. They can build on positive examples, strengthen our peer-to-peer learning, and create further momentum for GCM implementation.

I am pleased, also, that the Network will soon launch the Migration Network Hub as called for in the GCM. The Hub will further facilitate peer-learning, exchanges of good practices, and provide an interactive platform for dialogues.

Excellencies,

We cannot discuss implementation of the GCM without also reflecting on the impact of COVID-19. While the pandemic is not a crisis of migration, it has fundamentally impacted mobility of all people and the human rights of migrants. It has raised unexpected policy challenges for governments everywhere. It has both exacerbated the vulnerabilities migrants face – often at the cost of their lives, freedom, livelihood, health and employment – while at the same time it has opened up space for new, rights-based, gender responsive and child-sensitive solutions. We are seeing States implement alternatives to immigration detention, ensure inclusion of health services to migrants regardless of migration status, extend residence and work permits during the pandemic, and innovate to implement services in line with the pandemic protocol.

In this region we have seen how governments have implemented amnesty periods in response to the pandemic allowing irregular migrants to regularize their status. We have also witnessed new initiatives to support returning migrants, many of whom have lost their jobs overseas, to settle back into their communities.

The pandemic is highlighting the key contributions of migrants to the provision of services, such as frontline migrant health workers, upending previous notions of what constitutes essential work. As the world looks to the recovery and to build back better, inclusion of migrants remains essential – including in the vaccine rollout. As the Secretary-General's Policy Brief on COVID-19 and People on the Move has noted, “no one is safe until everyone is safe”.

The regional reviews provide an opportunity not only to discuss and evaluate how to strengthen regional cooperation on migration, but to do so within this new context, highlighting the adaptability – the relevance – of the GCM to all contexts. The reviews underline how collective efforts can advance protection of the vulnerable while enhancing the positive, development effects of human mobility.

Excellencies,

The Arab Region has seen many positive developments since the adoption of the GCM. The region also faces many challenges - with too many migrants finding themselves in extremely vulnerable situations. I encourage all of you to keep the discussions open in the next two days: we should not only look at positive development, but also challenge ourselves where we are failing to meet our collective commitments.

I look forward to our discussions and assure you of the steadfast support of IOM and the United Nations Network on Migration, in our collective efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Thank you.