

United Nations Network on Migration
2nd Annual Meeting
Tuesday, 15 December 2020 / 12:30-12:40
Coordinator's Opening Remarks

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I would like to warmly welcome you all to the second annual meeting of the UN Network on Migration.

This is an opportunity for colleagues from across the UN system – at both headquarters, regional and country levels – to come together with our partners to discuss how we can improve this collective way of working in support of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

It is not the only such opportunity. We are integrating a broad range of perspectives into our daily work – through the working groups, our listening sessions, preparations for the regional reviews, and by other means.

But today, indeed this week, provides us with a fixed moment in time to reflect on a tumultuous year and to look forward with a view to identifying where we can make the most impact for the benefit of migrants:

- Yesterday, the Principals of the Network's Executive Committee met. I shall share some brief reflections on these discussions shortly;
- Today and tomorrow, of course, is our annual meeting;
- It will include the soft launch of the Migration Network Hub: answering the Compact's call for a dedicated global knowledge platform and connection hub;
- It will also include the first Consultative Forum for the Migration MPTF: a chance to review the progress and priorities of this third component of the GCM's capacity building mechanism;
- Tomorrow, with Member States participating, we will have occasion to discuss key priorities for us in 2021; and,
- At the end of the week, we will commemorate International Migrants Day on 18 December.

This year has been – put mildly – unusual. The COVID-19 pandemic and responses to it have triggered a cascade of severe impacts on all aspects of life.

Despite these challenges, together we have made progress. The recent report of the Secretary-General has outlined these but I would like to highlight some key developments:

- We have advanced regional and country-level coordination through the establishment of Networks or similar arrangements – including four regional and 41 country Networks, fully aligning with the UN’s development system.
- We have developed guidance, tools and resources on a broad range of issues, highlighting positive practices; encouraging peer-to-peer discourse; and building the foundations for a concerted programme of working with partners to move forward with Global Compact implementation.
- 15 Member States have to date accepted to be GCM Champions. Their political leadership and advocacy on this issue – and, I hope, growing number – is a necessary partnership with the Network to build momentum behind the Global Compact.
- The Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (Migration MPTF) has funded its first six joint programmes with implementation already underway. The Fund’s Steering Committee will meet immediately after the Consultative Forum to consider our resource mobilization targets for the next phase.
- The Network continues to strengthen its unified voice on a number of migration issues including on forced returns during COVID-19; alternatives to immigration detention; access to services; and on discrimination towards migrants during the pandemic.
- We have given shape to the inaugural regional review process for the Global Compact. The first of these took place in the UNECE region last month. Much work and consultation has been taking place in other regions in advance of their upcoming reviews in the first quarter of 2021, in preparation for the global review in early 2022.

While we can collectively be proud of this, three things are clear.

First, our work is taking place in an environment which, for migrants, continues, too often, to present serious – grave – challenges. While we can celebrate and build on progress being made, more important is to find ways to overcome ongoing, significant deficits in our systems of migration governance. This must include how we learn from – and build solutions with – those most affected by these deficits.

Second, we are now poised to provide much more active support and guidance to Member States in their implementation of the GCM, whether through UN Country Teams, regional structures, or directly. This will be the coal face of GCM implementation.

And, third, we have an opportunity – through the regional reviews – to reinforce the significance of the GCM as the framework for cooperation on, and governance of, migration. The establishment of an almost continuous process of inclusive, multi-tiered discourse at regional and sub-regional levels will help strengthen the prospects for a successful global review in 2022.

In addition to these observations, in the principals meeting yesterday we discussed what we felt was working for the Network and, more importantly, what we needed to do better, including:

- Making sure we maximise our commitment to inclusivity: fully drawing on the expertise and capacities of the broad UN system and all partners – not just at HQ, but at all levels;
- Clearly articulating priorities moving forward, recognizing the broad canvas that is the GCM. For example, as we move from the first phase of the COVID-19 crisis into some form of response and recovery – how do we ensure that this is managed in a fashion fully inclusive of the interests of migrants;
- Strengthening our voice. The scourges of xenophobia, racism and other forms of bigotry are not going away; migrants continue to provide a convenient focus for the anger of some. How can we do better to push back against such base phenomena? How best can we frame narratives around migration that resonate, holding true to our common commitment to safety and dignity for all, that acknowledge the truth of migration as intrinsic to the human experience, and that understand the benefits for all that can flow from it?

Whether of substance or on how we work, we face a tricky period. But it should not be an overly daunting one.

If one thing is clear, I believe, it is that it is precisely because of such difficulties that the value of the Network can be realized. We need your critique in how we can work better; your guidance on how best we can focus our energies; and your participation in addressing the challenges ahead.

I look forward to hearing from all of you over these next two days as we together chart this next phase for the Network.

Thank you.