

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Bangkok, 10–12 March 2021

Items 2 and 3 of the provisional agenda*

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 the coronavirus disease pandemic

Thematic discussions on progress and challenges with regard to implementing the Global Compact at all levels, with due respect to the cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles of the Global Compact

Implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: a synthesis of voluntary Global Compact reviews in Asia and the Pacific*Summary*

This is a summary of voluntary national Global Compact for Migration reviews (surveys) by member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) concerning the status of implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. The survey was conducted to provide background information in support of deliberations among member States in the context of the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact, to be held in Bangkok from 10 to 12 March 2021.

As of 20 February 2021, 21 ESCAP member States had responded to the survey and reported on (a) progress in Global Compact implementation, including prioritization of Global Compact objectives; (b) linkages in implementation of the Global Compact and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (c) regional plans and strategies for Global Compact implementation; and (d) impacts of the coronavirus disease on migrants and their families in the region and beyond. In addition to an analysis of the aforementioned domains, conclusions drawn from the responses are also presented. The present document is intended to inform member States deliberations during the 2021 Asia-Pacific Regional Review.

* ESCAP/GCM/2021/L.1.

** This document is being issued without formal editing.

I. Introduction

1. On 10 December 2018, United Nations Member States adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Marrakesh, Morocco; it was formally endorsed by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018.¹ The Global Compact is the first intergovernmentally-adopted framework, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It is a 360-degree vision of international migration, based upon the core purposes and principles of the United Nations, as covered by its Charter, international human rights law, international labour law and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among others.

2. Its cross-cutting, interdependent guiding principles and 23 objectives and associated concrete actions provide a framework and road map for international coordination and cooperation, which are critical in addressing the challenges and opportunities of migration now and in the future. The Global Compact recognizes that no State can address migration alone, that national migration policies are more likely to succeed through a whole-of-society approach as well as a whole-of-government approach to international cooperation grounded in respect for human and labour rights and the rule of law.

3. The Global Compact calls for follow-up and review of progress at the local, national, regional and global levels of its implementation, using the framework of the United Nations through the State-led intergovernmental approach and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. Given that most international migration takes place within regions, Member States invited relevant subregional, regional and cross-regional processes, platforms and organizations, including the regional economic commissions, among others, to review the implementation of the Global Compact within their respective regions.

4. The years 2020 and 2021 mark the first time that regional commissions, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 73/195 and 73/326, and in collaboration with their respective regional partners, are reviewing the implementation of the Global Compact within their regions. These regional reviews will contribute to the International Migration Review Forums, the first of which will take place in 2022. ESCAP and the Regional United Nations Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific² are organizing the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration from 10 to 12 March 2021, using the ESCAP platform.

¹ A/RES/73/326.

² The following United Nations entities in Asia and the Pacific are members of the Regional Network: ESCAP, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme, Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Population Fund, World Bank and World Food Programme. See also: https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/default/files/docs/ap_regional_migration_nw_tor_march_2020.pdf.

5. In this context, ESCAP member States reviewed on a voluntary basis, progress towards achieving the objectives of the Global Compact and reporting on this for the Asia-Pacific Regional Review meeting. A voluntary national Global Compact review (survey), translated into all ESCAP languages, was conducted from June 2020 to December 2020, with responses received by 20 February 2021 still included in the analysis.³

6. The present document draws upon findings from completed voluntary surveys submitted by ESCAP member States to (a) report on progress in Global Compact implementation, according to the clustering of Global Compact objectives according to General Assembly resolution 73/326 and including prioritization of Global Compact objectives; (b) identify linkages between the Global Compact and the 2030 Agenda implementation; (c) highlight regional plans and strategies; and (d) discuss the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on migrants and their families in the region and beyond.

7. This summary highlights responses submitted by countries, some of them referring to laws, regulations, programmes and initiatives prior to 2018. The summary is not exhaustive. Moreover, given that some countries only recently submitted their surveys and other surveys remain forthcoming, the content of the present document will be updated and revised after the March 2021 Asia-Pacific Regional Review meeting. The examples presented in the present document focus on a broad spectrum of recent policies and initiatives from different countries in the region. For the full list of voluntary Global Compact reviews, please see: www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/asia-pacific-regional-review-implementation-global-compact-safe-orderly as well as migrationnetwork.un.org/country-regional-network/asia-pacific.⁴ Conclusions with reference to the guiding principles, drawn from responses, are also presented.

8. As of 20 February 2021, 21 ESCAP member States submitted voluntary responses to the surveys.⁵ In order to complete the surveys, some countries organized consultations with different government entities, United Nations agencies and members of the Regional United Nations Network on Migration for Asia and the Pacific and stakeholders in applying a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.⁶

³ For information on the survey questions, see: www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/asia-pacific-regional-review-implementation-global-compact-safe-orderly.

⁴ In accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/326, the United Nations Network on Migration, in preparation for the International Migration Review Forum will collect all inputs received from local, national and regional and global levels on a dedicated website, featuring inputs submitted by Member States and other relevant stakeholders to the forums, as part of the global knowledge platform called for in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

⁵ Based on the information provided in the surveys, where available, the following ministries took the lead in completing the surveys: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bhutan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, Vanuatu), Ministry of Justice (Republic of Korea), Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (Nepal), Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (Bangladesh), Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (Myanmar), Ministry of Interior (Tajikistan), Office of the Prime Minister (Tonga) and Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (Armenia).

⁶ More information is available at www.unescap.org/intergovernmental-meetings/asia-pacific-regional-review-implementation-global-compact-safe-orderly.

Table 1
Countries that submitted voluntary Global Compact reviews, by Asia-Pacific subregion

<i>East and North-East Asia</i>	<i>South-East Asia</i>	<i>South and South-West Asia</i>	<i>North and Central Asia</i>	<i>Pacific</i>
- Japan	- Indonesia	- Bangladesh	- Armenia	- Tonga
- Republic of Korea	- Myanmar	- Bhutan	- Azerbaijan	- Vanuatu
- Mongolia	- Philippines	- Nepal	- Kazakhstan	
	- Viet Nam	- Pakistan	- Russian Federation	
		- Turkey	- Tajikistan	
			- Turkmenistan	
			- Uzbekistan	

II. Ensuring that migration is voluntary, regular, safe and orderly (Global Compact Objectives 2, 5, 6, 12 and 18)

A. Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin (related to Objective 2)

9. Migration is a multidimensional reality, driven by social, economic, political and environmental factors. Countries in Asia and the Pacific identified, in particular, economic and employment-related drivers (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam), environmental factors (Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Tonga, Vanuatu, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam), population growth per se (Indonesia), unequal population distribution and economic and social disparities within the country (Mongolia) and educational aspirations of the population (Vanuatu). They highlighted policies intended to deter emigration, such as policies with a focus on job creation, poverty reduction and climate mitigation.

10. For example, Tajikistan highlighted its economic growth strategy with a focus on private sector growth and employment creation so that people could fulfil their professional aspirations within the country. Nepal had prioritized the creation of employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; the Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2023/24)⁷ carried out by the National Planning Commission was formulated to ensure that Nepalis had the opportunity to benefit from local economic opportunities without needing to migrate. The National Programme of the President of Turkmenistan for Social and Economic Development for the period 2019–2025⁸ aimed at improving the social and living conditions, reducing inequality, advancing digital solutions and bridging the digital divide and thereby reducing

⁷ Available at www.npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_English_Version.pdf.

⁸ A brief overview of the “National Programme of the President of Turkmenistan for Social and Economic Development for the period 2019–2025” can be found at <https://customs.gov.tm/en/news/891> and https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24723Voluntary_National_Review_of_Turkmenistan.pdf.

emigration. The programme promoted industrialization by increasing the production of domestic products, creating new jobs, improving social infrastructure and implementing measures to adapt to climate change.

11. Tonga had focused on improving local and national employment opportunities for youth and was collaborating with civil society organizations to minimize adverse employment-related and structural factors driving young people to emigrate. Similarly, to ensure people would not feel compelled to leave the country for work, Mongolia was planning to invest more in skills and career development of its citizens through creating equitable, inclusive and quality education for all, and infrastructure and e-economy development to support economic development and settlements so people would not feel compelled to leave the country. Mongolia was also reforming its social insurance system, streamlining social welfare and increasing employment with the goal of expanding the middle class. Viet Nam had actively implemented resettlement programmes and was planning to implement more in the future to prevent and mitigate the damage caused by environmental degradation and climate change and prevent people from having to migrate, including through unofficial channels.

12. Tonga was committed to raising issues related to the risk of displacement due to climate change and natural disasters at relevant international forums and by incorporating displacement and migration management issues into national planning and related strategies. In addition, the Republic of Korea, through the provision of official development assistance, highlighted its support to developing countries and countries affected by natural disasters in making emigration less likely.

B. Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration (related to Objective 5)

13. Greater availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration facilitate labour mobility and decent work, optimize educational opportunities, uphold the right to family life, and respond to the needs of migrants in situations of vulnerability. Countries in the region had issued work permits for migrant workers either seeking to live and work within their countries or planning to go overseas. The permits were intended to provide protection and prevent irregular labour migration (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu). For instance, at the end of 2018, the Philippines had partnered with Bahrain in the issuance of a “flexible visa” acting as a work permit valid for two years, including health insurance and a return ticket at the end of the contract period or when the worker decided to return.

14. Countries of origin and destination in the region were also signing and implementing bilateral plans, policies and agreements to protect their nationals and provide safe routes of regular migration (Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam). For example, Nepal had signed bilateral labour agreements, memorandums of cooperation and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with nine destination countries in the past few years. In Vanuatu, labour mobility schemes such as the Pacific Labour Scheme and the Seasonal Worker Programme for Australia and the Recognized Seasonal Employer scheme of New Zealand had provided regular migration pathways. Mongolia had adopted labour migration agreements with the Republic of Korea and Japan, which had

facilitated the opening of regular migration pathways and protected employment for Mongolians overseas. Uzbekistan had created special ticket offices for the National Railway Company and the National Air Company for temporary migrant workers going overseas to provide discounted and subsidized tickets and encourage regular migration.

15. Obstacles relating to safe migration pathways existed in the high cost of migration to destination countries (Bangladesh, Tonga and Uzbekistan) and irregular migration (Azerbaijan, Bhutan and the Philippines). The Republic of Korea noted the need to sign bilateral agreements with countries of origin due to the lack of a regional or universal system of standards and requirements to verify and recognize qualifications or certifications.

C. Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work (related to Objective 6)

16. Governments and private agents play critical roles in the successful governance and management of labour migration. As migrants' work is often not regulated, exploitation and violations can easily occur. Some countries in the region were implementing practices to not only provide an ethical and decent recruitment experience, but also safeguard working conditions after arrival. For example, Japan had compiled "Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign nationals",⁹ focusing on improving the working and living conditions of foreign workers with regard to education, medical care and housing.

17. Pakistan had developed the first National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis in 2020 which was in advanced stages of approval and implementation.¹⁰ The overall goal of the policy was to make emigration from Pakistan safe, orderly and regular, increase the protection and welfare of emigrant workers and their families, engage the Pakistani diaspora and facilitate the reintegration of returning migrants. Among the many specific objectives of this policy, it was intended to make the recruitment process for overseas employment fair and equitable and foster greater collaboration on migration among Pakistan's institutions dealing with migration-related issues.

18. A focus for action mentioned by some countries in the region was on reducing recruitment costs, including through introduction of legislation. Viet Nam, for example, had issued the Law on Vietnamese Guest Workers 2020 (also referred to as Law 69) to reduce recruitment fees and related costs charged to migrant workers, and to further prohibit fraudulent recruitment practices. Law 69 would come into force in January 2022.¹¹ Nepal, had established policies to minimize recruitment costs borne by workers after the introduction of the "Free Visa and Free Ticket" policy in 2015 for foreign employment. Indonesia was working towards the elimination of recruitment fees borne by its migrant workers by requiring employers and the government to cover placement costs. The respective policy was intended to take effect in 2021.

⁹ Available at www.moj.go.jp/content/001301382.pdf.

¹⁰ The Policy Brief of the "National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis" is available at www.budapestprocess.org/resources/reports-analyses-guidance?download=195:policy-briefing-national-emigration-and-welfare-policy-for-overseas-pakistanis-processes-challenges-and-responses-for-action.

¹¹ Law on Vietnamese Guest Workers 2020 is available at <https://vanbanphapluat.co/law-69-2020-qh14-vietnamese-guest-workers>.

D. Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral (related to Objective 12)

19. Procedures of screening, assessment and referral should be predictable and legally sound, in particular concerning victims of trafficking in persons, smuggled migrants and other persons in vulnerable situations. Some countries in the region were developing measures to provide assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations when crossing borders, particularly asylum seekers, women and children. For example, the Republic of Korea had provided special care for children under 8 years of age by allowing faster immigration clearance at (air)ports for family members with children. The Republic of Korea and Turkey had developed gender- and child-sensitive practices in the processes and proceedings of irregular migrants.

20. The “Border Control Operations Standard Operational Procedures Manual for Vanuatu” contained a checklist on trafficking and smuggling of migrants, providing guidance on victim identification and screening of vulnerable groups. In Turkmenistan, border and migration officials were trained to identify certain persons in mixed migration flows, particularly potential victims of human trafficking and violence and exploitation, migrants in vulnerable situations, refugees and children (including unaccompanied and separated children). The training addressed concerns related to gender-responsiveness and child-sensitivities. However, the issue of inefficient capacity of officials and other staff to respond to the special needs of migrants in vulnerable situations was also reported by countries in the region (Mongolia, Myanmar and Pakistan).

E. Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences (related to Objective 18)

21. In order to enhance cooperation on the recognition of foreign qualifications, it is important for countries to promote demand-driven skills development and facilitation of mutual recognition of skills. Nevertheless, both the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam noted the lack of recognition agreements between countries and at the regional and global levels.

22. Countries in the region, as sending, transit and receiving countries of migrant workers, had provided skills development, training workshops or vocational training for aspiring and/or pre-departure migrants (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam). Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States had a mutual recognition agreement regarding diplomas and certificates in place which facilitated labour migration among its member States.¹²

23. Azerbaijan and Turkey both mentioned institutions and agreements in place or intended to be established, dedicated to the mutual recognition of diplomas and other qualifications that were obtained abroad. In addition, some countries had worked towards the transferability of skills of their migrant workers. In 2018, Uzbekistan provided permission to accredited legal entities to confirm professional competence of potential migrant workers seeking

¹² The following ESCAP member States are also Commonwealth of Independent States member States: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. For an unofficial translation of the agreement, see: <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=4153>.

employment overseas, including proficiency in professional skills and foreign languages. Viet Nam was in the process of developing a national qualifications framework for the implementation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Mutual Recognition Agreements. The Vocational and Skill Development Training Academy in Nepal was responsible for skills development initiatives to enhance youth employability. Turkmenistan had implemented the digital education system in 2017 to create conditions for continuing education to all its population, including migrants. Skills and qualifications of immigrants in Turkmenistan were recognized in accordance with national legislation and international guidance on this issue, and immigrants were provided opportunities to develop their skills further to optimize their employability in the country.

III. Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance and border management measures (Global Compact Objectives 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 21)

A. Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation (related to Objective 4)

24. Everyone has the right to nationality; lack of birth registration and documentation undermines a person's ability to earn a livelihood and to access services and puts the person at risk of statelessness. In tackling challenges associated with legal identity and documentation, Nepal, the Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam for example, had developed instruments in updating, improving, and regulating the documentation system. Nepali citizens, for instance, were required to demonstrate that they hold valid machine-readable passports in order to seek jobs abroad. The Nepali Foreign Employment Information Management System, a web-based system, was designed to read data from several government entities. This practice helped the government track migrants working abroad, hence limiting the possibility of Nepali migrants being undocumented or missing throughout the migration process. In case Nepali migrant workers and victims of trafficking in persons were identified overseas, the Government, through diplomatic missions, provided temporary travel documents to those who did not have access to their identity document to return to the country.

25. Turkmenistan, supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), had implemented the "National Plan of Action to End Statelessness",¹³ which helped determine the status of stateless persons and grant them fundamental rights and state guarantees. As a result, Turkmenistan provided citizenship to about 23,000 refugees and stateless persons over recent years. Furthermore, in 2020, the "Law on Civil Status Acts"¹⁴ entered into force in Turkmenistan, ensuring that all children born in the country, regardless of the migration status of their parents, would have their births registered. Each new-born would be assigned a unique identification number and birth

¹³ More information on the "National Plan of Action to End Statelessness" starting at paragraph 157 is available at <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsoKkyJnmV2heosZtuObRgChGB4w2Jk8UwRqsxKQu5J%2BIGGYoj7brBiV15%2FtbErBPtM%2FIhBymnq148RNxmC%2BnLGEPe1yZtBSbDASF%2BGB5JPWa>.

¹⁴ See also www.unhcr.org/centralasia/en/12707-unhcr-welcomes-turkmenistans-new-law-to-ensure-universal-birth-registration-and-prevent-childhood-statelessness.html.

certificate, to be filed in an electronic format. In 2019, UNHCR supported Viet Nam in conducting a review on the situation of stateless people and recommending effective solutions to the issue.

26. Tajikistan's new generation of travel documents fully met the norms of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which allowed citizens to move freely across international borders. Vanuatu reported on increasing birth registration practices through concerted efforts by the civil registry within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Philippines had worked with some destination countries, such as Bahrain or Malaysia, to have their undocumented migrant workers regularized.

27. Other countries in the region were also using information and communication technology for the issuance of migration-relevant documentation. Issued by the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, Bangladesh had provided every single migrant worker in 2019–2020 with a smart card and orientation training related to safe migration. Republic of Korea nationals, who had had their births declared in the country, were given a unique resident registration number which was shared with all government organizations should they need to verify their identity; the number was also used to record marriage, death and family relationships. Republic of Korea nationals born outside the country were permitted to have their birth registered at overseas Republic of Korea diplomatic missions and had also had their passport issued there. These passports were fully equipped with all the security features recommended by ICAO.

28. In the Philippines, the Bureau of Immigration launched a text (SMS) messaging scheme for foreign nationals applying for their alien certificate of registration identity card to facilitate easier and safe delivery of the card. In Viet Nam, innovative technology was being applied in the residence management system, which allowed people to use their personal identification numbers to access and update the online population database and thereby, facilitating the residence and population management process while obtaining relevant data.

B. Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants (related to Objective 8)

29. Search and rescue is a vital element of border management work in locating missing migrants, arising from the obligations of States under international human rights law. Such operations should be especially maintained during public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Some countries in the region reported strengthening international cooperation and intragovernmental coordination on search and rescue of missing migrants, ratifying international conventions, improving the sharing of crime trends and methods of data-tracking, and/or implementing laws and protocols to prevent migrants from going missing.

30. For example, in the event of any migrant worker in Bhutan going missing, necessary coordinated efforts to locate the person(s) had been undertaken by relevant government agencies. By law, Kazakhstan was required to search for missing individuals, including for the prevention of illegal exploitation and trafficking of migrants. Tajikistan was working closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross and had drafted principles for searching for missing migrants. In 2020, Turkmenistan organized a meeting of Caspian Sea states to discuss and draft an agreement on cooperation in search and rescue in the Caspian Sea region. In the Republic of Korea, migrants

in distress and missing migrants had been treated equally in terms of search and rescue as nationals.

C. Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants (related to Objective 9)

31. Smuggling of migrants, often a function of underdevelopment, is fuelled by the lack of accessible, safe and legal pathways for migration, which exposes migrants to exploitation and other human rights violations.

32. Some countries had developed measures to better combat, investigate and prosecute cases of smuggling of migrants (Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Tonga, Turkey, Vanuatu, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam). For example, special units combating smuggling of migrants had been established within the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kazakhstan; a training centre for combating human trafficking had been set up for specialists. The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime 2006 Act¹⁵ of Vanuatu had dealt with offences relating to smuggling and trafficking in persons, including children.

33. Some countries in the region – such as Australia, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Turkmenistan and other ASEAN member States – were collaborating closely in preventing smuggling and human trafficking by sharing information on crime trends and effective countermeasures.

D. Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration (related to Objective 10)

34. Trafficking in persons is a crime as well as a human rights violation. Increased access to safe migration, including regular pathways and regularization of status, together with access to decent work, is a significant step towards eradicating trafficking in persons.

35. Countries in the region had paid particular attention to this issue by not only ratifying the respective global multilateral treaties, but also by drafting and implementing country-specific laws and allocating special government units to this area of work (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam).

36. For example, in 2020, the “National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2020–2024” was adopted.¹⁶ In 2019, amendments and supplements were made to the law “On identification of and support to victims of trafficking in human beings and exploitation” of Armenia.¹⁷ Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan had approved an

¹⁵ Available at https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/document/vut/2006/counter_terrorism_and_transnational_organised_crime_act.html.

¹⁶ Available at <https://m.mia.gov.az/index.php?en/content/338/>.

¹⁷ Articles of the Armenian Law “On identification of and support to victims of trafficking in human beings and exploitation” can be found in the document of “Information provided by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on the implementation of the UNGA resolution A/RES/69/167 ‘Protection of Migrants’.” Available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/GA70thSession/States/Armenia.pdf.

action plan on controlling, preventing and combating crimes of trafficking in persons while Indonesia was developing such a national action plan. Viet Nam had developed a national programme on human trafficking prevention and combat for the period of 2021–2025, which set out many new major tasks, including the building of a national data system on human trafficking.

37. The Republic of Korea had shared information on crime trends and effective countermeasures and signed MoUs with Australia, Indonesia and Thailand to establish collaborative relations to respond to smuggling and human trafficking. The Philippines had signed an MoU with the United Arab Emirates on combating trafficking in persons in 2019. The Ministry of Customs and Revenue and the Ministry of Police of Tonga had prioritized security and tackling crime, especially organized crime linked to smuggling, trafficking, and the flow of forged identity and travel documents. Indonesia had established a task force for the prevention and handling of trafficking in persons, aimed to address the problem at the community level through prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. Tonga had also formed a transnational crime unit providing assistance to border agencies with a specific focus on transnational issues, such as trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. Migrant workers in the entertainment sector in the Republic of Korea were required to take mandatory courses on the risks of sexual trafficking.

38. Some of the remaining challenges identified through the surveys concerned inadequate systematic understanding of human trafficking issues among law enforcement officials (Mongolia), a lack of inter-institutional coordination on this issue (Vanuatu), a lack of financial resources to draft and implement legislative and policy frameworks and to support training and awareness to prevent human trafficking (Vanuatu), difficulties in monitoring the reintegration efforts of victims of trafficking to prevent re-victimization (Indonesia), lack of reliable data on this topic (Nepal).

E. Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner (related to Objective 11)

39. Securing borders is an essential element of a comprehensive and holistic approach to migration governance. Given the complexity of borders, it is vital that States take a rights-based approach. A persisting challenge with border maintenance was the insufficient human capacity and lack of effective border management information systems. Due to the high volumes of entries and exits, countries in the region were renewing border checkpoints, enhancing infrastructure and security, improving the capacity of border technology and staff, developing measures and mechanisms to secure border management, and/or introducing new travel documents (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam).

40. For example, Vanuatu had developed a border management curriculum; capacity building of frontline and secondary line border officials was being supported by the joint collaboration between the Australian border force and the International Organization of Migration (IOM). In the Republic of Korea, immigration officers were being trained and educated to respect cultural diversity and language, be gender and child-sensitive, and respect the needs of persons with disabilities during immigration proceedings. Azerbaijan was applying the harmonization of relevant mechanisms with ICAO standards for integrated, secure and connected border management. To support legal border crossing, new travel documents were introduced in Tajikistan, with

foreign passports issued in the country containing electronic biometric information.

F. Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives (related to Objective 13)

41. According to the Global Compact, immigration detention should only be used as a measure of last resort and countries should work towards alternatives to detention. Detention has serious impacts on migrants' lives, including their physical and mental well-being. Some countries in the region reported not using detention whereas others noted that they used it as a measure of last resort, ensuring that it was carried out in a dignified way. For instance, the Republic of Korea noted that detention was only conducted strictly in accordance with due procedures and the Ministry of Justice conducted self-evaluation for any potential cases of human rights infringements and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, an independent organization dedicated to human rights protection, made visits to the detention facilities to ensure there were no cases of arbitrary detention and human rights infringements.

42. The Indonesian Government reported that it was working with IOM to ensure and protect the rights of migrants, especially those belonging to vulnerable groups, by providing alternatives for immigration detention. It was committed to protecting migrant children, including in the context of immigration detention. Turkey had included alternatives to detention in the law and reported using migration detention only as a measure of last resort.

G. Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration (related to Objective 21)

43. Safe and dignified return, readmission and reintegration is part of safe, orderly and regular migration. Repatriation and the measures relating to dignified return, readmission and sustainable reintegration of migrants were important to countries in the region. Some countries had conducted surveys, raised funds, signed bilateral agreements and/or initiated programmes in this regard (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam). For instance, Armenia had signed readmission agreements with the European Union and the Russian Federation; agreements of Armenia with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine were being negotiated or awaiting finalization; implementation protocols had been signed between Armenia and the Benelux countries and France; and Viet Nam had signed 18 repatriation agreements with other countries. To ensure the safe and dignified return and readmission of undocumented migrants from Azerbaijan as well as their sustainable reintegration, readmission agreements had been signed between Azerbaijan, the European Union, Norway, Switzerland and Montenegro. Turkmenistan was developing bilateral readmission agreements with countries in the European Union, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Turkey. It had already drafted agreements with Estonia and Switzerland.

44. Fund augmentation was pursued in the Philippines to accommodate more repatriation of migrants. The Philippines had also developed various programmes to assist its migrant workers to return home. For example, in 2018, it had launched the Comprehensive Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW)

Reintegration Programme¹⁸ in Hong Kong, China, to prepare and support migrant workers for their return. It was also working with the private sector to support women migrant workers overseas who intended to return and become entrepreneurs. The Women Entrepreneurs Reintegrated and Economically Active at Home programme¹⁹ offered training in reintegration preparedness and entrepreneurship to female overseas workers. It also provided access to start-up assistance, microfinance and a pool of business coaches. Azerbaijan, in collaboration with the Centre for Migrant Policy Development had implemented the “Reintegration Support to Azerbaijani Returnees” project which aimed at developing reintegration guidelines and providing reintegration support to Azerbaijani returnees. As part of the project “Strengthening Vietnamese Capacity for Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants Women and their Households in Viet Nam,” supported by the Korean International Cooperation Agency and IOM, Viet Nam had opened a One Stop Service Office to support returning women migrants by providing essential needs including counselling, medical assistance, legal aid and temporary housing.²⁰ However, Viet Nam also noted that many challenges regarding return and reintegration remained, especially for women faced with stigma and discrimination upon return.

IV. Supporting migrants’ protection, integration and contribution to development (Global Compact Objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22)

A. Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle (related to Objective 14)

45. A key challenge for migrants’ protection is their interaction with two different sets of authorities, those in the country in which they reside and those of their country of origin. Member States were expanding services at diplomatic missions in the region and beyond in order to create improved structures not only to issue travel documents but also protect their nationals abroad through advocacy, mediation and legal assistance (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam). However, some also reported problems in doing so, such as the Philippines which pointed out that the presence or coverage of Filipino embassies in countries of destination was a challenge in terms of providing access to basic services and ensuring consular protection due to the geographic locations of embassies and the limited number of personnel abroad.

46. In many countries, however, additional personnel had been added to foreign missions to support migrants overseas. For example, since 2019, the work of the Consular Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia had expanded consular relations, protecting the interests of Mongolians and legal entities abroad, simplifying travel conditions, and improving the legal environment for consular activities to make services faster,

¹⁸ For more information, see <https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/news-from-our-foreign-service-postsupdate/19203-comprehensive-ofw-reintegration-program-launched-in-hk>.

¹⁹ For more information, see www.nrco.dole.gov.ph/index.php/programs-and-services/women-reintegrated-and-economically-active-at-home-program-women-reach.

²⁰ For more information, see <http://english.molisa.gov.vn/Pages/News/Detail.aspx?tintucID=222981>.

more accessible and more digitalized for Mongolian citizens to travel abroad (see Government Action Plan of 2016–2020).²¹

47. Since 2019, the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development was mandated to deploy social welfare attaches to foreign service posts to assist overseas foreign workers in distress. Similarly, Uzbekistan had added attachés for labour migration at diplomatic missions, while Nepal had labour counsellors and attachés working in all diplomatic missions in countries with more than 5,000 Nepali migrant workers since 2007. Pakistan had deployed community welfare attachés to diplomatic missions overseas to look after the welfare and interests of their overseas workers. The missions of Bangladesh in countries of destination provided consular service, arrangement of compensation to victims of accidents and emergency services. Labour migration attachés had been deployed by Uzbekistan to diplomatic missions in the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam was organizing training courses on migration-related issues for diplomats prior to their deployment overseas.

48. In addition, some countries had developed online platforms to provide services to their nations overseas. For example, the Indonesia platform of “Portal Peduli WNI” allowed consular officers to provide services and protection to overseas citizens more optimally. In the Philippines, the government provides online platforms for psychosocial intervention and psychological first aid to bring together trained professionals to address the needs of overseas foreign workers.

B. Provide access to basic services for migrants (related to Objective 15)

49. Migrants’ access to basic services are often constrained by national laws, fees, language barriers, and restrictions on housing and movement, although such access represents a human right. However, some countries in the region were providing or aiming to provide the same access to basic services, such as health or education to foreign nationals, regardless of their migration status, as to their citizens.

50. For example, all migrants in Tonga, irrespective of their legal status, had access to government-funded national health services, including both emergency and non-emergency services. The Republic of Korea had designated 111 medical institutions for non-nationals ineligible for the national health insurance plan and medical fee support. All non-national children in the country were given the same rights as Korean children to have access to regular education. The national laws and regulations in Bhutan and Turkmenistan ensured that migrant workers had equal access to basic services such as health care and education. Turkey had developed instruments in providing education, health care and social stability, particularly for asylum seekers residing near its borders. To ensure that no child was left behind, Viet Nam enabled all migrant children to have access to education, including children with no proof of Vietnamese citizenship. Furthermore, migrant children returning to Viet Nam with their families in ethnic minority, mountainous and border areas were aided to continue their studies.

²¹ Government Action Plan of 2016-2020 of Mongolia can be found at http://www.mfa.gov.mn/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2016-2020_Gov_AP_Eng_Revised.pdf.

C. Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion (related to Objective 16)

51. Migrants practice their cultures and religions in their interactions with citizens in destination countries. Their integration and reintegration are important in creating a harmonized society for all.

52. Pre-departure and post-arrival programmes were important elements to facilitate migrant integration in countries of destination or upon return in countries of origin, as highlighted by Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam. For example, in the Philippines, pre-departure information was provided to migrants through online modules to make such services more accessible to the public, especially those in less developed areas and ones historically considered as origin provinces of Filipino emigrants. In Nepal, pre-departure training was mandatory for migrant workers. The training focused on legislative provisions of the host countries, social and cultural customs, and health and safety related subjects; it also promoted savings among labour migrants. The trainings were offered through government offices and licensed private sector training centres. Indonesia observed that pre-departure training as well as post-departure reintegration at the subnational level were difficult since resources were often limited.

53. Addressing migrant inclusion and social cohesion for both long-term and short-term residence provided an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding. Some countries had carried out harmonization activities. For example, the Eleventh Development Plan (2019–2023)²² in Turkey underlined that failure to adapt migrant populations to urban life could have detrimental effects. Turkish Red Crescent Community Centres carried out all harmonization activities through migration programmes, aiming to contribute to the development of a society where mutual recognition of differences, maintenance of respect, and co-existence based on intercultural interaction, consultation, and social dialogue were ensured. Turkmenistan promoted intercultural dialogue and exchange between government agencies, local populations and migrants by organizing conferences, meetings, exhibitions and cultural events. Many of these activities were informal in nature, and they were intended to improve mutual understanding and respect and enrich each other's cultures.

54. The Republic of Korea was offering a programme for rapid adaption to the Korean society for new migrants, provided in 13 languages and including lectures on basic laws and how to receive basic public services. A separate programme was provided for long-term migrants and offered lessons on Korean language, culture and society. The programme was provided at no cost and from 2021, programmes on everyday laws, consumers' rights and preventing crimes, especially sexual violence against migrant women and disaster response, would be added. Graduates of this programme were encouraged to become mentoring volunteers. To promote Japanese language education nationwide for non-national children, Japan had developed curricula and teaching guidelines for children who required Japanese language instruction, to ensure non-national children's school attendance. This effort was based on the "Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign nationals".

²² Available at www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Eleventh_Development_Plan-2019-2023.pdf.

D. Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries (related to Objective 19)

55. International migration generally contributes to the socioeconomic development in both origin and host countries. Diaspora communities contribute to the countries of their nationality through remittances, development of initiatives, investment and trade activities, and transfer of skills and knowledge, which all feed into national development. To encourage further actions, member States have been incorporating migration into development strategies, initiating studies and programmes, creating online platforms, and/or establishing relevant centres to create conditions in allowing migrants and diasporas to make contributions (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Turkmenistan and Tonga).

56. For instance, diaspora engagement was continually being expanded in the Philippines through wider localization of the “BaLinkBayan portal”, the online portal for diaspora engagement in business, philanthropy and government online services. In Armenia, and with support from the Prime Minister, the “iGorts programme” had been launched to identify up to 100 diaspora Armenian professionals to use their experience and knowledge to improve and develop state institutions, policies and programmes for 12 months.

57. In order to increase migrants’ contribution to development, the Ministry of Finance in Indonesia had issued a Diaspora Bond programme, which aimed to enable Indonesian migrants to contribute to the state budget. Mongolia was working to develop a comprehensive diaspora development programme, building on increased diaspora activism during COVID-19. The Non-Resident Nepali Act, 2064 (2008)²³ of Nepal had motivated non-residents to contribute to the country’s development. Nepal had also established a Brain Gain Center to harness the skills and expertise of Nepali diaspora communities. Azerbaijan was focusing on collecting data and information on its diaspora in order to better engage with this group and form partnerships. The “Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino” programme of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas continued to serve as a channel for the migrant Filipino diaspora to provide assistance to Filipinos at home. It had facilitated the transfer of various forms of assistance from Filipinos or other donors overseas to support projects in livelihood/micro-enterprise development, education, health and welfare related activities, and small-scale infrastructure, as well as technology and skills transfer.

E. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants (related to Objective 20)

58. Remittances, in cash and non-cash items, contribute significantly to both individual household budgets and Gross Domestic Products. However, in some remittance corridors in the region and beyond, the cost of sending remittances remained high and the availability of formal transfer channels was lacking. It was noted that irregular channels were still used by most senders in Mongolia and Myanmar.

59. Some countries reported to have adopted practices to generate incentives, lower costs of sending, and/or enable safer transfers through formal channels (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines,

²³ Available at www.immigration.gov.np/public/upload/e66443e81e8cc9c4fa5c099a1fb1bb87/files/Non-Resident-Nepalese-Act-2064.pdf.

Tonga and Vanuatu). For instance, Bangladesh was providing 2 per cent cash incentives to all remitters. The high cost of remittance transfers was recognized by Tonga and Vanuatu leading to the introduction of mobile money wallets in 2019, offering cheaper domestic remittances.

60. Kazakhstan, Nepal, the Philippines and Vanuatu noted the importance of financial inclusion of their migrants. In this context, the Philippines reported that in 2019, the Central Bank of the Philippines, together with the Overseas Workers' Welfare Association and the BDO Foundation, forged a partnership to improve financial inclusion and literacy of overseas foreign workers and their families. The "Pinansyal na Talino at Kaalaman" programme (or Financial Intelligence and Knowledge programme) was aimed to equip overseas foreign workers with the ability to better manage their remittances, get out of debt, set aside savings or make prudent investments, in preparation for a better life when they returned to the Philippines. To foster financial inclusion of migrants, Nepali migrant workers were requested to have a bank account at home in order to formalize and streamline financial transactions carried out by them.

F. Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits (related to Objective 22)

61. Migrants are often excluded from social protection systems, which are crucial in fighting poverty, decreasing inequality and empowerment in both origin and destination countries. The social protection systems' benefits, even if migrants are able to access them, may not be portable after borders are crossed. For instance, Indonesia and the Philippines were experiencing low access to social security of migrant workers overseas, and overall awareness of the importance of social security was low (Indonesia).

62. However, as reported through the surveys, countries in the region had developed platforms, initiated programmes, established acts and/or signed agreements in providing protection for their migrants (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and the Philippines). In Bhutan, the "RemitBhutan" platform, launched in 2016, had facilitated the transfer of remittances from Bhutanese workers living abroad.

63. With regard to bilateral agreements and national policies and programmes, in 2021, the pension agreement for the working population of the Eurasian Economic Union member States entered into force.²⁴ This made citizens of the Union eligible for pension rights on the same terms as citizens of the State of employment within the Union. The agreement defined the order and mechanism of transferability of pensions from one country of the Union to another. Indonesia had signed an agreement with the Republic of Korea regarding the transferability of social security and was working with Malaysia on a similar agreement. The Social Security Act of 2018²⁵ of the Philippines covered all Filipinos, including migrant workers, and mandated entry into social security agreements with destination countries. Through the Wage

²⁴ The Protocol of the fourth meeting of the Advisory Committee for social security, compliance with pension rights, medical care provision and professional activity of workers of the member States of the Eurasian Economic Union. Available at: www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/finpol/migration/Documents/protocol-4-kk-eng.pdf. The following ESCAP member States are also members of the Eurasian Economic Union: Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation.

²⁵ Available at www.sss.gov.ph/sss/DownloadContent?fileName=20190207-RA-11199-Social-Security-Act-of-2018.pdf.

Earners' Welfare Board Act 2018,²⁶ Bangladesh indicated it was providing welfare and social security to migrant workers and their families.

V. Strengthening evidence-based policymaking, public debate and cooperation for safe, orderly and regular migration (Global Compact Objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23)

A. Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies (related to Objective 1)

64. In order to guide public discourse and formulate evidence-based policies, data disaggregated by sex, age, migration status, disability and other characteristics are needed. As indicated in the surveys, it is common practice in the region to obtain data on migration through national censuses administered every few years. However, there is still a persistent need to provide more timely, accurate, consistent, integrated and disaggregated data. The unavailability of such data becomes exaggerated in cases of undocumented migrants. There were obstacles, such as the shortage of systematic data integration due to the many ministries and government entities in countries of origin and destination involved in collecting data using different concepts and methods, as noted by Indonesia, the Philippines and the Russian Federation.

65. Countries reported to either have expanded or worked towards expanding the means to obtain migration data through initiatives such as the usage of new and/or existing databases and platforms, big data, and/or additional surveys (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Turkey, Vanuatu and Viet Nam). Some countries also reported on having issued Migration Profiles or were working towards new ones (Armenia, Nepal and Viet Nam).

66. Some countries collected data from various sources. For example, in the Philippines, data on migrants were collected by different authorities through different means. Administrative data on Filipino migrants were monitored by the Department of Foreign Affairs, while surveys on Filipino migrants were conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority. The Commission on Filipinos Overseas also collected and processed emigrant data which included statistical profiles of, for example, registered Filipino emigrants, spouses and partners of foreign nationals. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration gathered deployment data on overseas foreign workers deployment data while the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration collected data on overseas foreign workers welfare concerns. The Central Bank of the Philippines also provided remittance data, disaggregated by land or sea-based worker. The first National Migration Survey in the Philippines²⁷ was conducted in 2018 to address the need for in-depth and baseline data on mobility.

67. In Azerbaijan, all relevant data on foreigners and stateless persons temporarily staying, working and residing in Azerbaijan were stored in the Unified Migration Information System. The Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs in Bhutan recorded and maintained a

²⁶ For more information, see www.forum-asia.org/uploads/wp/2019/05/Migration-Trend-Analysis-2018-RMMRU.pdf.

²⁷ The National Migration Survey and its annual reports from 2015–2019 is available at <https://psa.gov.ph/tags/national-migration-survey>.

database on all migrant workers; it also maintained records of work authorization issued to migrant workers. The Directorate General of Migration Management in Turkey published annual migration reports and updated migration statistics on its official website.²⁸ The Republic of Korea introduced big data analysis techniques and a bio information fast-searching system through a data warehouse, where immigration-related information was stored and managed.

B. Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration (related to Objective 3)

68. Migrants lacking accurate information about migration processes can be disempowered. They may be unaware of their rights and responsibilities, leaving them prey to exploitation-based misinformation or prompting them to fall into irregular status for procedural reasons. Despite limitations in information provided to migrants, the dissemination of timely and accurate information, particularly pre-departure, was exemplified by Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines (see also objective 16).

69. Relevant mobile applications, websites, resource centres, brochures and support lines were often used for dissemination purposes. Member States were also developing databases and portals, providing information to migrants and promoting awareness. For instance, Azerbaijan had launched the “Call Center” of the State Migration Service, and a “MigAz” mobile application providing accurate and timely information for migrants at all stages of migration enabling them to access basic services, including in emergency situations in Azerbaijani, English and Russian. Pakistan had established an online complaint mechanism for migrant workers. In the Republic of Korea, a visa portal had provided information on the different types of visa and allowed migrants to change their visa type, provided they submitted the required information.

70. The information system of Nepal aimed at providing a one-stop portal addressing key issues along each stage of the migration cycle. The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training in Bangladesh had developed a database where relevant data of migrant workers were disseminated during pre-departure stages, which was further integrated with the airport authorities. The establishment of migrant resource and employment centres (Armenia, Myanmar, Nepal, Tajikistan and Viet Nam) had contributed to informed decision-making about foreign employment. For example, relevant information had been disseminated in Armenia by the seven Migration Resource Centres managed by the State Employment Agency. Viet Nam had established five centres for migrant workers to provide reliable and up-to-date information about migration and access to justice.

C. Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration (related to Objective 7)

71. Migrant vulnerabilities occur in origin, transit and destination countries. They are not inevitable but rather outcomes of policies and underlying structural issues.

72. In addition to ratifying relevant global conventions and protocols, countries in the region reported different means to address migrant vulnerabilities on the ground. For example, Nepal had focused on ensuring transparency in the recruitment process and creating partnerships. It had

²⁸ <https://en.goc.gov.tr/#>.

operationalized a comprehensive information system linked to all stakeholders engaged in the recruitment and placement process. This system had captured the information of the entire process: clearance of pre-departure orientation, medical assessment, insurances, agreement with employers, lists of demands and jobs available and details including salary, working hours and benefits, among others. The Philippines had established various communication lines to facilitate assistance to overseas foreign workers in need, including a 24/7 command centre, hotlines and a Facebook help page. Call and support centres for multicultural families had been put in place in the Republic of Korea to provide support to migrant victims of crimes. The services were available in 13 languages and for 24 hours per day.

73. On a broader national scale, from 2018 to 2022, the Third National Human Rights Plan of Action²⁹ was being implemented in the Republic of Korea to achieve a “fairer society where all people can enjoy equal rights” with an emphasis on “supporting migrants and their social integration”. With a focus on children, the Republic of Korea was also permitting all children of irregular status to attend public schools. Kazakhstan had launched programmes to protect migrant children and offer comprehensive social, psychological and legal assistance. Turkey reported having developed gender and child-sensitive approaches and practices in the processes and proceedings involving migrants in irregular situations.

D. Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration (related to Objective 17)

74. Principles of non-discrimination and elimination of racial discrimination, xenophobia, racism, violence and intolerance directed at migrants, regardless of their status, as outlined in international law, are crucial in ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration. In addition, open and evidence-based public discourse on migration and migrants is important to generate more realistic, humane, and constructive perceptions. Initiatives to prevent and prohibit discrimination had been established in some countries. For example, Azerbaijan had held “Open Door Day” citizen forums, awareness-raising events, as well as conferences at the national level with participation of migrants and stateless persons, as well as local citizens, representatives of relevant state entities, public organizations, employers and entrepreneurs, aimed at promoting evidence-based public discussion to form migration-related perceptions. The Republic of Korea had recommended all schools to offer two-hours of programmes related to multiculturalism every year to ensure that cultural diversity was upheld in schools and to encourage intercultural understanding within communities. Furthermore, teachers’ capabilities of sufficient levels of knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity were emphasized through their subject teacher qualifications.

E. Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration (related to Objective 23)

75. In the Global Compact, Member States recognized that “no State can address migration on its own because of its inherently transnational nature”.³⁰ International cooperation helps secure “triple win” outcomes: for origin and destination countries, as well as for migrants themselves. Countries in the region were involved in international forums, processes and meetings, such as

²⁹ Available at www.immigration.go.kr/bbs/moj/121/501463/artclView.do.

³⁰ A/RES/73/195.

those of ASEAN, the regional consultative processes (including those with civil society and other stakeholders) or the Global Forum on Migration and Development. They also participated in relevant events and activities of ESCAP and subregional processes (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam).

76. Countries in the region had also signed MoUs and bilateral agreements, building initiatives and collaborating with one another. For instance, in order to strengthen international cooperation to prevent irregular migration, the Ministry of Interior in the Russian Federation had collaborated with authorities of other countries. Indonesia had cooperated with Government agencies of other countries, including the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Through the Migration and Diaspora Programme, GIZ had provided assistance to diaspora and Indonesian diaspora organizations. United Nations entities were also working closely with countries in the region on safe, orderly and regular migration, some of them through the United Nations Network on Migration.

VI. Global Compact for Migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

77. The majority of countries responding to the survey indicated that they were following up on the 2030 Agenda, with some actively promoting the Sustainable Development Goals in order to achieve the objectives of the Global Compact (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam).

78. Many countries had mainstreamed migration into national development plans. For example, the Philippines explicitly referred to migration-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators in its Development Plan 2017–2022.³¹ Bangladesh integrated Sustainable Development Goals in its Seventh Five-Year Plan,³² with an emphasis on actions pertinent to Sustainable Development Goal target 10.7.³³ The National Planning Commission of Nepal incorporated Sustainable Development Goals in its national monitoring and evaluation system. Viet Nam had issued an Implementation Plan of the United Nations 2030 Agenda with explicit references to migration-related Sustainable Development Goals. In 2020, Viet Nam had also promulgated a decision on a Global Compact for Migration Implementation Plan which asked to integrate migration issues into the Implementation Plan of the 2030 Agenda. Azerbaijan had developed a National Strategy on Migration, including a road map for 2020–2025 on effective migration management, which aligned implementation of the Global Compact with the 2030 Agenda. Mongolia and Nepal reported submitting a

³¹ Available at <http://pdp.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/PDP-2017-2022.pdf>.

³² Available at <http://nda.erd.gov.bd/en/c/publication/seventh-five-year-plan-fy2016-fy2020>.

³³ Sustainable Development Goal target 10.7: facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

voluntary national review of migration-related Sustainable Development Goals to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.³⁴

79. Other countries reported focusing on specific migration-related Sustainable Development Goal targets which aligned with related objectives of the Global Compact. For example, Bangladesh and Pakistan had taken steps to improve migration governance, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact and had focused on reducing migration costs and remittance transfer fees, as described in Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10.7. Indonesia had set specific national targets for achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 10.7 and was also focused on Sustainable Development Goal targets related to trafficking in persons and remittances. Turkmenistan, in partnership with international organizations and civil society developed and approved policy framework documents, containing migration-related targets and indicators in order to facilitate effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

VII. Regional plans and strategies³⁵

80. Countries responding to the survey indicated that in implementing the Global Compact, their regional cooperation activities were often focused on labour migration, human trafficking and smuggling. They engaged in regional consultative processes (i.e. Bali Process and Colombo Process) and other regional fora (i.e., ASEAN, Budapest Process, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) on these issues. For example, of the ASEAN member States which submitted the survey, Indonesia, Myanmar and the Philippines were active members of the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers. Regarding regional consultative processes, Indonesia and Australia co-chaired the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, aiming to strengthen regional efforts to tackle human smuggling and trafficking,³⁶ while Pakistan, a member of the Colombo process, was Chair of the Thematic Area Working Group on Remittances in the Colombo Process.

81. According to their geopolitical situation, other countries took part in other regional forums. For example, Mongolia was party to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and its Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.³⁷ Mongolia had also agreed to establish the China-Mongolia-Russia-Economic Corridor, a multifaceted trilateral cooperation programme that aligned Mongolia's "Development Road" programme with the "Belt and Road initiative". Members of the EEU who responded to the survey (Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) were actively collaborating on various migration-related activities. Other countries had signed bilateral agreements

³⁴ In addition, the following countries that submitted a survey, also made reference to migration in voluntary national reviews: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Turkey. See www.unescap.org/resources/asia-pacific-migration-report-2020.

³⁵ For a comprehensive overview of regional cooperation activities in Asia-Pacific, see *Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2020*.

³⁶ Information on the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime is available at www.iom.int/bali-process.

³⁷ Available at <http://un-act.org/publication/view/south-asian-association-for-regional-cooperation-saarc-convention-on-preventing-and-combating-trafficking-in-women-and-children-for-prostitution-2002/>.

and MoUs, such as those between the Republic of Korea and various countries in North and Central Asia, or those between Australia, Indonesia and Thailand.

82. Countries also collaborated with each other and with international organizations on broader migration-related topics, such as on the project “Safe & Fair: Realizing women migrant workers’ rights and opportunities in the ASEAN regions” (2018–2022) which was part of the multi-year European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls in ten ASEAN countries. It was implemented by ASEAN member States and supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

VIII. The impacts of the coronavirus disease and the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration

83. The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating impacts on all countries in Asia and the Pacific, and persons in vulnerable situations have been particularly affected. Migrants are at a heightened risk of contracting the virus due to factors including stigma, discrimination, and exclusion; unsanitary and overcrowded living conditions; lack of and/or restrictions in access to basic services, social protection, personal protective equipment, and health care. The survey responses indicate that countries in the region responded to the pandemic through measures including closing borders; providing financial and psychological assistance to their own nationals overseas and to migrants residing within their borders; offering free COVID-19 testing and treatment; limiting physical interaction and/or closing institutions; repatriating nationals through chartered flights; facilitating the speedy and safe travel of essential workers, such as seafarers; providing legal assistance to migrant workers who lost their jobs but had not been paid; or establishing relevant acts, measures, centres, and/or institutions to coordinate their actions at the national level to fight further spread of the virus.

A. Health-related responses

84. Regarding health-related responses, countries reported implementing both preventive and curative measures. Bangladesh, for example, initiated a COVID-19 telemedicine service for migrants in countries of destination. The Republic of Korea established the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters, which addressed the needs of international migrants as part of a coordinated national and local government response to COVID-19. Non-nationals were offered the same free COVID-19 testing given to Korean nationals. The Republic of Korea also mitigated fears and increased testing of irregular migrants by establishing a firewall between health officials and law enforcement authorities. Kazakhstan implemented COVID-19 health-related measures for children affected by migration, including hygiene practices to prevent infection in childcare settings.

B. Impacts on mobility and protection

85. Governments in almost all countries of the region imposed restrictions on international and internal movement. With borders closed, overseas migrants experienced further obstacles, such as being stranded and unable to return home, while those in countries of origin had been unable to travel abroad for employment. Bhutan, for example, closed international borders, enforced lockdowns, and consulted with agencies to facilitate the safe return of migrant workers. Bhutan relaxed immigration rules and regulations to extend the stay

of migrant workers, allowing them to change employers and workplaces and facilitating renewal of work permits of stranded migrants without imposing late renewal fees. Azerbaijan also closed state borders, suspended transport of passengers from other countries, and automatically extended the stays of migrants who wished to remain. Azerbaijan offered to regularize the status of undocumented migrants. Turkmenistan had supplied essential disinfectants and medical equipment at border points to ensure the security of border crossing and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

86. Regarding return and repatriation, Mongolia reported, for example, that as of December 2020, about 13,000 Mongolians overseas had filed requests with the diplomatic missions for immediate return. With the financial and logistical support of international organizations, many Mongolians who had been stranded and were unable to pay for return flights or quarantine facilities were able to return home. In Myanmar, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population collaborated with relevant Myanmar embassies, international organizations, recruitment agencies and civil society organizations to repatriate Myanmar migrant workers. Bhutan formed an intergovernmental committee tasked with the safe, dignified, and timely return of its migrant workers. Viet Nam also worked with foreign authorities to take stock of Vietnamese migrants overseas and repatriate them, if there was need. Indonesia developed guidelines for handling stranded vessel crew members and Indonesian citizens during the pandemic. The Philippines established the Green Lane Policy for Seafarers through a joint circular of various Philippine Government agencies to facilitate safe and timely travel of seafarers, including safe, expeditious disembarkation and crew changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. Economic and social impacts and support

87. According to the World Bank, COVID-19 triggered the deepest global recession in decades. In assessing the economic and social impacts on migrants in the region and abroad, countries reported on the hardships their nationals experienced overseas and the various measures taken to provide economic and social support.

88. For example, some countries had adopted comprehensive economic stimulus and recovery packages that took account of their overseas migrant workers. For instance, the economic stimulus package of Tonga provided financial support to migrants stranded overseas. The Philippine Congress responded to the pandemic with two laws, namely the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, Republic Act No. 11469³⁸ and the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act, Republic Act No. 11494³⁹ which addressed the economic and social needs of persons affected by the pandemic, including overseas migrant workers. The Philippines also provided direct assistance to foreign workers in need of support, including food packages, accommodation and travel assistance. Indonesia also distributed more than 500,000 food packages (March–October 2020) to Indonesian citizens overseas in need. Bangladesh allocated financial emergency support to migrant workers overseas and planned to offer stimulus soft loan packages to returned migrants and their families for longer term rehabilitation.

³⁸ Available at <http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/Bayanihan-to-Heal-as-One-Act-RA-11469.pdf>.

³⁹ Available at www.sec.gov.ph/covid-19-iatf/ra-11494-bayanihan-to-heal-as-one-actbayanihan-to-recover-as-one-act/.

89. To facilitate reintegration of returnees, the Government of the Philippines provided temporary employment (particularly in government agencies, health sector) or livelihood support. The Government of the Philippines also used reskilling/retooling programs to maintain the competitiveness of its overseas workers in both domestic and foreign labour markets during the pandemic. In Bhutan, returning migrants were granted monetary assistance, and Vietnamese migrant workers who had to return home were reimbursed for all their travel and quarantine expenses, and they received support finding work in Viet Nam. In Pakistan, a comprehensive reintegration strategy was developed to facilitate the return of migrant workers and their families, based on skill development/certification, re-employment, entrepreneurship and social inclusion.

90. Governments in the region also maintained close contact with their embassies overseas, holding regular meetings with representatives of the migrant community to discuss issues of concern, such as the weekly meetings held by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, its ambassadors, and representatives of the migrant community. The Philippines also offered online counselling and mental health services to returning overseas Filipinos. Bangladesh and Viet Nam provided emergency COVID-19 hotlines at its diplomatic missions for its citizens abroad.

91. While acknowledging the many challenges of COVID-19, Armenia also saw that the return of migrant workers was an opportunity to address demographic challenges and speed up national development projects, including those in the construction and infrastructure sectors. It had fast-tracked, reoriented, and expedited several renovation projects by employing returning migrant workers.

IX. Conclusions

92. Twenty-one ESCAP member States submitted voluntary responses to the national Global Compact for Migration review survey, reflecting on the state of implementation, achievements and challenges. The general level of commitment to the Global Compact was strong, as evident by the key actions taken and the key results achieved. Most of the member States had also integrated the 10 independent guiding principles into their agreements, policies, and programmes (table 2). Most countries reported that due to the linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact, Sustainable Development Goals were being more progressively integrated. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had tremendous health-related, mobility, and economic and social impacts on migrants and their families, member States reported on having responded in different ways and dedicated both financial and human resources to protect and support their nationals as well as foreign citizens at home and abroad.

93. In reviewing responses from 13 member States in the region regarding their priorities of implementing the objectives of the Global Compact, six objectives stand out (table 3). Eight member States prioritized skills development and mutual recognition of skills (Objective 18), while six prioritized providing timely and accurate information at all stages of migration (Objective 3), international cooperation and global partnerships (Objective 23) and availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration (Objective 5). Fair and ethical recruitment and safe conditions (Objective 6) was favoured by seven countries while the collection of data for evidence-based policymaking (Objective 1) was prioritized by five countries. Given the multidimensional nature of migration and the linkages between the objectives, further follow-up

and review is needed to support member States in addressing all Global Compact objectives.

94. Over two years after adopting the Global Compact, it is evident that States aim to achieve its goals and have already reached some important milestones. The collection of the survey responses for the Global Compact on Migration regional review and this summary report now constitute a wealth of data, information, policy examples, best practices, and methods of collaboration and partnership to further the implementation of the Global Compact in Asia and the Pacific. The present document is intended to provide background information for the deliberations among member States taking part in the 2021 Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.

Table 2

Integration of independent guiding principles in the implementation of the Global Compact of Migration⁴⁰

Country	People-centeredness	International cooperation	National sovereignty	Rule of law and due process	Sustainable development	Human rights	Gender-responsiveness	Child-sensitivity	Whole-of-government approach	Whole-of-society approach
Armenia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bangladesh	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bhutan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Indonesia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Japan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mongolia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Myanmar		✓	✓		✓					
Philippines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Republic of Korea	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nepal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tonga	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Turkmenistan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vanuatu	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Viet Nam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

⁴⁰ The answers only apply to the ESCAP member States which completed the ESCAP voluntary national Global Compact for Migration review and responded to the question regarding the independent guiding principles.

Table 3
Priorities of objectives in the Global Compact for Migration⁴¹

Country	Objectives of the Global Compact																						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Bangladesh	✓		✓			✓	✓					✓				✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Bhutan				✓			✓			✓	✓	✓											
Indonesia	✓		✓		✓	✓												✓					✓
Mongolia	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	
Myanmar			✓		✓	✓												✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Pakistan	✓																	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Philippines			✓			✓	✓					✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Republic of Korea					✓											✓							
Nepal						✓																	
Tonga		✓			✓													✓					
Vanuatu		✓			✓													✓					
Viet Nam	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓													✓

⁴¹ The answers only apply to the ESCAP member States which completed the ESCAP voluntary national Global Compact for Migration review and responded to the question regarding the prioritization of Global Compact objectives.