



Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab region

Day 2 – 25 February 2021

Roundtable 4

<p>GCM objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies</p>	<p>GCM objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration</p>	<p>GCM objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration</p>
<p>GCM objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration</p>	<p>GCM objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation & global partnerships for safe, orderly & regular migration</p>	

1. Brief overview on the Objectives clustered under the respective Roundtable

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) constitutes a major advancement in the global dialogue on migration governance. Its vision, guiding principles, 23 objectives and associated actions are part of an ambitious cooperative framework and represent an important toolkit that Member States can draw from to shape their national migration policies. The above clustered objectives, which will be discussed during this roundtable, are of utmost importance for the Arab region which continues to be marked by complex migration patterns, as Arab states are serving at the same time as countries of origin, transit and destination. In 2019, the numbers of migrants and refugees hosted in the region exceeded 40 million, with women constituting almost one-third, while more than 31 million people migrated from Arab countries, almost half of whom stayed in the region¹. Governments, and other stakeholders in the region have for long highlighted the lack of reliable, timely and comparable data on migration which consequently undermines their capacities to shape programmes and policies to assist those in need. The endorsement of the GCM is an opportunity for governments and stakeholders to engage with each other and collaborate in the collection of timely and accurate data, which would result in a better understanding of migration and how it is addressed at the national and regional level. Drawing on these data, governments and stakeholders could promote a balanced, value-driven and evidence-based discourse and policymaking on migration,

¹ UN DESA. International Migrant Stock, 2019. Available at <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>

which could help preventing all forms of discrimination against migrants. These will be essential components, reinforcing the GCM's Knowledge Platform and Connection Hub. Finally, it would also help in the establishment and distribution of accurate information to migrants therefore contributing to better-informed decision-making throughout the migration cycle, fight misinformation, stigmatization and anti-migrant public discourses, while reducing potential vulnerabilities and enhancing peaceful coexistence.

2. Short Background on why and how the objectives are relevant to the Arab region with evidence base

Too often, knowledge on migration is not fully captured due to significant deficits in empirical data and non-harmonized definitions, leading to flawed comparison or aggregation and creating misjudgments that could mislead public opinions and policymakers. The large number of migrants in an irregular situation hinder the ability to capture the real magnitude of migration in the region. Furthermore, due to the irregularity of their situation, governments and embassies are not able to accurately capture number, demographic and other characteristics and needs of migrants in a specific location to provide necessary support. The Arab region lacks information related to migrants' characteristics, which are needed to identify related vulnerabilities. For instance, availability of age-disaggregated data has been a challenge – hindering efforts to understand the situation of children and young people in the migration context and design appropriate solutions. Consequently, this tends to give a view of the realities of migration and mobility as problems that need to be fixed rather than the reality that, if well-governed, migration and mobility can benefit both origin and destination countries as well as migrant themselves and their families. These issues combined prevent a comprehensive analysis of the benefits and impacts of migration as well as on the specific vulnerabilities of particular migrant groups and tailored assistance as needed. GCM objective 1 - if properly applied - by building the capacity of public administrations to produce the data needed for statistical observation of migration, while ensuring the right to privacy and data protection, among other measures – would therefore shape coherent and evidence-based policy and programmatic responses and contribute to well-informed public discourse.

GCM objective 3 focuses on the need to make information accessible to migrants at all stages of the migration process and to use this information to provide predictability and certainty for all the actors involved. Many migrants are in fact not informed before departure of their rights and duties, and on the opportunities and challenges they will face upon arrival and when living and working in destination countries. This lack of information can put them in a vulnerable situation as they can end up in an irregular status or at risk of being exposed to exploitation, abuse and violence. Drawing on effective data collection, several countries of origin in the region already introduced pre-departure orientation programmes, or safe migration information campaigns and

some countries of destination in the region also provide gender-responsive and child-sensitive accessible and comprehensive information as well as legal guidance to newly arrived migrants. For example, the United Arab Emirates launched, in 2017, a pilot post-arrival programme focusing on cultural and legal orientation as a vector to promote coexistence between migrants and host communities. Furthermore, in the COVID-19 pandemic, the dissemination of information is more than ever needed for migrants returning to home and/or host countries. Relevant authorities, in countries of origin and destination, including consular representatives, should reach out to migrants, especially to those affected by confinement and lockdown, to provide accurate and timely information, regarding options and pathways for regular migration, available protection and assistance, social benefits and entitlements and opportunities for dignified and safe return. Provision of information in a language and manner tailored to the ethnic and age composition of migrants is necessary throughout the migration cycle in order to ensure that migrants are continuously able to access information.

GCM objective 7 calls for increased efforts to respond to the needs of migrants in situations of vulnerability - in particular women and men at risk, children, notably those unaccompanied or separated from their families, members of religious and ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, victims of violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons who are discriminated against on any basis, workers facing exploitation and abuse, domestic workers, migrants subject to exploitation and abuse in the context of migrant smuggling, and victims of trafficking in persons -, which may arise from the circumstances in which they travel or the conditions they face in countries of origin, transit and destination. This objective is of utmost importance in a region where an estimated 3.77 million migrants are employed in the domestic sector, including 1.7 million migrant women in Mashreq and GCC countries alone. Migrant domestic workers are exposed to more vulnerabilities in many Arab countries as they are not yet fully covered by national labour laws. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated their vulnerabilities as their ability to cope with the economic, psychological and social impacts of the pandemic, avoid infection and receive adequate health care can be affected by their living and working conditions; a lack of consideration of their linguistic diversity in service, their limited local knowledge and networks; and their access to rights often related to their migration status. However, the pandemic has also initiated positive steps around labour reforms; for example, in Qatar, migrant workers, including domestic workers, are not required anymore to obtain a no-objection certificate (NOC) from employers before changing jobs; and Saudi Arabia has also recently announced reforms to move towards the dismantlement of the kafala (sponsorship) system, which will be implemented in March 2021.

GCM objective 17 seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination, racism, violence and xenophobia against migrants. Today, there remain reports of migrants being discriminated against, while all Arab countries are among the 177 States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have

been reports demonstrating a rise in xenophobia against migrants, including blame for the spread of the virus. Collecting accurate and disaggregated data by socioeconomic characteristics, migration status, gender, age and origin is needed to quantify and identify groups that are victims of discrimination and to address this issue. Under GCM objective 17, governments and stakeholders could partner with media and academia to promote an open and evidence-based public discourse on migration, thus generating a more realistic, humane and constructive perception of migrants. Governments and stakeholders could also mention the measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic to alleviate the exacerbation of xenophobia, racism and stigmatization against migrants.

GCM objective 23 is a commitment to enhancing regional and global partnerships in support of a comprehensive and integrated approach to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration in alignment of each state's challenges and priorities as well as their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in which migration (target 10.7) is a critical cross-cutting theme. As the Arab region contains a number of inter-state Consultation Mechanisms on Migration such as the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs (ARCP) or the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) among others, discussion pertaining to this objective could therefore highlight good practices and gaps in establishing national and regional partnerships as well as supporting local authorities in the implementation of the GCM; and sharing lessons learned in using capacity-building mechanisms to strengthen states' implementation of the GCM.

3. Guiding Questions

All guiding question should be assessed through the GCM's guiding principles 'lens, notably through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach while also being child-sensitive and gender-responsive.

1. Have there been improvements and investments in the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, reliable and comparable data, disaggregated by sex, age, migration status and other characteristics at the national level to better understand the migration phenomenon and help in the shaping of evidence-based policies or strategies? **(GCM Objective 1)**
2. Is the current level of regional cooperation and dialogue sufficient to meet the ambitions of the GCM regarding the accurate collection of data and exchange of information on migration-related trends, including through partnerships with academic research institutions, migration observatories, online platforms and databases, and international training centres, while protecting personal data and upholding the right to privacy? **(GCM objectives 1 and 23)**

3. Do existing partnerships between states and/or states and relevant stakeholders, provide for accurate, up-to-date and relevant dissemination of information - notably on immigration laws, socioeconomic opportunities, living conditions, access to protection and services, among others - to migrants throughout the migration cycle? How are states ensuring that this information is gender-responsive, child-sensitive accessible and comprehensive to migrants? Can existing information and data collected for different purposes be used for increasing the evidence on migration-related issues? (**GCM objectives 3 and 23**)
4. What measures have states implemented – or should have implemented – to reduce the vulnerabilities of migrants, such as legal and regulatory assessments, assistance and protection mechanisms, accessible and expedient procedures, regularization efforts, among others? To what extent have local authorities and relevant stakeholders been consulted and/or involved in the implementation of such measures? (**GCM objectives 7 and 23**)
5. What examples of state-led partnerships with media organizations - such as capacity building activities for journalists on how to read and use accurate data for reporting on migration, among others - have led to positive, objective, evidence-based messaging on migration and/or prevented inflammatory reporting, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic? What mechanisms have been established to empower migrants, notably migrant women to denounce all forms of discrimination targeted towards them? (**GCM Objective 17**)
6. How are states addressing migrants' vulnerabilities since the outset of COVID-19? Has there been adaptation of admission and stay procedures? Were all migrants able to access health facilities and basic services? Were local communities, trade unions, the private sector, civil society organizations and migrant communities involved in the development and/or adaptation of such measures? (**Objectives 7 and 23**)

Resources

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration ([GCM](#))

[Situation Report](#) on International Migration 2019 The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Context of the Arab Region

Africa Migration [Report](#): Challenging the Narrative

UN Secretary-General [Policy Brief](#): COVID-19 and People on the Move

UN Network on Migration [Policy Brief](#): The Global Compact for Migration (GCM): Well Governed Migration as an Essential Element of Effective COVID-19 Response

Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial [analysis](#)

Global Migration Group's [Principles and Guidelines](#), Supported by Practical Guidance, on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations.

[Technical note](#): Social Protection for Children and Families in the Context of Migration and Displacement during COVID-19

[Technical note](#): Migratory regularization as an essential condition for the comprehensive protection of the rights of children in the context of human mobility