

OPENING STATEMENT
Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the
Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
10 March 2021, Bangkok, Thailand

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, a pleasant morning. On behalf of all Bureau members, I wish to express our warm appreciation to the distinguished delegates for the confidence reposed in us.

It is my distinct honor and privilege to serve as your Chair for Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

I hereby call the Conference to order.

Welcome to the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Let me begin by thanking the organizers of this meeting, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and to the Regional UN Migration Network. I also wish to extend my appreciation to the ESCAP member states, international organizations, and stakeholders in attendance on this meeting.

Our region, the Asia and Pacific Region is home to majority (60% in 2020) of the people in our planet, approximately over 4.6 Billion people in 2020. This region is composed of countries, which includes rising economic and political powers, middle-income countries, and some that are still considered as among the least developed.

With such a diverse group of countries in this region, it is emphasized that most are experiencing high vulnerabilities to the major issues affecting our world today, including climate change and natural disasters; and inequality in wealth, income, and opportunities.

Over two years ago (19 December 2018) the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM). Endorsed by 152 UN Member States, the GCM became the first inter-governmentally-adopted framework that covers all dimensions of international migration, in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It presents a shared vision and is

guided by the following principles which are essential to its success, namely: (a) people centered; (b) international cooperation; (c) national sovereignty; (d) rule of law and due process; (e) sustainable development; (f) human rights; (g) gender-responsive; (h) child-sensitive; (i) whole-of-government approach; and (j) whole-of-society approach. Truly, the GCM is testament of UN Member States for decency and humanity in the treatment of migrants.

The outcome of this three-day meeting to review of the implementation of the GCM in the region will feed into the upcoming International Migration Review Forum in 2022. It will cover the full set of 23 objectives of the GCM and integrate the cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles.

To highlight the importance of this event to the Asia Pacific Region, it is worth mentioning that the UN-ESCAP reported that in 2019, the number of international migrants from our region living outside their countries of birth amounted to almost 107 Million individuals or 2.2% of the entire world's 4.6 billion population, with 46 million moving to countries within the region and 61 million moving to countries outside the region.

The driving force of such large-scale migration is primarily temporary labor migration, particularly with destinations within the region or in the Middle East. Consistent with our respective countries' commitment to GCM, we seek cooperation among states to (1) ensure that migration is voluntary, regular, safe and orderly; (2) protect migrants' rights; (3) support migrants' protection, integration and contribution to development; and (4) strengthen evidence-based policymaking, public debate, and cooperation towards safe, orderly and regular migration.

Certainly, the hardships experienced by migrants from the Asia-Pacific region are magnified by their vulnerability to climate change and inequality, and more recently due to the COVID-19 pandemic that ravages not only our region but the whole world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted vulnerabilities of migrants, as they have suffered disproportionately from the health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic. They have faced xenophobia and abuse and female migrants, migrant children and migrants in irregular situations are those who have faced multiple and intersecting discriminations. Yet, they are at the forefront of providing essential, life saving services to the people of the region and beyond, during the pandemic.

The challenge for all countries is ensuring that migrants are included in the picture as all countries begin to "build back better". Not only that they need to be included in the vaccination and treatment programs, but also as part of process of rebuilding process towards a more just and sustainable future of Asia Pacific and the world.

This is a historic opportunity for taking stock of what we have done thus far as we meet for three days under the framework of the GCM. Indeed, there is no better time than now to exercise such cooperation between states, international organizations, and other stakeholders to further the GCM.

I encourage everyone to participate actively on this three-day meeting in order for us to adopt a substantial report of the meeting that will be brought to the International Migration Review Forum in 2022.

Excellencies, at this point, allow me to say a few words on the extraordinary circumstances of this Meeting. As you are aware, this Regional Review is being organised using a hybrid modality, keeping in mind the well-being of all delegates during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as due to on-going travel restrictions in many countries in the region.

While we have a few Bangkok-based delegates joining the session physically at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, many are joining us virtually through KUDO or via YouTube.

Due to these circumstances, time management is essential to enable the smooth running of this Meeting. We therefore kindly request your cooperation to (1) tailor your interventions to issues directly linked to the agenda items and (2) keep within the time limit prescribed for them.

I thank you in advance for accommodating these requests. Please note that I and my colleagues in the Bureau will be strictly enforcing these time limits, so that we can give all delegations the opportunity to speak.

Delegations present in the UNCC, wishing to take the floor, may do so by raising their flag. Delegations who are joining us virtually through KUDO may do so by asking for the floor using the functions available in KUDO.

Please note that the KUDO chat box is to be used for technical questions only and not for comments. For those wishing to make comments, we request that you press the "Request to Speak" button in KUDO and make your comment directly to the floor.

During the round table discussions tomorrow, and for others joining us via YouTube Live, we respectfully ask that you leave comments in the YouTube chat box. The Secretariat will help compile the speakers list in order in which the requests have been made both physically as well as through KUDO. Please bear with us in case there are any delays or technical glitches in view of the extraordinary circumstances in which this meeting is being held.

We at the Bureau seek your cooperation in steering this Meeting to a successful conclusion. We look forward to rigorous discussion and achievement of the expected outcomes.

AGENDA ITEM 2

Ladies and Gentlemen, we will now continue with agenda item 2 “Review of progress and challenges with regard to implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Asia and the Pacific, including the implications of COVID-19.”

I am pleased to invite the Secretariat to show a short video setting the stage for our discussion. I understand that ESCAP and members of the Regional UN Network on Migration collaborated in producing this video which is based on the findings of the Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020.

I thank the Regional UN Network for Migration for producing this video. The messages from this video provide an important backdrop in deliberating on this agenda item, namely, how to work towards safe, orderly and regular migration.

Before, we proceed further. Please let me refer you to the background documents as listed in the annotated provisional agenda.

I note that the first two documents have been developed based on the Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020. The last two documents have been informed by member States’ responses to a survey on the implementation of the Global Compact in Asia and the Pacific and a series of stakeholder consultations carried out in line with the Global Compact’s whole-of-society guiding principle.

Delegations will now have an opportunity to present official country statements.

As I earlier mentioned, delegations who are physically present in the conference room are asked to please raise their flag. Delegations who are joining us virtually through KUDO may do so by asking for the floor using functions available in KUDO. The Secretariat will help compile the speakers list in order in which the requests have been made both physically as well as through KUDO. Please bear with us in case there are any delays or technical glitches in view of the extraordinary circumstances in which this meeting is being held.

Since this is an intergovernmental meeting, standard procedure allows for interventions by Government delegations of member and associate member States, then observers, followed by intergovernmental organizations, representatives of stakeholder organizations, UN bodies and specialized agencies.

Please note that statements made by each member State and associate member State should not exceed four minutes; statements made by observers, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities or stakeholders should not exceed three minutes.

I now invite three champion countries to make interventions first. The first speaker on this morning's list, the distinguished delegate of Bangladesh may please take the floor, followed by the delegates from Indonesia and Thailand.

Thank you distinguished delegate of Bangladesh. May I call on the distinguished delegate of Indonesia.

Thank you distinguished delegate of Indonesia. May I call on the distinguished delegate of Thailand.

Thank you distinguished delegate of Thailand.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have now the honour to invite Mr. Nadhavathna Krishnarmra, Director-General of the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand and one of the elected Vice-Chairs to guide us through the remainder of this morning's session. I will be following the deliberations closely via KUDO, but my vice-chairs will now guide the further deliberations of the meeting. I will conduct the closing of the meeting on Friday. Mr. Krishnarmra, you have the floor.