

Session 2

Background note



The second session of the Regional Review for the members of the United Nations Regional Commission for the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) will offer space for discussion of progress made in accomplishing objectives 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 21 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)¹.

This background note provides examples of progress and challenges in regional, sub-regional and intra-regional collaboration towards the implementation of the GCM by the UNECE Member States drawn from inputs from the Regional Network on Migration; voluntary GCM reports submitted to the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF)²; the IMRF Progress Declaration³; consultations with stakeholders; and information available on the Migration Network Hub.⁴

Introduction

Migration trends in the UNECE Region continue to challenge efforts to achieve safe, orderly, and regular migration, presenting significant risks to vulnerable populations on the move. More than 50,000 migrants and refugees have lost their lives on their journeys since 2014 worldwide. Europe has been the deadliest destination; 29,126 deaths or disappearances were recorded within Europe and at its external borders on sea routes, followed by North America with 5,806 recorded deaths and disappearances.⁵

In 2021, about 35,200 children arrived along the main mixed movement routes to Europe, most of whom were unaccompanied migrant and refugee children, amounting to an estimated 67 per cent of the total.⁶

Between 2002 and 2022 there were 206,725 individual cases of victims of trafficking globally: 9.5 per cent of those of known citizenship were from a UNECE country, and 69.2 per cent of known gender were women.⁷ Surveys with migrants across countries of first arrival along the Mediterranean routes in 2023 revealed that they experience numerous challenges, including physical violence, being held against their will, being forced to work, or working without getting the expected (or any) payment.⁸

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

² [Voluntary National Review Reports](#)

³ [IMRF Progress Declaration \(A/RES/76/266\)](#)

⁴ <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/migration-network-hub>

⁵ <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

⁶ [https://reliefweb.int/report/world/refugee-and-migrant-children-europe-accompanied-unaccompanied-and-separated-overview-trends-january-december-2022#:~:text=Arrivals%20to%20Europe%20in%202022,compared%20to%202021%20\(24%2C147\)](https://reliefweb.int/report/world/refugee-and-migrant-children-europe-accompanied-unaccompanied-and-separated-overview-trends-january-december-2022#:~:text=Arrivals%20to%20Europe%20in%202022,compared%20to%202021%20(24%2C147))

⁷ The nationality and gender data is not available in all cases; therefore, may not be representative of the entire population. For more information please see: <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/>

⁸ [Europe Mixed Migration Dashboard | Displacement Tracking Matrix \(iom.int\)](#)

The war in Ukraine has concerns about human trafficking and smuggling⁹, and facilitators are often involved in the process of obtaining authorization for work and residence for migrant workers from Central Asia, increasing the risk of exploitation or trafficking.

A route-based approach could provide one means by which to analyse progress on the GCM objectives under consideration in this session. A route-based approach envisions simultaneous interventions from Member States and other stakeholders at all points of key mixed movement routes, including countries of origin, transit and destination.¹⁰ The route-based approach is a revitalized way to address movements of migrants and/or refugees during their journeys through concrete measures that Member States and Observers and other international, regional and national stakeholders can implement with support from the United Nations Network on Migration. The route-based approach aligns with the GCM's comprehensive view of migration at all points of the journey, involving countries of origin, transit and destination, building on the complementarity of the two Global Compacts¹¹.

Overview of progress

Through the adoption of the GCM, Member States recognized the need for migrants to have access to proof of nationality and relevant documentation, however accessible and non-discriminatory civil registration systems must be provided to fulfil this commitment. To this end, Portugal has implemented a central online consular management system contributing to a faster and more focused consular service, eliminating language barriers and reducing costs for applicants.¹²

There has been extensive progress towards the achievement of the GCM across the UNECE region, including as it relates to Member States' commitments to protect the lives and uphold and respect the human rights of migrants. In line with this commitment, and by taking proactive steps to save migrants' lives, North Macedonia and Serbia, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, established a mechanism to offer medical and humanitarian assistance along their borders.¹³ At least 35,000 people have perished or gone missing along migration routes worldwide since the Compact's adoption, the vast majority on their way to the UNECE region, indicating the strong need for further efforts to protect the lives of refugees and migrants.¹⁴

In committing to prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons, the IMRF Progress Declaration highlights as a priority the need to break the cycle of migrants' vulnerability to exploitation leading to trafficking in persons.¹⁵ Effective, evidence-based communication with communities at risk of embarking on dangerous journeys, predictable search and rescue and the provision of humanitarian assistance, might contribute to curbing trafficking within and to the region. For example, a joint programme admitted to the pipeline of the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (M-MPTF) aims to improve knowledge and skills among prospective migrants in Tajikistan through financial literacy, courses and the use of modern information platforms. The project also strengthens regional cooperation amongst states and the diaspora.¹⁶

Well-functioning border management also has the potential to strengthen regional cooperation, facilitating safe and regular cross-border movements of people and goods. This requires integrated, streamlined and human rights-compliant procedures at borders, whether land, sea or air, as well as effective information

⁹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2022/GLOTIP_2022_web.pdf

¹⁰ UNHCR's Grandi on need for 'panoramic' approach to mixed movements, 21 April 2023 <https://www.unhcr.org/news/speeches-and-statements/unhcr-s-grandi-need-panoramic-approach-mixed-movements>

¹¹ GCM Resolution, paragraph 4

¹² <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/practice/new-model-consular-management-nmcm>

¹³ <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/practice/red-cross-north-macedonia-humanitarian-service-point-lojane>

¹⁴ <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>

¹⁵ IMRF Progress Declaration, paragraph 55

¹⁶ [M-MPTF Pipeline, page 59](#)

sharing to manage mobility, counter the smuggling of human beings, and fight transnational crime.¹⁷ States have committed to combat smuggling networks' criminal activities and impunity and avoid criminalizing those being smuggled.¹⁸ In this regard, an Italian civil society organization's pledge to provide capacity-building programmes to government officials and other stakeholders in International Migration law, including on the rights and obligations of migrant workers, protection at sea, prevention and countering of trafficking and smuggling, border management, detention and alternatives to detention, return, integration, and reintegration of migrants, might support with the advancement of Member States' commitments.¹⁹

At the IMRF, Member States recognized the challenges in ensuring alternatives to detention with full respect for human rights, that alternatives to detention must be sought as a measure of first resort to uphold human rights and international law, and highlighted progress made to modernize border-crossing points, including by simplifying procedures and upgrading infrastructure and equipment to reduce immigration detention.²⁰ The United Nations Network on Migration workstream on alternatives to migration detention has supported Member States and stakeholders by organizing peer learning events, the developing policy guidance and the mobilizing pledges. Yet, the detention of migrants continues to be used beyond the very limited circumstances in which it is permitted under international law.

The Progress Declaration acknowledges that safe and dignified returns, readmission and sustainable reintegration in full compliance with international human rights law have proven to be difficult and complex in many cases.²¹ Addressing drivers of migration in countries of return, including fostering employment opportunities and enhancing cooperation between host countries and countries of return is necessary. Likewise, involving civil society, local communities, authorities, and returnees in needs assessments, implementation, and monitoring of returns and creating conditions for safe and dignified returns and sustainable reintegration, including with development actors and financial institutions, are critical. The Checklist for Safe and Dignified Return and Sustainable Reintegration provides a 'package' to assist States and other stakeholders to operationalize GCM objectives.²² However, challenges to facilitate and cooperate on safe and dignified returns and upholding international law obligations remain, due to the absence of agreements with concerned countries of origin and resources needed for sustainable reintegration.

¹⁷ IMRF Progress Declaration, paragraphs 30, 44, 47, 65

¹⁸ IMRF Progress Declaration, paragraph 61

¹⁹ <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/pledge/development-capacity-building-programs-international-migration-law>

²⁰ IMRF Progress Declaration, paragraph 31

²¹ IMRF Progress Declaration, paragraph 35

²² [United Nations Network on Migration: Checklist for safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration.](#)

Guiding questions

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. What are the main gaps and challenges to existing inter- and cross-regional collaboration on the implementation of the GCM?
5. 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.

Session agenda

Session 2: 11:45 – 13:00 CET	
Introductory remarks (5 mins) Member State speaker	Sofia Östmark , Deputy Director General and Head of Department Department for Migration Ministry of Justice, Sweden
Interactive discussion (70 mins) moderated by Stakeholder representative	Susan Fratzke , Senior Policy Analyst Migration Policy Institute (MPI)