



Executive Committee Principals (Virtual) Meeting

Monday, 29 January 2024

09.00 – 10.30 (NY time)/15.00 – 16.30 (GVA time)

Summary

Participants:

Ms. Amy E. Pope, DG/IOM, Network Coordinator

Mr. Volker Türk, HC/OHCHR; Ms. Peggy Hicks, Director/OHCHR

Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator/UNDP; Ms. Shoko Noda, ASG and Director of UNDP Crisis Bureau

Ms. Ghada Waly, ED/UNODC

Ms. Maria Francesca Spatolisano, ASG/Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, DESA

Ms. Manuela Tomei, Assistant DG/Governance, Rights and Dialogue, ILO

Ms. Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, AHC/UNHCR

Ms. Hannan Sulieman, Deputy ED/UNICEF

Ms. Mamta Murthi, Vice President for Human Development/World Bank

Ms. Ailan LI, Assistant DG/WHO

The agenda of the meeting included the following items:

- The “Politics of Migration”; and
- The route-based approach, including through the complementary implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees.

In opening remarks, the Coordinator provided an update on the Migration MPTF; and highlighted upcoming key events in 2024, including the Annual Meeting, the Regional Reviews, the Secretary-General’s Report on GCM implementation, and developing a new Network workplan.

The Coordinator also suggested that the Principals continue to meet twice a year, with regular exchanges in-between.

The “Politics of Migration”

Introduced by High Commissioner Türk, 2024 will see some 70 national elections many of which have migration and migrants as a significant element of the political discourse, frequently negatively and unlinked to fact.

Data and evidence on migration can be critical to inform public opinion and to dispel myths about migration. The Network needs to improve how it communicates about migration acknowledging also its nuanced and complex nature. There can be better means to address fear-based narratives, for example through human-centred stories to help debunk fears.



The Principals discussed the importance in coming together with a strong voice, with the High Commissioner suggesting that the Network consider joint statements in certain situations.

As suggested next steps, the Network will compile an overview of the different relevant campaigns and initiatives amongst its members and develop a set of common messages for use both individually and collectively, including statements in response to specific situations involving migrants. Engaging Resident Coordinators was also highlighted, as was a recommendation to organize a technical meeting on communications and advocacy with relevant colleagues.

Action Points:

- Produce an overview of the different campaigns and initiatives amongst Network members.
- Develop a set of common messages.
- Organize technical meeting on communications and advocacy with relevant colleagues.

Route-based approach including through the complementary implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR)

The topic was supported by a background note (see attached). The Coordinator recognized UNHCR and IOM's longstanding joint work on the route-based approach and recommended that the Network provide support to migrants through a route-based approach within the framework of the GCM, as an inclusive way of working, drawing on the expertise of humanitarian and development partners inside the UN and out.

Assistant High Commissioner Menikdiwela emphasized that the route-based approach involves the complementary implementation of both compacts not only regarding issues common to both frameworks but also in distinct areas which are mutually reinforcing for the GCR and the GCM. She stressed the work already being done by the Network on several aspects on complementary implementation: alternatives to detention, xenophobia, smuggling and trafficking, pathways and reaffirmed that UNHCR stands ready to support. In some situations, where both Compacts intersect, the Assistant High Commissioner also encouraged engagement in existing platforms at the regional and country level including the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela and Issues-Based Coalitions as well as UN country teams.

On the route-based approach, the Coordinator also referred to exchanges with the UNODC Executive Director Ms Ghada Waly prior to the Principals Meeting, in particular, her suggestion that the Principals discuss prioritizing some focused work on specific migration routes, for the Network to be more operational and have a visible footprint, for example in West Africa. Further elaborating on this, Ms Waly explained that there are some routes that can facilitate reflection on strengthening key approaches advocated by the Network, e.g. creation of regular pathways. Migration routes within West Africa, for example, demonstrate that despite existing free movement agreements in the region, there is still a high reliance on migrant smugglers because of inaccessibility of travel and identity documents in source countries and widespread corruption at borders. Ms. Waly



also highlighted that the route-based approach should factor in the impact of digital tools and social media – some migrant smuggling routes are completely controlled from remote locations unrelated to the route, because of the impact of technology. She recommended that the Network consider launching a surge capacity pool – an inter-agency team ready to promptly respond to crises as they arise.

Ms. Ailan Li, Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), emphasized the importance of the route-based approach in promoting international collaboration and ensuring continuous access to essential health services and products such as vaccines. Li noted that in March 2023, WHO convened a second high-level meeting on the health needs of migrants and refugees in collaboration with its regional offices for Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the European Region, with support from WHO's Department of Health and Migration. The meeting focused on strategies to guarantee equitable access to healthcare for refugees and migrants along migration routes, aligning with universal health coverage principles and ensuring continuity of care. Additionally, plans are underway for a third high-level meeting on the all-route approach in the WHO African Region in 2024.

Furthermore, in October 2023, WHO, in collaboration with 200 academic institutions, IOM and UNHCR, launched the first research agenda on health and migration. This initiative aims to provide evidence-based insights to counter misinformation and shape a positive narrative around migration. The research findings will serve as a foundation for advocacy efforts and contribute to fostering a more informed understanding of migration-related health issues.

Ms. Mamta Murthi from the World Bank mentioned that, as highlighted in the latest World Bank World Development Report on migration, current polycrises are increasing migration pressures with regional and strategic implications. In this moment there are opportunities for both destination and origin countries. For destination countries these include helping compensate for demographic imbalances, as aging countries will need more workers to address fiscal deficits in pension systems and labour shortages. For origin countries, migration provides an opportunity to develop skills. Additionally, remittances provide a crucial income for families and has an important development impact. But migration can also pose serious challenges in human, economic, and social terms including the potential risk of brain drain, and when refugees or migrants remain in irregular status at destination.

Sound policy interventions, such as Global Skills Partnership schemes (GSPs) can help mitigate these concerns and can also reduce the flow of irregular migrants in increasingly strained routes and corridors. The World Bank is planning to support at least 10 GSPs in 2024. The World Bank intends to partner as much possible with UN agencies in this agenda, and in ensuring GCM implementation at regional and local level.

Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Sulieman, affirmed that route-based approaches are central to UNICEF's way of working, and one of UNICEF's core programming principles is to provide children on the move with a continuum of support and protection across their entire migratory journey. UNICEF is pleased to be working with IOM and Save the Children to develop a global programme proposal focused on making migration management systems more child-sensitive, taking a migratory routes-based approach. UNICEF recommended that the Network incorporate the route-based approach



as a part of its work in certain thematic areas and in select regions, but it should make sure to build on existing structures and existing work and should not make a complete shift of focus to a route-based approach. UNICEF is supportive of the route-based approach by the Network as long as it is used strategically, on select thematic areas - and in the settings in which the Regional Network is ready. UNICEF offered its support to the Network, to share experience of routes-based approaches for children. UNICEF's role with children, regardless of immigration status, often means playing a bridging role between the agencies with specific mandates for refugees or migrants – which has been particularly helpful in mixed migration contexts.

Ms. Manuela Tomei, Assistant Director-General, ILO stressed ILO's full support for the initiative, noting that it could help bring strong action to the field level and show the value addition of the UN system working as a whole. She mentioned ILO's experience working in corridor approaches and could share lessons learned from these experiences. Ms. Tomei noted that advancing decent work in countries of origin was an important trigger for development dynamics, while a focus on decent work for migrant workers abroad, in addition to reducing abuse and exploitation also had benefits for employers, who were able to find the skills they needed, reduced informality and could also address negative perceptions of migrant workers. She emphasised that key next steps would include identifying a small number of relevant routes and identify criteria for selection, which could include routes where all EC agencies are working and where there are low-hanging fruits. She also mentioned the importance of ensuring that the Network was organised to promptly address and intervene in crises when called upon by the international community.

OHCHR welcomed the discussion on routes-based approach and noted that proposed routes should not only encompass those in which a 'mixed movement' profile is evident but also include routes that are precarious and multifaceted in other ways that impact on human rights. OHCHR proposed as priority corridors Mexico and Central America, the Mediterranean Sea, South Asia-GCC/Southeast Asia and the Pacific, due to the death toll and human rights abuses and violations of migrants taking place there. OHCHR highlighted the crucial need to consult country and regional Networks on the proposals to ensure a bottom-up approach. OHCHR also stressed the importance of ensuring human rights protection for all people using these routes; advocating for the expansion of pathways for safe and regular migration along these routes; and enhancing efforts to confront policies and narratives that are security focused and criminalize migrants and human rights defenders. OHCHR offered its contribution to mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to the routes-based approach, including by monitoring and reporting human rights abuses and violations along these routes, and by engaging all relevant stakeholders, including CSOs, NHRIs and migrants themselves.

Ms. Shoko Noda, Assistant Secretary General and Director of the UNDP Crisis Bureau, reaffirmed UNDP's commitment as an active member of the Network to support UN Member States in the implementation of the GCM. She stated that the route-based approach presented in the meeting has to be an inclusive approach, which encompasses a target group that goes beyond migrants, for instance by including members of the host communities. She was glad to read in the concept note that the route-based approach should go beyond "only" humanitarian interventions, as it is crucial to focus on sustainable development. Furthermore, the route-based approach should not only look at migrant flows, but also at migrant stocks. Often people do not keep moving but stay in a



country. They must be integrated, granted access to services and given permission to work. These tasks go beyond mere protection of migrants, including refugees. To address these tasks effectively, a route-based approach has to be complemented by a long-term perspective on migration such as schooling, social protection and decent jobs.

Ms Noda continued that the Network must think about whether the route-based approach works in every context. Most migrants do not use irregular routes and skip transit countries by flying from the country of origin to the country of destination by plane. In other cases, the country of destination is a neighbouring country. In these constellations route-based approach appears to be not an appropriate approach.

In the ensuing discussion, the Principals tasked the working level to draw up a proposal in consultation with national and regional Networks by which to trial Network support to a route-based approach for GCM implementation, with proposed timelines. The proposal should, within the framework of the GCM, focus on where there are good partnerships with Resident Coordinators and country/regional Networks and/or UNCTs; and map actions already underway to avoid duplication. The Network should incorporate the route-based approach in select regions, rather than have a complete shift of focus. Further, the Network should not move away from work on thematic areas of GCM implementation just because these particular thematic areas do not lend themselves to the routes-based approach. The proposal should focus on rights-based interventions which strengthen policy coherence along migration routes, including among others creating decent work at home and abroad, providing services to people on the move, ensuring child-centred approaches, considering the impact of climate change and conflicts, promoting socio-economic integration and supporting host communities. As laid out in the supporting concept note a route-based approach should go beyond humanitarian interventions and also focus on sustainable development. This proposal should be submitted to Principals by 1 May.

Action Points:

- Executive Committee working level to draw up a proposal to trial Network support to a route-based approach, within the framework of the GCM, working with partners at country and regional levels, in select regions. The proposal, with timelines, should be submitted to the Principals by 1 May 2024, in accordance with the criteria as explained above.

Any other business

- ASG Spatolisano inquired about the request from the Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) to participate in the Executive Committee on a rotating basis. It was also suggested to invite the RECs when a particular topic of interest warranted their participation. She indicated that UN/DESA supported the request in either format and inquired about the views of the other participants. No objections were raised. The issue will be taken forward by the Coordinator.