



### Summary

## UN Network on Migration - Executive Committee (EC) Principals Meeting Monday, 14 December 2020, 15.00 – 16.00h (virtual)

### Participants:

António Vitorino, Director General, IOM, Network Coordinator  
Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner, OHCHR  
Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF  
Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner, UNHCR  
Guy Ryder, Director General, ILO  
Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP  
Ghada Fathy Waly, Executive Director, UNODC  
Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director-General, WHO  
Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, DESA

The Coordinator provided an update covering the regional reviews of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the Champions initiative, the establishment of country/regional networks, the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), and the Network's COVID-19 workstream. He welcomed WHO to the Executive Committee of the Network.

Looking ahead to 2021, the Coordinator raised three issues:

- How to ensure that the COVID-19 vaccination and socio-economic recovery plans include migrants, refugees and IDPs without discrimination.
- How the Network can improve its advocacy and impact on addressing hate speech against migrants (noting the impact had by the Network statements on forced returns and alternatives to immigration detention).
- The Network secretariat should be considered as a resource for and of the whole UN system. He acknowledged the secondments provided by UNHCR and UNICEF and called on others to consider the same on a rotational basis (UNHCR's undertaking to continue the arrangement, and UNICEF's and UNDP's to look into the matter are noted, with thanks).

The Principals discussed key priorities for the Network's focus for 2021:

### **COVID-19 response: universal vaccines; access to services; inclusive recovery plans**

The need to advocate for universal access to the COVID-19 vaccine(s) without discrimination, both within and across countries was emphasized. Continued advocacy for inclusion of migrants and refugees is critical, irrespective of status, to ensure that no one should be left behind. Linked to this was recognition of the importance of access to public services and social protection systems. Firewalls could help ensure that provision of vaccination and other services are duly separated from immigration enforcement measures.

Reaching out to stakeholders on the ground to help communicate the importance of such measures should be an area of focus for the Network.

In some countries, border closures and other mobility restrictions related to the pandemic had been implemented without due process, exposing and increasing a number of vulnerabilities for migrants, especially those stranded in border areas. Continued efforts are needed to save lives and protect migrants at borders, including by developing joint guidance on disembarkation and strengthening mechanisms for identification, referral and assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations. In the context of COVID-19, some good practices had been developed regarding alternatives to detention. Some countries may continue to link health criteria with mobility. Investments will be needed in infrastructure, including capacity-building for border guards and immigration officials as well as guidance on how to reopen borders with guaranteed health measures and without discrimination.

The socio-economic recovery would be difficult in many countries, raising concerns that stigmatization towards migrants may commensurately grow. It would be important for the Network to advocate for the inclusion of migrants in recovery plans, including through engaging diasporas and promoting access to data to enable a focus on those in the most vulnerable situations. Providing early warning measures by identifying where migrants face the greatest disparity in access and inclusion was highlighted.

*Action Point:*

- *Network to develop advocacy tools for ensuring migrants and migration, including as regards vaccination roll-out, are included in COVID-19 response and recovery plans, alongside guidance for UNRCs towards the same end.*

## **Returns**

It was recalled that at the last Principals meeting returns was raised as an issue requiring further discussion. The divergence of stances between UN entities, as seen at the EC working level, was noted as was the need to have a strong Network position, recognizing the challenges in establishing effective, principled systems of return, while noting that returns were an integral component of migration governance. The EC working level was tasked with seeking convergence on this issue, and where not possible this issue should be raised to the Principals level.

*Action Point:*

- *Executive Committee working level to seek convergence on this issue for policy guidance to be presented to the Principals.*

## **Climate and mobility**

Noting that the Secretary-General will make climate change a key focus in 2021, this was identified as a priority for the Network to pursue, including by strengthening climate adaptation and mitigation action and promoting pathways for admission based on human rights and humanitarian considerations.

*Action Point:*

- *Include climate and mobility as a Network priority for 2021.*

## **Migration Governance**

The pandemic has exposed shortcomings in migration governance that the Network should address in a strategic manner beyond the pandemic. Bilateral labour migration agreements are likely to increase in importance in the coming period and the Network was tasked with completing its work to develop concrete deliverables in this area.

### *Action Point:*

- *Network to conclude its policy guidance on bilateral labour migration agreements.*

## **Increasing coordination with other partners, mechanisms and initiatives**

The importance of the Network's collaboration with various stakeholders, other inter-agency coordination mechanisms and other initiatives was identified, including on addressing xenophobia and hate speech, the adverse impacts of climate change and trafficking in persons.

Similarly, the importance of the Network providing integrated, substantive support to Member States, noting the critical importance of its work at the country level, including through comprehensive, comprehensible guidance and tools was emphasized, avoiding jargon or mandate-driven language.

### *Action Points:*

- *Network to continue to collaborate with other inter-agency mechanisms on the above-reference substantive areas, including through the provision of support to the country-level.*
- *The Network's work should continue to be grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through its support and engagement in the regional reviews leading to the 2022 International Migration Review Forum.*

At the closing, the Principals endorsed the Network press statement for International Migrants Day (attached).

The next meeting of the Network EC Principals will be in during the first half of 2021 (date to be confirmed).