



Conferencia Regional sobre Migración
Regional Conference on Migration

FIRST REGIONAL FORUM OF CHAMPION COUNTRIES IN THE AMERICAS: GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION

27 and 28 September 2023

Panama City, Republic of Panama
- Background Notes -

Session 1: Protection of migrants in vulnerable situations

- #7. Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration.
- #8 Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants
- #14. Enhance consular protection, assistance, and cooperation throughout the migration cycle.
- #15. Provide access to basic services for migrants.

Overview

Given the large, complex and dynamic of migration flows in the region, protecting the lives, dignity and human rights of migrants, particularly of those in vulnerable situations, is an enormous challenge, especially, but not exclusively, for transit countries that have witnessed record numbers of irregular entries.

In this context, tens of thousands of migrants find themselves in situations of great vulnerability due to dangerous conditions along the route, gender-based violence, abuse at the hands of traffickers and smugglers, the lack of shelter, and limited access to health and mental health services, among others. Women, boys, and girls, especially if unaccompanied, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTIQ+ community are the most exposed to these risks.

Saving lives, providing humanitarian assistance and protection throughout the migration cycle, as called for in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)¹ objectives 7, 8, 14 and 15. Regional cooperation and responsibility-sharing are needed to strengthen protection and assistance capacities that are often overburdened in both transit and destination countries.

Against this backdrop, Member States requested that the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM) develop actionable recommendations on missing migrants and provision of humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress to prevent loss of life in transit, to be included in the next Secretary General's report on GCM implementation². This session will help inform these recommendations.

¹ See [A/RES/73/195 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

² See [A/RES/76/266 Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum](#).

Methodology: Panel

First, the facilitator opens the panel discussion and introduces the presenter and the expert panelists. The presenter then briefly introduces the topic followed by expert panelists who can give a 3-minute talk or a 4-to-5-minute (maximum) presentation on some key aspects of the topic. The facilitator then initiates the discussion with one or maximum two follow-up questions for each expert who has 3 minutes to respond. The facilitator then turns to the audience in the room for specific questions or comments. Afterwards, the facilitator invites participants from champion countries outside the Americas who are online to briefly share their experience and/or make a comment.

The rapporteur presents the main ideas of the discussion at the end.

Note: To give many participants a chance to contribute and permit a fluid discussion all interventions must be concise. The facilitator will monitor the time.

Guiding Questions

1. What are good practices, policies and tools to save the lives of migrants and provide humanitarian assistance to migrants?
2. What are the main challenges to save the lives of migrants and provide humanitarian assistance and how could they be addressed?
3. What are the main priorities, challenges and opportunities for strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation on saving the lives of migrants and providing them humanitarian assistance?

Session 2a: Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and border governance

- #9. Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants.
- #10. Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.
- #11. Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner.

Overview

The Americas face major challenges with respect to human smuggling and trafficking in persons. Smugglers facilitate irregular migration along dangerous routes that expose migrants to risks of robbery, violence, crime and human rights violations including death. Trafficking networks also operate in the region, exploiting victims for purposes of forced labor, sexual exploitation and other abuses.

GCM objectives 9, 10 and 11 call for strengthening transnational efforts to combat smuggling and trafficking in persons, while promoting orderly and humane border governance.

Countries in the Americas have taken steps to counter trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants through legislation, policies, capacity development and regional initiatives. However, challenges persist due to limited capacities and coordination, barriers in the capacities of local actors to identify these crimes, a lack of clear referral mechanisms and responsibilities, insufficiency of data/information gathering and exchange, limited resources to provide assistance to victims, and low levels of prosecution.

Further efforts are needed to prosecute criminal networks, provide assistance to victims, address root causes, and ensure border security while upholding the rights and safety of migrants. Regional cooperation and partnerships with civil society are essential.

Methodology: Knowledge Café

The facilitator briefly introduces the topic. Participants will then work in three groups with each one focusing on one of the three guiding questions. Each group will nominate a person to report the findings of the round table to the other two groups.

After all three roundtables have presented their findings, participants will be able to comment on the findings of the other round tables.

The rapporteur will then present key findings from all three roundtables to the plenary.

Guiding Questions

1. What are good practices, policies and tools to combat smuggling, trafficking in persons and enhance border governance?
2. What are the main challenges for combatting smuggling, trafficking in persons and enhancing border governance and how could they be addressed?
3. What are the main priorities, challenges and opportunities for strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation on combatting smuggling, trafficking in persons and enhancing border governance?

Session 2b: Regular pathways for the admission and stay of migrants

- #4. Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation.
- #5. Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.
- #12. Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures.

Overview

Expanding regular migration opportunities remains a key priority in the Americas as limited visa options combined with often complex administrative procedures impede regular migration pathways for employment, education, family reunification and humanitarian purposes.

GCM objectives 4, 5 and 12 highlight needs to improve access to legal identity, diversify visa options, simplify immigration processes, and make migration procedures more efficient and predictable.

In recent months, some countries have adopted measures to expand and facilitate regular pathways. However, more efforts are required to reduce barriers, expand visa categories, decrease processing times, reduce costs, strengthen migrant worker protections, and provide more migration options for humanitarian needs and for those who already find themselves outside of their countries of origin in an irregular situation either in countries of transit or destination. Improving regional cooperation can help identify good practices to further expand regular migration opportunities.

Methodology: Knowledge Café

The facilitator briefly introduces the topic. Participants will then work in three groups with each one focusing on one of the three guiding questions. Each group will nominate a person to report the findings of the round table to the other two groups.

After all three roundtables have presented their findings, participants will be able to comment on the findings of the other round tables.

The rapporteur will then present key findings from all three roundtables to the plenary.

Guiding Questions

1. What are good practices, policies and tools to expand and facilitate regular pathways for stay and admission for (temporary) employment, education, family reunification and humanitarian purposes?
2. What are the main challenges to expand and facilitate regular pathways for stay and admission for (temporary) employment, education, family reunification and humanitarian purposes and how could these be addressed?
3. What are the main priorities, challenges and opportunities for strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation on expanding and facilitating regular pathways for stay and admission for (temporary) employment, education, family reunification and humanitarian purposes?

Session 3: Contributions of migrants to sustainable development

- #6. Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work.
- #16. Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion.
- #19. Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable Development.
- #20. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants.

Overview

Migration and migrants make significant economic, social and cultural contributions that are essential for sustainable development in the Americas. In countries of origin, migrant remittances are a lifeline for their families and communities. Their savings put food on the table and facilitate access to education, health care, and housing, among others. In many countries, migrant remittances constitute 19 or more percent of the Gross Domestic Product – a significant macroeconomic support.

Migrant networks drive trade, investment and transfer of skills between origin and destination countries. Evidence has shown the contribution of migration to sustainable development, via trade, entrepreneurship, tax payments and social security participation. For example, across Central America, North America and the Caribbean, a 1% rise in migrant stock in a country is associated with a 0.23% increase in exports on average. This is equivalent to an estimated increase of 7,751 USD in exports per additional migrant. Migrants also contribute diverse skills, perspectives and dynamism to societies across the region.

Realizing the full developmental potential of migration is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region. GCM objectives 6, 16, 19 and 20 aim to promote migrant protections, inclusion, diaspora engagement and reduced remittance costs to maximize benefits. While progress has been made, greater efforts are needed to uphold rights, foster social cohesion, reduce remittance fees, and strategically leverage migration's benefits for the SDGs.

Methodology: Panel

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The rapporteur presents the main ideas of the discussion at the end.

Note: To give many participants a chance to contribute and permit a fluid discussion all interventions must be concise. The facilitator will monitor the time.

Guiding Questions

1. What are good practices, policies and tools to harness the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development, including diaspora and remittances?
2. What are the main challenges in maximizing the potential of migrants' and migration contribution to sustainable development, including diaspora and remittances and how could these challenges be addressed?
3. What are the main priorities, challenges and opportunities for strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation on harnessing the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development, including diaspora and remittances?

Session 4a: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies

- #1. Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.

Overview

Strong migration data collection and analysis capabilities are essential for evidence-based policymaking, monitoring and evaluation of government policies as well as well-informed public discourse. Timely data provide insights on trends, migrant needs, labor market needs and the development impact of migration, among others.

The region has initiatives underway to address those gaps migration statistics and analysis. But continued efforts must strengthen national data collection approaches, promote comparable definitions, robust methodologies, build analytical expertise, facilitate access, and enable responsible regional data exchanges.

Investing to enhance data systems and collaborating with experts will bolster the evidence base for formulating policies that maximize the benefits of orderly, regular migration in the region.

Methodology: Knowledge Café

The facilitator briefly introduces the topic. Participants will then work in three groups with each one focusing on one of the three guiding questions. Each group will nominate a person to report the findings of the round table to the other two groups.

After all three roundtables have presented their findings, participants will be able to comment on the findings of the other round tables.

The rapporteur will then present key findings from all three roundtables to the plenary.

Guiding Questions

1. What are good practices, policies and tools to collect data on the size and characteristics of migration flows and migrants and including methodological innovations?
2. What are the main areas where data are particularly lacking and how can these challenges be addressed?
3. What are the main priorities, challenges and opportunities for strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation on migration data issues?

Segment 4b: Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration

- #21. Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration

Overview

Return and readmission of migrants has increased in prominence across Latin America and the Caribbean, as migration flows have risen. This has resulted in different forms of return – ranging from forced returns to voluntary returns.

GCM objective 21 stresses the need to cooperate on safe, humane return/readmission and enhance sustainable reintegration assistance. Countries in the region have developed policies and programs to receive and reintegrate returnees. However, significant capacity and resource gaps persist in providing tailored services, fostering economic, social and psychosocial reintegration support, while upholding rights. Importantly, there is need to work on reintegration at individual, community and structural levels considering the multiple impact of return migrant and the need for greater sustainability of interventions.

Enhanced regional coordination and responsibility-sharing are essential to strengthen returnee and reintegration support across countries. Investing in data collection, infrastructure, and partnerships with communities are also key to promote sustainable reintegration after return.

Methodology: Knowledge Café

The facilitator briefly introduces the topic. Participants will then work in three groups with each one focusing on one of the three guiding questions. Each group will nominate a person to report the findings of the round table to the other two groups.

After all three roundtables have presented their findings, participants will be able to comment on the findings of the other round tables.

The rapporteur will then present key findings from all three roundtables to the plenary.

Guiding questions

1. What are good practices, policies and tools to facilitate safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration? Please include experience in working with communities and civil society on reintegration.
2. What are the main challenges to facilitate safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration and how could these be addressed?
3. What are the main priorities, challenges and opportunities for strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation on facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration?

Cross-cutting Issues

As the GCM is based on a set of cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles interventions and discussions are encouraged to refer to them as appropriate:

- a. **People-centred.** The Global Compact carries a strong human dimension, inherent to the migration experience itself. It promotes the well-being of migrants and the members of communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. As a result, the Global Compact places individuals at its core;
- b. **International cooperation.** The Global Compact is a non-legally binding cooperative framework that recognizes that no State can address migration on its own because of the inherently transnational nature of the phenomenon. It requires international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue. Its authority rests on its consensual nature, credibility, collective ownership, joint implementation, follow-up and review;
- c. **National sovereignty.** The Global Compact reaffirms the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction, in conformity with international law. Within their sovereign jurisdiction, States may distinguish between regular and irregular migration status, including as they determine their legislative and policy measures for the implementation of the Global Compact, taking into account different national realities, policies, priorities and requirements for entry, residence and work, in accordance with international law;
- d. **Rule of law and due process.** The Global Compact recognizes that respect for the rule of law, due process and access to justice are fundamental to all aspects of migration governance. This means that the State, public and private institutions and entities, as well as persons themselves, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and are consistent with international law;

- e. **Sustainable development.** The Global Compact is rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and builds upon its recognition that migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the sustainable development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. Migration contributes to positive development outcomes and to realizing the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially when it is properly managed. The Global Compact aims to leverage the potential of migration for the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the impact this achievement will have on migration in the future;
- f. **Human rights.** The Global Compact is based on international human rights law and upholds the principles of non-regression and non-discrimination. By implementing the Global Compact, we ensure effective respect for and protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, across all stages of the migration cycle. We also reaffirm the commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance, against migrants and their families;
- g. **Gender-responsive.** The Global Compact ensures that the human rights of women, men, girls and boys are respected at all stages of migration, that their specific needs are properly understood and addressed and that they are empowered as agents of change. It mainstreams a gender perspective and promotes gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, recognizing their independence, agency and leadership in order to move away from addressing migrant women primarily through a lens of victimhood;
- h. **Child-sensitive.** The Global Compact promotes existing international legal obligations in relation to the rights of the child, and upholds the principle of the best interests of the child at all times, as a primary consideration in all situations concerning children in the context of international migration, including unaccompanied and separated children;
- i. **Whole-of-government approach.** The Global Compact considers that migration is a multidimensional reality that cannot be addressed by one government policy sector alone. To develop and implement effective migration policies and practices, a whole-of-government approach is needed to ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government;
- j. **Whole-of-society approach.** The Global Compact promotes broad multi-stakeholder partnerships to address migration in all its dimensions by including migrants, diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, national human rights institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance.