

United Nations Network on Migration

3rd Annual Meeting

Thursday, 9 December 2021: 9.30

Coordinator's Opening Remarks

As delivered

Dear colleagues,

I would like to warmly welcome you all to the third annual meeting of the UN Network on Migration.

This gathering comes exactly five months before the International Migration Review Forum, set to take place in New York from 10-13 May, to be preceded by multi-stakeholder hearing on 9 May 2022.

In my recent discussions with the President of the General Assembly, he assured me that the Migration Review Forum is one of his highest priorities, and from my side I assured him of the full Network's support. So, let us take these two days together to not only reflect on how far we have come, but what we must do to support Member States and all partners as they head towards the IMRF and above all, beyond the IMRF.

The Network, of course, has a particular mandate to support the Forum, not least through the express request of the General Assembly to the Secretary-General to provide guidance for its deliberations in his forthcoming biennial report. We must come away from the Migration Review Forum confident that we contributed to the best of our abilities in ensuring its success.

To my mind, a Forum to be proud of will have four main components.

First, that the occasion is used to conduct an honest review of the state of GCM implementation to date. This will require ensuring that the 360-degree nature of the Compact is respected – and that all objectives receive due attention. This is not always the case as we learned during the regional reviews that took place last year and this year.

Encouraging broad engagement and the submission or updating of voluntary reports that are the basis of truly inclusive consultations within governments and with all stakeholders must be a priority in the coming period.

Second, that we emerge from the Forum with a clear set of priorities in order to move forward. The Forum will, of course, look back and acknowledge achievements since Marrakech. But its integrity demands, also, recognizing the many challenges which remain in the way of for the full implementation the Compact and which impact so deleteriously the lives of too many migrants.

How we address these challenges will be a clear test for the Forum.

It is a truism that the GCM was born in a degree of turmoil amidst a growing recognition that more needed to be done to protect those in vulnerable situations; bring about greater predictability; address inaccurate, virulent narratives; and maximize the undoubted benefits of safe, orderly and regular migration.

A little over one year after the adoption of the GCM, WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic. Since then, 229 countries, territories and areas issued 111,456 travel restrictions measures, stranding millions around the world. In 2020 there were around two million fewer migrants.

Migrants were amongst those most affected by the pandemic, including through a lack of access to vital health services – vaccinations particularly - through job losses or having to accept more precarious working conditions. Many were stranded across borders with no safe means to return home.

Yet, migrants have also proved critical to the COVID-19 response in the health sector, in the delivery sector and the agricultural sector, with governments making critical exceptions to allow travel or extend work permits for essential workers.

That we are gathering virtually – when the plan had been to be in person – is testament to the fickle nature of the virus, and our ongoing struggles to learn new ways to manage mobility, if we want to move forward as we want. It is just a meeting for us: for many others, these disruptions take on an existential importance.

We will continue to face many challenges, and at times they will deepen. What is clear, however, is that the Compact is increasingly taking center stage in framing our discourse on how best to address those challenges. In focusing on the challenges, as we must, we have to not undermine the validity of the Compact as the means for doing so, but rather uphold the GCM.

Third precondition, that in the run-up to, and coming out of the Forum, there is a clear commitment on the part of states, stakeholders, and the UN system to take on additional concrete actions in implementing the Compact.

Last month, the Principals of the Network's Executive Committee agreed to a pledging initiative in advance of the IMRF. This pledging initiative will be launched on 17 December, and will be a key plank of our activities between now and the Forum itself.

More guidance on this aspect will be forthcoming imminently but, in essence, we are asking for pledges which are new, measurable, and linked to specific objectives and/or guiding principles.

They can take any nature – financial, process, policy, or technical – and can be made individually or jointly.

My belief is that this initiative will assist in generating discussion and impetus. It is important that we contribute to both, by engaging partners in government as to how they could contribute and thinking through what our own organizations could commit to and in the run-up to the Forum. It will be possible to make pledges directly onto the Network's website also.

Finally, a successful Forum must be an inclusive one. This has a number of key components:

- The whole of government guiding principle requires the involvement of local governments: their vantage point is vital to our understanding of the challenges that migrants and their communities face, and the solutions that exist to resolve these challenges.
- On the other side, the whole of society guiding principle requires that the full panoply of voices is heard and that the Forum – and the run-up to it – ensures the meaningful engagement of all. The Compact is notable for its extensive recognition of the need for collective engagement but here I would like to single out, in particular, two constituencies whose voices, to my mind, remain still too often overlooked: I'm speaking about the host communities and definitely - last but not least - the migrants, themselves.
- Finally, the Forum must be truly global. It must be open to all states and states from all regions must see the value of participating in it – of sharing experiences; of learning from others; and from seeing further the benefits of truly cooperative action.

Looking back, I am proud of how far we have come in what is in the scheme of things a short period of time, and I want to thank particularly all the agencies that have been engaged in the implementation of the GCM:

- Nearly 60 country and/or regional networks or other migration-related structures now established focusing on supporting Member States in their implementation of the GCM. That represents, in total, over one third of the UN Country Teams. We have begun to roll out dedicated training to UNCTs to integrate the GCM into their programming.
- An ever-expanding resource of thematic tools, carrying the imprimatur of the UN system-wide collaboration on issues such as alternatives to detention, bilateral labour migration agreements, returns and reintegration, and COVID-19 response and recovery, as well as on supporting States and stakeholders on integrating the GCM into their national planning.
- Utilizing new ways of working – the reality of virtual platforms such as this – to broaden our outreach, working to ensure that more and more voices are heard.
- Supporting a growing, geographically diverse group of GCM Champions who are increasingly – in Geneva, New York, and regionally – exercising leadership in promoting the Compact as the framework for which to guide migration governance.

Important as well is the progress we have made on the Migration Network Hub. We have started collecting policies and practices for its repository of practices that will be available for

the public by February 2022. The Hub's discussion spaces are being used by an increasing number of stakeholders to exchange ideas and will be central in the preparation of the Forum's round table discussions.

Finally, a Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund is now financing its first nine joint programmes covering all thematic areas with a few more funding allocation decisions anticipated to be made at our Steering Committee meeting next week on 14 December.

We shall discuss the Fund more in the Consultative Forum tomorrow morning. But here I would like to make the following observations:

- In its truly representative governance body; in being the first UN pooled fund with a dedicated human rights marker; in its alignment with overall UN reform, I think that the MPTF is seen as a market leader in collective financing around a specific given issue.
- This can be evidenced in the growth of our donor pool; in its breadth; and in the fact that overwhelmingly donors are returning to make additional contributions.
- With 32 joint programmes in the pipeline, the Fund is poised to make a difference, providing concrete examples of what the Compact can achieve if of course the Fund is given the means.

Dear colleagues,

Challenges do remain in how we work. In particular, I would point to the need to strengthen linkages within the Network between global, regional, and country levels; the need to ensure that the Migration Network Hub becomes the resource it is designed to be; our responsibility to be more agile in speaking with one voice, particularly on key emerging issues; and the importance of ensuring, in particular, greater engagement of grass-root migrants in our work.

We must work on our strong start to address these challenges.

In conclusion, we have a lot of work – yes, we have - in the coming months. We have devised a calendar – launching the Secretary-General's report in February and providing a platform for broad consultations on the full panoply of GCM issues – that will keep us very busy, but which is vital to ensure that we play our role in delivering on the Forum.

I wish you – all of us – in the run-up to May, and beyond.

Thank you.