

a. Has your government developed a GCM national implementation plan or integrated the GCM and its guiding principles into existing frameworks, plans and policies? If so, please elaborate on the process. If not, please indicate if your government has plans to do so, and what the envisaged process is.

In December 2022, in accordance with Article 53 of GCM, the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SMS) adopted an action plan for 2023-2026 to support the implementation of GCM in Azerbaijan. The plan consists of 58 measures based on 10 guiding principles and 23 goals of GCM. Also, its implementation mechanism has been determined, and a report on its implementation for 2023 has already been prepared. The plan covers a number of actions including but not limited to simplification of legal migration procedures, prevention of irregular migration, capacity building in migration sphere, strengthening partnership, data management, etc. Concurrently, this plan has been developed in adherence to existing international legal and policy frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

b. How has or will your government integrate the recommended actions to accelerate the implementation of the GCM as set out in the IMRF 2022 Progress Declaration into their relevant national policies and plans and reflected in their engagements in relevant international fora (e.g. High-Level Political Forum, Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, COP Climate Change Conference, etc.)? Furthermore, please indicate how the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches were implemented and/or advanced in this regard.

Azerbaijan's national strategy - "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development" (2021) highlights IDPs as a central focus of the strategy. Section 4 of the strategy outlines the Government of Azerbaijan's approach to the return of internally displaced persons. The strategy envisions the establishment of family resource centers and community resource centers. In addition, the State Program emphasizes two primary objectives: ensuring sustainable settlement and facilitating the "reintegration into economic activity" of the displaced population. The associated State Program and Action Plan, which align with this pillar of the strategy, are designed with consideration for different age groups, particularly focusing on activities tailored for displaced youth and their active participation. Furthermore, the State Program outlines a comprehensive work plan spanning from 2022 to 2026, which primarily involves the construction of new housing, sustainable communities, and essential infrastructure to support the return migration to Karabakh.

The State Program includes specific measures such as the sustainable settlement of families, the establishment of a dedicated hotline to provide support to the returning population, the implementation of social protection projects, and the active development of employment programs. Furthermore, the State Program integrates climate considerations into the process of IDP return and the reintegration of territories into economic activities. Notable environmental provisions include the expansion of

renewable energy sources, the establishment of "green energy zones," and a strong emphasis on environmental protection and safety. The program also emphasizes the incorporation of environmental concerns into urban planning and the construction of new residences and buildings, advocating the utilization of green technologies and promoting environmental efficiency.

Furthermore, the Employment Strategy for 2019–2030, cites strengthened social protection of migrant workers as a priority area for focus in improving labour market regulations.

As Chair of the Almaty Process for 2023-2024, Azerbaijan has included facilitating the implementation of GCM in priorities of its chairmanship taking into consideration its experience as a "Champion country" on GCM implementation.

Furthermore, pursuant to the commitments made in GCM and renewed in the IMRF Progress Declaration, Azerbaijan aims to expand knowledge base and capacities of the Process's participants to develop inclusive climate change and migration policies upholding the human rights of migrants in this context and incorporate the nexus between human mobility and climate change into national adaptation plans. Moreover, keeping in mind that whole-of-society, whole-of government and international cooperation approaches are among the main principles laid out in GCM, Azerbaijan plans to foster dialogue among Member and Observer States of the Process at different levels in order to support initiatives on mainstreaming migration into development policies.

Azerbaijan engages civil society organizations (CSOs) in agenda setting and implementation of migration-related issues through the Public Council consisting of nine members of civil society. The Public Council under the SMS was founded in 2015, and meets internally on a quarterly basis, and at least twice yearly with the SMS directly.

The private sector is also engaged in agenda setting and implementation of migration-related issues through the Advisory Council under the SMS. Established in 2018, the Advisory Council serves as the link between the private sector and the SMS, with the aim to increase transparency in the issuance of work permits and to improve communication with employers. This Council includes large companies, members of international chambers of commerce, employers' associations, and entrepreneurial organizations.

Another important initiative to ensure whole-of-society approach in Azerbaijan was establishment of the Migrant Council under SMS. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure more active participation of migrants residing in the country in the migration management of Azerbaijan, to improve the effectiveness of the protection of their human rights and freedoms, the quality of services provided to foreigners and stateless persons and to ensure transparency, as well as to assess the impact of the decisions taken in the sphere of migration on daily life of foreigners. The establishment of Migrant Council has received great interest among migrant communities. Migrants believe that

they may contribute a lot to further strengthening of migration management in Azerbaijan.

Moreover, as COP29 chair Azerbaijan will explore opportunities to reflect the goals and core principles of the GCM during the engagement within this fora.

c. Please list some examples of achievements, promising practices and lessons learned that relate to national, inter- and sub-regional collaboration to the implementation of the GCM.

Azerbaijan is among the first countries in the region to support and join GCM, became “Champion country” on its implementation, as well as to establish UN Network on Migration at national level, and contributed with a comprehensive report for voluntary review of GCM (2021), as well as updated it (2022).

GCM Championship has remarkably affected the active engagement of Azerbaijan in activities dedicated to the International Migration Review Forum 2022. Azerbaijan also supports the **pledging initiative** launched by the UN Network on Migration which takes a long-view approach in encouraging Member States to make pledges which will improve conditions for migrants and their communities. So far Azerbaijan has undertaken more than **10 pledges**, including but not limited to process-oriented activities to further support implementation of the GCM in order to ensure the long-term sustainability and to address migration in all its dimensions. Recently another pledge has been added to this number by **donating** to the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF).

In order to make a tangible commitment to advancing the implementation of GCM through a pledge, the governments of Azerbaijan, Luxembourg and Portugal, in their capacity as GCM Champion countries, convened a virtual event for the 56 Member States of the UNECE on 1 February 2022. The event involved stakeholders in inclusive IMRF preparations, this in turn responding to a process-oriented commitment called for by the pledging initiative. Furthermore, in the framework of this event **video message** of representatives of Azerbaijan, Luxembourg, Portugal and several NGOs on call to the other Member States to join “Make a pledge” campaign was recorded and posted on social networks. Moreover, at the beginning of 2023, a report was submitted to the UN Migration Network regarding the implementation of pledges taken by Azerbaijan on the implementation of GCM.

Following this joint pledge Azerbaijan has organized series of events to celebrate the Migration week (14-18 February 2022) in order to contribute to the globally supported occasions and promote the migration agenda. The **special section** was created on the State Migration Service’s official webpage in order to raise awareness on IMRF, GCM and “Champion countries” initiative.

Furthermore, in order to encourage the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches, SMS with support of the Representation of IOM in Azerbaijan organized the **consultations for various stakeholders**. These multi-stakeholder consultations were composed of three discussions focusing on cross-societal and cross-government collaboration for more effective implementation of GCM, as well as raising awareness on IMRF and “Champion countries” initiative. Representatives of relevant government agencies, NGOs, media, migrant communities, academia, as well as youth, students and volunteers participated in the consultations. Thus, these were the most extensive consultations on GCM organized in the region.

Azerbaijan has submitted a number of **best practices** in various areas of migration in the Repository of Practices launched by the UN Network on Migration to contribute to the Migration Network Hub, which could be useful for other stakeholders and partners, as well as could bring value in terms of addressing key challenges of human mobility if applied appropriately. In addition, on the eve of the first SDG Summit held in New York in September 2023, the good practice on establishing the Migration Council in Azerbaijan, which is at the intersection of GCM and SDGs, was posted in the Repository of Practices on the UNNM website.

Also, in February 2022, at the initiative of the State Migration Service, an extensive **social media campaign** was organized to inform the international community about the best practices of our country in the implementation of GCM and the importance it attaches to multicultural values. In total, more than 350 posts were shared on social network during this social media campaign.

Moreover, in the framework of the "**Support for the establishment of a Regional Training Center on Migration in Azerbaijan**" project implemented jointly by the State Migration Service and the International Organization for Migration from November 1, 2020 to April 30, 2023, the establishment of the Regional Training Center on Migration (RTCM) which aims to enhance the capacities in migration management at the regional level was initiated.

Establishment of RTCM is a flagship initiative aimed at strengthening capacity building of persons working in migration field, academia, media, youth and other interested parties in neighboring countries of Azerbaijan, as well as countries of Central Asia, Middle East and Eastern Partnership. GCM and SDGs are the central elements of the content delivered by the Center.

On March 1, 2023, during the official visit of former Director General of IOM in Azerbaijan "Memorandum of Understanding between the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the International Organization for Migration on cooperation related to the Regional Training Center on Migration (RTCM)" was signed. The

Memorandum was characterized as an important step taken in the direction of ensuring the future activity of the Center based on the curriculum designed in line with the international standards at the regional level.

On the top of its contributions Azerbaijan has conducted **2-day regional training** on International Migration Law in RTCM devoted to Migration Week and IMRF 2022 with participation of representatives from 10 region countries, during which broad information on GCM and IMRF has been presented to the participants.

To foster **international cooperation and global partnerships** for safe, orderly and regular migration, agreements for cooperation on migration was signed with the Republic of Belarus (2019), the Republic of Kazakhstan (2019) and Turkmenistan (2020), the Republic of Uzbekistan (2022), and Memorandums of Understanding with the Kingdom of Belgium (2019) and Hungary (2023). Currently, signing of relevant documents on cooperation with 7 other countries is underway.

Azerbaijan is also currently actively participating in the development of **a mechanism of indicators** for assessing the implementation of GCM.

For many years Azerbaijan was unable to implement its international obligations due to occupation of its territories. However, given the new realities in the region Azerbaijan also will extend implementation of GCM and SDGs to the liberated territories.

d. What are the main gaps and challenges to existing inter- and cross-regional collaboration on the implementation of the GCM?

In some cases, there are certain difficulties in strengthening inter- and cross-regional partnership due to the lack or underdevelopment of whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches within the countries, which leads to difficulties in sharing responsibility for implementation of GCM. In this regard, RTCM can play the role of a regional platform for building capacity and enhancing skills and knowledge on GCM, becoming a hub for strengthening cooperation, conduct discussions and exchange of practice on implementation of GCM in the region.

There is also a need to develop more joint regional or interregional initiatives, as well as platforms for regular discussion and exchange of views and ideas on the implementation of GCM and contribute to strengthening in-depth knowledge and skills on GCM at the regional level.

e. Outline areas (GCM objectives and/or guiding principles) where the region would benefit from strengthened cooperation in terms of finance, capacity-building, policy advice, data gathering and analysis, technology, multi-stakeholder partnerships, etc.

Collecting, sharing and analyzing of the migration data (Objective 1), minimizing the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin (Objective 2), enhancing availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration (Objective 5), facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work (Objective 6), promoting of faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants (Objective 20), strengthening international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration (Objective 23), as well as whole-of-government, whole-of society and international cooperation guiding principles, etc.