



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Report

Second capacity-building workshop on the regional review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab region 13 August 2020

Summary

The second capacity-building workshop on the regional review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in the Arab region was held virtually by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the League of Arab States (LAS) on 13 August 2020. The aim of the workshop was to provide support to representatives of Member States in preparing Voluntary GCM Review reports. It offered a platform for participants to discuss progress in drafting voluntary GCM reviews, assess the alignment of reviews with the GCM guiding principles, exchange experiences and best practices in preparing reviews, and identify areas requiring further development or support from ESCWA, IOM and LAS. The workshop also provided Member States with an opportunity to initiate discussions on preparing for the GCM regional review conference.

Introduction

1. Building on its previous efforts to increase the capacity of Member States, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the League of Arab States (LAS) in collaboration with the relevant UN agencies, who are members of the UN Network on Migration in the Arab Region, organized a Second Online Capacity Building Workshop to support Member States in developing their voluntary Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) reviews. The first workshop, organized in June 2020, aimed to raise the awareness of Arab States' designated focal points on migration, on the GCM principles and objectives, and the 360-degree approach to its implementation, follow-up, and review. The second workshop provided an opportunity for Member State representatives to discuss the progress in developing their voluntary GCM reviews, exchange experiences and best practices in preparing them, and ensure that they are aligned with the spirit and text of the GCM.

2. Representatives from 15 countries attended the second online workshop, namely from Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Tunisia. The total number of attendees is 111 participants, including 27 government officials and 70 representatives from the UN agencies, in addition to IOM, LAS, and UNESCWA representatives.

Workshop proceedings

Welcoming remarks

3. Mr. Othman Belbeisi, Senior Regional Advisor for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) - IOM; Ms. Enas El Fergany, Director of Refugees, Expatriates and Migration Affairs Department - the League of Arab States; and Ms. Sara Salman, Regional Advisor on Population Affairs - ESCWA, welcomed the participants to the online workshop. The organizers also expressed their sympathy and solidarity with Lebanon, following the massive explosion in Beirut. Their opening remarks highlighted the issues of migration in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and presented the methodology of the workshop.

4. Ms. Sara Salman gave an overview of the aim and discussions of the first capacity-building workshop, which consisted of five sessions, including an opening session to set the scene with global and regional overviews of the review process of GCM. Session one presented guidance on the preparation of the voluntary GCM review. Session two was dedicated to government representatives' interventions, and provided an opportunity for representatives of the 15 countries attending to have an open dialogue on the guiding template for preparing voluntary GCM reviews at the country level. Session three gave the space for United Nations agencies to highlight suggestions and offer support with regards to the voluntary GCM reviews. The closing session outlined the key highlights of the discussions, noting the member State led process and the support that might be provided at the country level for State implementation of GCM.

Member States' presentations on the progress in preparing voluntary GCM reviews

5. The first session was dedicated to presentations by member States on progress in preparing voluntary GCM reviews. The session was moderated by Mr. Belbeisi.

6. Ms. Hanane Bouarourou, the representative of the Government of Morocco and Head of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave an overview of the geographical placement of Morocco and its impact on migration flows in the region, including the 2014 immigration and asylum national strategy that Morocco had implemented. She stressed that Morocco was committed to implement international policies and frameworks on migration, especially the GCM since Morocco had hosted in Marrakech the conference that had led to its adoption. She highlighted that Morocco had been following a whole-of-government approach to the implementation and review of GCM, noting that the entities currently working on the review included the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates. Morocco had also followed a whole-of-society approach through collaboration with

non-governmental organizations, universities, and the private sector. She added that Morocco had fully engaged in regional initiatives and processes, noting progress regarding the African Migration Observatory stationed in Morocco. Regarding the COVID-19 measures the country had taken, she said that the Moroccan Government, in cooperation with civil society and international organizations, had continued providing services to Moroccans residing abroad, migrants and the most vulnerable groups, including asylum seekers. The Government had also adopted a post-pandemic action plan.

7. Mr. Oualid Cherif, representative of the Government of Algeria and Director of Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that GCM constituted a vital roadmap for better migration governance, noting the reservations of Algeria to GCM, particularly regarding the lack of differentiation between regular and irregular migration. He emphasized that it was necessary to implement the agreement voluntarily and gradually, in line with countries' priorities and sovereignty. He noted that despite the large waves of migrants coming from the Sahara desert and the economic challenges, the Algerian Government had tried to ensure satisfactory conditions for thousands of migrants in shelters, and to cover repatriation expenses in coordination with countries of origin and IOM. Protecting the human dignity and basic rights of migrants was vital, including their access to basic services such as education and health. He added that combatting human trafficking and migrant smuggling was a priority for Algeria. Regarding progress on the voluntary GCM review, he said that the Algerian Government was making concerted efforts, including ensuring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, noting the close coordination with the Ministry of Interior and with non-governmental organizations, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that had hindered work in various sectors. Areas of migration governance that had witnessed progress included procedures relating to irregular migration, deportation and repatriation, in addition to providing necessary assistance to migrants in need. However, he stressed that there was a need to address the 23 GCM objectives in the light of national context, priorities and capabilities.

8. Ms. Rana El Khoury, First Secretary of the Directorate of International Organizations, Conferences and Cultural Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, presented her country's progress in preparing its voluntary GCM review on behalf of Ambassador Caroline Ziade, Head of International Organizations at the Directorate of International Organizations, Conferences and Cultural Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had established a national mechanism to ensure coordination with various ministries and stakeholders (including the Prime Minister's office, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Central Bank, and the Central Department of Statistics, as well as relevant international and non-governmental organizations) in preparation for the national review, and had requested the appointment of focal points by relevant institutions to facilitate the review process. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had shared the guiding template with relevant stakeholders and was currently coordinating with stakeholders to collect information needed to prepare the report, despite the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Beirut explosion.

9. Following a short break, Ms. Sara Salman took over from Mr. Belbeisi as moderator. Mr. Mohamed Tantoush, from the IOM Office in Libya introduced the two government representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Mohamed Hammouda, Advisor to the Minister of Justice and liaison officer for immigration affairs from the Government of Libya, on behalf of both the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that Libya had reservations to GCM, particularly regarding the lack of differentiation between regular and irregular migrants. However, he acknowledged that the GCM was a useful framework for migration governance, noting the challenges facing Libya regarding migration governance. He said that despite the various difficulties facing Libya, the Government had established a coordination team for the GCM review with IOM support, noting cooperation between the Government and IOM in the field of migration data to draft evidence-based policies. He stressed that the Government of Libya had made efforts to assist migrants despite limited resource, including saving lives at sea and preventing human trafficking. He added that Libya was in

the process of implementing a national strategy to prevent human trafficking. He noted that the Ministry of Interior was working to improve conditions of migrants in detention centres funded by IOM and CSOs. In the COVID-19 context, he said that the Libyan Government was following two approaches: providing consular protection to Libyan nationals stranded outside the country; and protecting vulnerable social groups in collaboration with civil society organizations. Libya was looking forward to capitalizing on international cooperation to implement GCM and to share lessons learned and best practices.

10. Mr. Fawzi Al-Zioud, Head of Office for IOM Lebanon, took the opportunity to highlight GCM achievements in Lebanon despite the challenges facing the country. He presented IOM work with the Government of Lebanon on assisting those in distress, border humanitarian protection, the protection of vulnerable groups and people with special needs, and other achievements regarding the labour force. He asked about specific challenges faced in Algeria and Morocco. To resolve those challenges, Morocco was preparing a national strategy on migration, and working on integrating migration into national development policies and strategies.

11. Ms. Hanane Bouarourou, the representative of the Government of Morocco and Head of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that there were many challenges to ensuring safe, orderly, and regular migration in Morocco, including issues related to reintegrating returned migrants, human trafficking, and ensuring safe migration pathways, particularly for migrants transiting through Morocco.

12. Mr. Ma'an Asoud, the representative of Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced, spoke on behalf of Mr. Ahmed Rahim, Chief of the External Migration Section at the Department of Migration Affairs. Mr. Asoud updated participants on progress in preparing the voluntary GCM report. He said that information from various relevant institutions, including the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Planning, and from representatives of the Kurdistan regional government and non-governmental entities had been collected with technical support from the IOM country office. The main challenge faced during data collection had been the absence of a coordinating body with authority. He noted that Iraq had developed a migration governance strategy aimed at implementing all GCM objectives.

13. Mr. Ali Abdou, the representative of the Comoros, Ministry of Interior Affairs, highlighted the changing pattern of migration in the Comoros, with transit migration becoming an emerging issue. He presented progress in implementing GCM since its adoption and focused on institutional developments, including the establishment of a multisectoral committee to deliberate the national strategy on migration, which comprised all governmental and non-governmental entities including representatives of civil society organizations and human rights committees. He said that the Government of the Comoros was currently working on a national migration strategy. The Comoros had introduced constitutional amendments regarding residency in the country, in line with GCM. The Comoros had recently ratified the Palermo protocols and celebrated World Day against Trafficking in Person. He added that the Government was implementing a project with IOM funded by the United States Government to establish a technical team to formulate a national strategy to prevent trafficking in person. Moreover, the Ministry of Interior was drafting policies for protection and legal procedures to combat trafficking in persons.

14. Mr. Waddah AlRakkad, the representative of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and Director of the Population Department at the Syrian Commission for Family and Population Affairs, reiterated his country's commitment to implementing GCM and achieving its objectives. He reviewed Syrian efforts regarding border control, which had become a particularly challenging issue since 2010. He confirmed that the report on the implementation of the GCM had been approved and sent to the Human Rights Committees two months ago, noting that the work had been done in cooperation with other entities. He reiterated that the Capacity-Building Workshop had greatly assisted in understanding experiences from other countries.

15. Mr. Alaeddine Dridi, from the IOM office in Tunis, highlighted the efforts and plans of the IOM Tunisia country office to support Tunisia with migration governance, particularly in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. Support efforts included providing free PCR tests for migrants, providing financial aid for migrants in coordination with the Human Rights Committee and the Tunisian authorities, and offering support to returned migrants and international students in Tunisia.

16. Participants inquired whether the COVID-19 pandemic would affect the plan to host a GCM Regional Review Conference, which had been planned for 1 and 2 December 2020 and led by the IOM Director general Antonio Vitorino who is also Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration responsible for preparation and organization of regional reviews. The co-organizers responded that a final decision had yet to be made on whether the conference would be held in person or virtually, noting that it depended heavily on travel restrictions in place at the end of the year, and on the willingness of member State representatives to attend the conference in person or virtually.

Open Discussions and Wrap-up: way forward

17. Ms. Kristina Mejo, Senior Regional Liaison and Policy Officer and Deputy Regional Director for IOM Regional Office MENA moderated sessions three and four. The sessions allowed for an open discussion to address questions from the government representatives attending and guidance on the way forward towards the Regional Review Conference. Ms. Mejo highlighted the health challenges of COVID-19, its impact on mobility and migration, as well as overall impact on countries around the world. She noted that through the respective responses of States to COVID-19, this may equally be seen through a GCM lens in terms of contributions towards achieving the GCM Objectives. She also shed light on the work of different national UN Networks on Migration supporting the countries in their efforts to implement, follow up and review the GCM. Ms. Mejo also responded to participants' queries regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the Regional Review conference and indicated that as a Member State led process, further consultations will be made with Member States to arrive at a conclusion with regards to the date and modalities of the conference.

Closing remarks

18. In the closing remarks, the co-organizers from ESCWA, IOM and the League of Arab States thanked participants for their active engagement in the Second Capacity-Building Workshop and stressed the importance of countries submitting their national reports in a timely manner to allow the co-organizers ample time to prepare the regional review report.