Summary of the Second Annual Meeting of the UN Network on Migration

Overview

The UN Network on Migration (Network) held its second annual meeting on 15-16 December (online). 283 participants (15 December) and 364 participants (16 December) representing the Network, civil society and other stakeholders, as well as Member States (on the second day), came together to discuss:
(i) supporting momentum for and visibility around the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), including on accurate narratives on migrants and migration; (ii) enhancing collaboration including with country and regional migration coordination mechanisms for support and implementation of the GCM; and (iii) identifying emerging challenges and next steps for the Network to improve its support of GCM implementation.

This short note summarises the recommendations raised in discussions in response to the guiding questions put forward for each session and outlines proposals for the next steps and the way forward.

SESSION - SETTING THE SCENE - SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES IN SUPPORTING GCM IMPLEMENTATION

Opening Remarks by the Network Coordinator

- The Network has made progress in key areas building on its foundational work in the first year; as well as adapting to emerging situations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, adjusting its priorities and modalities.
- The critical importance of GCM implementation at the country level was highlighted, including at local level. The role that the local governments play is significant to note as first line responders and to integrating migration into development policies and planning.
- The Network’s impact, including through the growing number of country-level Networks needs to be meaningful. To build on the gains of enhanced collaboration within the UNCTs and with other partners, more support from the global Network would be critical to implement much needed activities in support of GCM implementation.
- The significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants and migration has reaffirmed (the GCM’s applicability. Responding to the pandemic – both in the short and medium-term - should remain a priority for the Network through supporting GCM implementation, including on how to develop positive narratives in a new landscape shaped by the pandemic.
- To be impactful, actions to advance GCM implementation need to be aligned with all relevant frameworks including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, alongside pandemic recovery efforts.
- The need to further engage the full Network and stakeholders was highlighted. The Network’s listening sessions and webinars were deemed useful as a platform for engagement. Similarly, there is a need to allow for new spaces, avenues and fora to include thematic and operational issues that fall outside of the scope of the Network’s current thematic working groups.
• Measuring progress and impact of the work by the Network remains important, including through keeping thematic working groups in a time-bound nature aiming for specific deliverables. The Guiding Principles of the GCM remain critical for the work of the Network; the working modalities can vary – e.g. advisory groups on gender were referred as ideas.

Proposed next steps and way forward
• To continue the Network’s collective work on the COVID-19 response and recovery, including advocating for universal vaccine access and ensuring proper social protection measures. Such efforts should be further aligned to the 2030 Agenda and look at the broader picture on human mobility during the recovery phase.
• Importance of both country and local level implementation and follow-up and review of the GCM – calls for increased capacity building and technical support by the Network to Member States and the UN system, including resource needs for local initiatives for implementation.
• To further the involvement and collaboration with both the broader Network and stakeholders and link up with other relevant mechanisms (e.g. youth initiatives, local governments, GFMD Mayoral Mechanism, Global Mayoral Forum, Special Rapporteurs, etc.).
• To build on gains and create space for a wide range of stakeholders on dialogues; peer learning/learning sharing including through the Migration Network Hub being launched.
• To consider developing mechanisms to engage on outstanding key issues, e.g. advisory groups for gender, beyond the Network’s thematic working groups.

SESSION - ENHANCING COLLABORATION, INCLUDING WITH COUNTRY AND REGIONAL NETWORKS AND OTHER MIGRATION COORDINATION MECHANISMS

• With a growing number of country and regional Networks, many showcased experiences of successful collaboration and shared challenges, including on (a) response and support to governments on the pandemic; (b) supporting governments’ efforts on evidenced-based migration policies to implement the GCM; (c) partnerships between UNCTs and CSOs; and (d) partnerships with other migration coordination mechanisms.
• The structural and intersectional drivers that lead to exclusion and vulnerabilities of migrants, heightened by the pandemic, was highlighted.
• With the GCM rooted in the SDGs, it provides the framework to better manage migration at all levels. It should remain grounded in the work of the UNCTs and that of global and regional efforts and capacities aligned to the ongoing UN Development System Reform, collaboration and coordination to deliver coherent, integrated policy solutions for the SDGs and financing to achieve impacts at scale on the ground.
• Integrating migration into development, leveraging the growing number of the country-level initiatives (e.g. country Networks, the Champions initiative, Migration MPTF projects) should provide promising opportunities to the countries for achieving GCM objectives.
• The Network can better support the UNCTs to promote a whole of government and whole of society approach – including through an inclusive consultation with relevant stakeholders including migrant groups, community leaders, as well as supporting local governments to make migration more viable.
• The issue of migration data is important as reflected in different guidance, including the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF). The UN system should do better to collect, disaggregate and utilize data for evidence-based migration policy making.
The importance of peer learning was highlighted as useful across and among the regions and subregions, as well as through the Network mechanisms (such as through thematic working groups) to mutually strengthen initiatives (e.g. advocacy for alternatives to detention) at the global level.

Proposed next steps and way forward

- To further strengthen its collaboration with the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), in line with UN Reforms and whole of UN system approach, to bolster UNCTs’ efforts in support of Governments’ development plans, including as regards COVID-19 recovery and migrants and migration.
- To organize joint meetings with the Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UNCTs on migration and the SDGs, and to support the collaboration on transboundary issues between UNCTs and at sub-regional and regional levels.
- To support countries with ongoing GCM regional reviews and preparations toward the first International Migration Review Forum in 2022 (IMRF), including through promoting more visibility for Champion countries on sharing their good practices.
- To identify ways to support the capacity building needs of Governments and other stakeholders.
- To continue supporting more effective stakeholders’ participation in country and regional level Networks to enhance the impact of GCM implementation in the field.
- To promote and support effective peer learning on good practices and experiences, including through the Migration Network Hub and link up with relevant initiatives.

SESSION - IDENTIFYING EMERGING CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NETWORK

Remarks by the UN Deputy Secretary-General

- Climate change and migration should become one of the priorities for the Network in 2021. The GCM recognizes climate change as a key driver of irregular migration, refers to the Paris Agreement and other frameworks, underscoring needed policy coherence across these spheres. Looking at the structural inequalities combined with climate change, need to ensure people are safe from the negative effects of climate change and develop adaptation strategies.
- The COVID-19 pandemic remains a priority given its significant impacts on migrants and their communities at country, regional and global levels. In addition to the loss of jobs and reduced remittances, the pandemic has heightened vulnerabilities including with regards to discrimination and xenophobia towards migrants and other vulnerable communities, further limiting their access to services. Migration will remain critical during the recovery process as well – in addition to the continuing contributions migrants are making in COVID response and recovery, remittances/diaspora, skills for recovery including adapting to the future of work post-COVID. More dialogues between countries of origin and destination are required.
- Several other issues are suggested as priorities for 2021 – alternatives to immigration detention, migrant children and youth access to online education requiring efforts at national and regional levels, and addressing irregular migration including trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants.
- Important that the work of the Network links with other relevant initiatives (e.g. narrative on migration, gender, race).
• Resounding support was expressed for the Champions initiative involving a wider range of countries. National implementation of the GCM should be aligned with the national development plans and migration policies. The work of the Champions will also support engagement in the regional reviews and keep the momentum towards the IMRF.

• It is essential to have Network guidance for Member States on GCM implementation. Important to engage in peer learning as more experiences and best practices emerge, including through use of the Migration Network Hub. There is also a need to complement other regional processes and mechanisms which include peer learning in order to address the needs of migrants in different contexts.

• Strengthened efforts are needed in engaging regions more consistently and having regional concerns feed more into Network’s guidance and galvanize its products.

• The Network can more usefully provide meaningful dialogue at all levels (including trade unions, private sector, NHRIs, academia and research communities). The value-added of the Network is connecting people, ideas and solutions i.e. being a broker and bringing together everyone’s expertise.

Proposed next steps and way forward

• To continue working with the Champions – and encourage more countries to join.

• To increase support by the Network for the regional reviews and preparations for the IMRF, reigniting an active dialogue working also with the Champion initiative.

• To support Member States in the implementation of the GCM where needed through Network guidance and facilitating peer learning.

• To formulate the Network’s 2021 workplan considering the proposed priorities – (N.B. including responses to the ongoing survey). Some of the issues that have come up throughout include:
  - Gender (gender advisory group)
  - Racism
  - Climate change and migration including working in alignment with the UNFCCC’s taskforce on displacement
  - COVID-19 and mobility, including vaccine access for migrants

• To consider ways to build on the work of the Network’s thematic working groups, e.g. proposed forum on the future of regular pathways especially leading up to the IMRF.

• To try out different approaches for creating spaces for dialogue within and between stakeholders over the next year; link up with other relevant joint efforts.

• To support peer learning through the Migration Network Hub.

• To work on ways to build One Network Voice and increase the Network’s responsiveness with already available advocacy tools.