United Nations Network on Migration
Working Better Together

UN Network on Migration Briefing with Member States

Thematic Working Group 5 on Returns and Reintegration

19 October 2020

Who are we?

- The **issue of return and reintegration is a complex one**, involving varying and sometimes conflicting interests and priorities in national policies, public opinion and international cooperation.

- The Thematic **WG on Return and Reintegration** was formed to support Member States in ensuring all returns are safe and dignified and that reintegration of migrants in their home countries is sustainable. The Working Group is co-led by IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF. Its membership includes several other UN entities, CSO and stakeholder partners, including representatives of academia, research institutions, national human rights institutions, the International Red Cross, migrant and diaspora organizations, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants.

What have we done so far?

- The Working Group is **developing tools and resources to support States** in implementing their GCM commitments to cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return, as well as sustainable reintegration.

- By the end of 2020 the WG will have produced:
  o **Mapping of gaps and promising practices**: We are analyzing return and reintegration initiatives to document how returns are carried out and how reintegration measures are being implemented, including gaps in human rights protection, and cross-border cooperation at regional, country and local levels, also identifying promising practices and examples that can be replicated in different contexts.
  o **Practical tool / checklist**: The Working Group is developing a draft tool / checklist for governments, UNCTs, and other relevant stakeholders to assess return practices and reintegration measures, including their human rights compliance.
  o **Common UN position**: The Working Group is developing a common UN Position on safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration.

- **The Working Group would like to partner with States and UNCTs to pilot the mapping and the checklist.** We would be keen to receive an indication of interest by any MS, so that the tool can be tested in practice and further refined. We are also interested in how we can provide technical support and advice on key elements of safe and dignified return initiatives and sustainable reintegration strategies.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our work?

- **Since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, with the closure of many borders, the issues of return and sustainable reintegration have become even more complex.** The pandemic has inevitably had a major influence on migrants' decision-making about the question of return - with some losing their employment or access to essential services in host countries and wishing to return home, and with others pushed back or forcibly returned to situations in their countries of origin that often put them and their families, and the communities to which they

are returning, at increased risk – and leave them in circumstances that do not offer the prospect of sustainable reintegration.

- The UN Migration Network issued a public **statement** that forced returns should be suspended in times of COVID-19 in order to protect the health of migrants and communities, and uphold human rights.
- The Working Group would like to convene a **virtual peer learning exchange** with Member States and relevant stakeholders focused on safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration, for the purposes of cross-regional peer-learning. A potential thematic focus for these meeting could be ongoing challenges and potential solutions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.