

UN Network Dialogue with Stakeholders in the Arab region on the International Migration Review Forum

Thursday, 10th February 2022
Meeting Summary report

1. Background and objective

In agreeing to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), supporting Member States decided that the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) would serve as the primary intergovernmental global platform to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the GCM, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. The inaugural IMRF will be held from 17 to 20 May 2022 in New York, preceded by multi-stakeholder hearings to be held on 16 May 2022. These would help attain the broadest possible participation of governments and stakeholders, in reflection of two of the guiding principles of whole of government and whole of society and thereby contribute to the success of the IMRF. The UN Network on Migration encourages relevant stakeholders to actively participate in its preparation at the national, regional and global levels.

This first IMRF will consist of three elements: four interactive multi-stakeholders round tables (RTs), a policy debate and a plenary session during which the Progress Declaration will be adopted.

Each RT will cover a set of specific objectives of the GCM:

- i.Round table one: objectives 2, 5, 6, 12 and 18;
- ii.Round table two: objectives 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 21;
- iii.Round table three: objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22;
- iv.Round table four: objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23.

The briefing aimed to:

1. Provide stakeholders with an overview of and roadmap to, the IMRF in 2022;
2. Listen to the voices of different stakeholders regarding their plans of contributions to the IMRF;
3. Discuss potential support from the UN Network on Migration, including at the national, regional and global level, for optimal engagement and inputs of relevant stakeholders to the IMRF, building on lessons learnt from the GCM Regional Review in February 2021.
4. Explore different modes of engagement and contributions the stakeholders can bring to the IMRF;
5. Discuss stakeholders' contribution to the development of National efforts and Action Plans.

2. Participants

The meeting targeted different stakeholder groups including migrants, civil society, migrant and diaspora organizations, faith-based organizations, local authorities and communities, the private sector, trade unions, parliamentarians, National Human Rights Institutions, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, academia, the media and other relevant stakeholders.

A total of 145 participants attended the meeting, including 88 participants from the various stakeholder groups and 57 participants from UN Country Teams in the Arab region and members of Regional and National UN Migration Networks representing 8 agencies¹.

¹ United Nations: ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UN Women, UNICEF, UN ESCWA, UNHCR, OHCHR

3. Summary of presentations and interventions

The Master of Ceremony began with setting the scene of the meeting and introduced the objective of the meeting which is to inform the stakeholders on the upcoming IMRF as well as possible contributions and support from the UN Network on Migration.

Opening Remarks

Ms. Amy Muedin, Deputy Head of UN Migration Secretariat thanked participants for joining the dialogue with stakeholders in the Arab region in preparation of the International Migration Review Forum in 2022 (IMRF) which will take place in May, highlighting the quadrennial meeting, at the highest political level, will serve to gauge progress made, while identifying persistent or emerging challenges to the implementation of the GCM. As this is the first IMRF, there is a unique opportunity to set the tone and ambition of the Forum, uphold the GCM's vision and guiding principles, and contribute to the drafting of key recommendations that will pave the way for the following four years.

Summary and lessons learned from stakeholder engagement during the GCM regional review

by Ms. Harsheth Virk, Regional Programme Coordinator, Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, UNODC MENA Regional Office

- Between Oct 2020 and Feb 2021, there were six dialogues organized by the Regional UN Network on Migration including the two multi-stakeholder dialogues on 27 Oct and 3 Nov 2020; two dialogues held on 28 Jan and 4 Feb 2021 with the Inter-state Consultation Mechanisms and the Parliamentarians; a regional stakeholder consultation on Women Migrant Workers, Migrant Children and Youth and a multi-stakeholder consultation on 23 February.
- Throughout the consultative processes and the regional review conference, various stakeholders including 18 Member States were involved and participated.
- Identified good practices included inclusive participation from a list of relevant stakeholders compiled through regional and national UN networks on Migration, and careful selection of speakers to balance geographic and gender representation; information were also disseminated through all three languages (English, Arabic, and French).
- Areas to be improved included the limited participation from the region in global stakeholder consultations, as well as from specific stakeholder groups; therefore, there is need for more systematic engagement with stakeholders;
- Other areas for improvement can be to further enhance strategic communication to balance ensuring that information trickles down without overwhelming stakeholders; and to continue expanding our network of stakeholders in the region.

Summary of the Stakeholders Inputs to the Regional Review

by Ms. Rosal Fischer, UNICEF MENA Regional Office, Children on the Move Consultant

- On the 15th of February 2021, the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States and the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office co-organized a virtual Regional Stakeholder Consultation, Advancing GCM Implementation for Women Migrant Workers, Migrant Children and Youth in the Arab Region: Reviewing Progress and Addressing Continuing Challenges.
- The consultation brought together about 100 participants working on migration covering all Arab States from national, cross-regional and global perspectives. Stakeholders included youth and women migrants themselves and their support groups, regional/national networks, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, academia, private sector, media, UN agency representatives and others.

- More details on the recommendations can be found [here](#).

Summary of the Stakeholders Inputs to the Regional Review and the results of the stakeholder's study

by Dr. Ayman Zohry, Expert on Population and Migration Studies

Dr. Zohry introduced the stakeholders' online survey on the implementation of the GCM in the MENA region was conducted on three following areas: 1) identify migration-related priorities in the region as well as key emerging issues; 2) highlight key trends, common challenges, and opportunities in implementing the GCM; 3) shed light on some gaps and promising practices from the region.

Survey findings are followings:

- The majority of respondents reported an improvement of the situation of migrants since the adoption of the GCM;
- Respondents identified the GCM objectives 1 (data), 2 (minimize adverse drivers), and 6 (recruitment and decent work) as priorities where countries need to make more efforts.
- Some of the preferred means of stakeholder engagement include: contribution to the process of developing national migration and asylum strategies; implement projects in partnership with government to improve migrants' protection; engagement through national committees to respond to migrants needs.
- Stakeholders reported they are engaged in the implementation of the GCM objectives 1 (data), 3 (information provision), 4 (legal identity and documentation), 6 (recruitment and decent work), 7 (reduce vulnerabilities), 15 (access to basic services), and 17 (eliminate discrimination).
- **Gaps and challenges** reported include: lack of coordination between actors and stakeholders; insufficient resources to implement the GCM objectives; lack of reliable data and information; a need for more comprehensive national policies for migration in some countries; negative impact of COVID-19 on receiving countries of migrants and refugees; and political instability in the region.
- **Promising practices** reported include: integrating migrants through making available socio-economic integration programs; capacity building for local actors; the adoption of national migration strategies; better access to basic rights for migrants; collection of disaggregated data on migration; training for migrants for better vocational integration and access to decent work.

As a Rapporteur of the Multi-stakeholders Consultation held on 23 February 2021, Dr. Zohry also presented the key recommendations from the stakeholders: adopting the whole of society approach to ensure involvement of all stakeholders, monitoring the GCM implementation with enhanced data availability; encouraging more national and sub-national consultations to ensure the broadest participation in the GCM review; ensuring consistency between national laws and international framework for the protection of migrants; developing gender-sensitive migrant protection policies; emphasizing the role of cities in migration governance; and addressing the negative drivers of migration.

Open Discussion 1: Emerging priority issues for stakeholders in GCM implementation and gaps, challenges, best practices, and way forward

Moderated by Dr. Ibrahim Awad, Professor of Global Affairs and Director, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, the American University in Cairo, discussions were held in line with the following *guiding question*:

- *What are the emerging issues and additional challenges that have been observed that require attention since the Regional Review Conference in the Arab region?*
- *What is the current status of the gaps identified at the time of the Regional Review Conference? Have they been closed or worsened? If so, why?*

- *What are the best practices and major achievements accomplished since the Regional Review and what were the roles that stakeholders played in such achievements?*

Interventions from the Floor:

Mr. William Gois, Regional Coordinator, [Migrant Forum in Asia](#)

The Civil Society Action Committee in its recently released document outlines 12 key areas of Global Civil Society Priorities in terms of implementation of GCM, which includes: just recovery from pandemic, climate change in coordination with, dealing with xenophobia, migrant workers' rights, creating regular pathways, alternatives for deportation and return, special concerns on children migrants protection, civil society engagement among others. Leading up to the IMRF, we want to highlight three following priorities to be included for discussion: 1) as we recover from COVID-19 pandemic we have to look into new social contract – in countries particular where there are many Asian migrant workers (what is needs is not only reform of Kafala system but a whole revamping of the system to set a decent work framework); 2) access to basic services especially with consideration of wage justice (many migrant workers were deprived of wages during the pandemic); 3) inclusion of migrants voice in policy consultations and advocacy.

Ms. Sara El-Khatib, Field Migration Specialist for the [MENA Region Solidarity Center](#)

Despite some progress made, we have not achieved the total abandonment of Kafala system in the region. We need alternatives for sponsorship system in the region - migrants are continuously drawn into sea and most migrants work in informal sector. We demand strong international cooperation to avoid dangerous pathways for migrants. In particular, we urge European governments to adopt human rights-based approach when it comes to migrant policy. The first IMRF through adopting a whole of society approach should provide an alternative migrant governance system in the region in line with international law and frameworks.

Mr. Murtaza Khan, Regional Managing Partner (Middle East & Africa) at [Fragomen](#)

Representing the business constituents as a business advisory group we have been actively engaged on Migration. In particular, in September last year we organized a business consultation meeting on migration, which was followed by a dialogue with governments in the region. For that, a research paper, titled *exploring the successes, opportunities, and challenges of business immigration frameworks in the Middle East* ([reference](#)) was prepared. The research findings show that: focusing on CGM Objectives 5, 6, 18, despite some positive development, more consistent approach across the region is required. In particular a focus on expanding migration pathways to categories that are in line with current business and industry requirements. Additionally migration pathways must take into account the need to support new emerging forms of work e.g. self sponsored for multi-employer scenarios, remote work. There is a call for more private sector consultations in the GCM review process, for example in terms of supporting nationalisation policies where local skills exist to move towards a coordinated achievable goal and also in ensuring that the regulatory position of equal rights translates into practice and implementation when it comes to gender related issues. For fair recruitment, private sector values the principle, and it is observed that the region is moving towards positive direction and there is a recognition that most companies that enforce best practices have standards higher than the minimum regulatory requirements and this is to be encouraged.

Mr. Fabrizio Anzolini, MENA regional Migration Advisor, [International Federation of Red Cross](#)

The IMRF will be an opportunity to further advocate for the rights of migrants and displaced populations. IFRC is providing humanitarian assistance including cash based assistance, psychosocial support and others to affected people, reaching millions of people in the region. The regional CGM consultations provide an opportunity for IFRC also to address some of gaps and challenges existing in the region. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (RC/RC) took a proactive action such as formal establishment of the MENA RC/RC migration network, and development of route-based cross-regional programmes between Africa-

MENA regions and different initiatives focus on different groups of vulnerable groups including children and women. We suggests following two priorities for the coming IMRF: 1) we need to work to change perspective of the States on migration, which is not an emergency issue, but something a structural and therefore embedded in all aspects of governance which requires whole-of-government approach (not merely dealt by Ministry of Interior); 2) we need more coordination by building strong relationship among different actors including UN, NGOs, local civil societies since no one act alone when it comes to migration.

Mr. Khalid Ramli, Heads of National Human Rights Council, Morocco

The recently published report on the follow-up to the operationalization of the African Migration Observatory by the King Mohammed VI provides a progress made when it comes to GCM implementation in the region. However, there are still gaps and challenges remained: protection of migrants in digital platforms – we need to promote rights of migrants, however, the discrimination and xenophobia persists; and migrants’ access to information should be improved. To tackle some of the challenges, the Moroccan National Human Rights Council conducted various workshops to promote the Marrakesh Compact. In addition, the Council places an emphasis on the role of civil society to implement the GCM to better promotion of migrant workers rights.

Ms. Sarah Badr, MENA Regional Lead, UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY)

On behalf of young migrants, we would like to highlight the pressing issue on education and upscaling. There are various obstacles in access quality education including language barriers, COVID-19 pandemic and digital literacy gap given that now all education platforms are moved to online because of the pandemic situation. In addition to education, youth migrants’ fair access to all social services without discrimination is critical. Good practices are found in the region; however, they should be scaled up such as through skills development programmes. The IMRF should provide an opportunity to measure a clear progress in terms of GCM implementation to ensure no one is left behind.

Dr. Jocelyn DeJong, Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, American University of Beirut

The global COVID-19 response framework asks for an inclusive provision of treatment and vaccination, and there has been many good practices where migrants are taken into consideration for health care access through for example the use of digital applications. However, still there has not been much research on barriers of migrants in accessing health care system and also there is a gap in terms of sensitizing populations on migration. A recent collaboration with WHO on health and migration highlighted that disaggregated data (migration status, gender.etc) is imperative for further improving policy/programmes. Throughout the GCM review process, academics could play an important role in providing literature review, taking the views and engagement of next generations, as well as providing an independent critical analysis on the situation of migrants.

Ms. Ghada Hammouda, member of business advisory group in Egypt

We want to emphasize the role of Private sector in the implementation of the GCM, and in particular in the context of COVID-19 recovery phase, it is a critical importance to take into consideration of the changing discourse of migration after experiencing the pandemic. Therefore, we are currently conducting a survey on labour migration governance and the result will be shared at the IMRF with all stakeholders. The report will provide recommendations for hopefully contributing to better policy on migration.

Mr. William Warda, Hammurabi Human Rights Organization of Iraq

We have conducted [research](#) with EU on border management and migration control in Iraq. Though the research is focusing on Iraq, still it has relevance throughout the regions. There is a problem in terms of accessing residency with relation to the Kafala system, and the majority of the countries in the region are not yet ready to host migrants in accordance with international framework. For this, we need further enhance capacity of states and relevant stakeholders. Due to legal status, most workers are working in informal

sectors, exposing them to vulnerable to abuse, exploitation. There is an issue also on decent work and housing. In addition, to highlight that including Iraq, many countries in the region have not ratified the global compact on refugees.

Ms. Rima Kalush migrants-rights.org in the Gulf region

We want to raise two issues to be discussed at the IMRF as priorities: first, ongoing detention and deportation of thousands migrant workers in the Gulf region even during the pandemic - This has been worsening recent days and in violation of international laws; and second, the lack of data obscures progress across GCM objectives – affecting for example in wage protection system, reform on employment mobility, which raise questions how we evaluate our progress by incorporating migrant voices into the system.

Mr. Salim Korkmaz, UCLG-MEWA

Representing the UCLG-MEWA based in Istanbul covering the region, I want to explain our work. There was an International forum in 2019 which led to the [Gaziantep Declaration](#). One of the main outcomes of the forum is to reflect best practices on local solution on migration and after that we created a global task force on migration to follow up the Declaration. These are crucial to draw more local efforts in the GCM implementation.

Overview on IMRF and how civil society organizations can engage in the forum

by Ms. Monami Maulik, Civil Society Liaison Officer, UN Network on Migration Secretariat

Ms. Maulik introduced to the stakeholders that the UN Network on Migration is a collaborative platform of 39 UN entities with IOM serving as a coordinator. The GCM takes the whole of society approach in following up of implementation of GCM. Within the [Arab region](#), there are currently 15 networks including recently joined Sudan, Tunisia and Lebanon. The [IMRF](#) will take place in May 2022 which will be preceded by a one-day interactive multi-stakeholder hearing on 16 May. It is a high-level event with government's highest-level representation. The roadmap towards the Forum is in February Migration Week launch of UN Secretary General's Report on the GCM, consultation with stakeholders, in March registration open. Entry points for stakeholder engagement includes: voluntary GCM reviews, [pledging initiative](#), [dialogue series](#), platforms for stakeholder engagement at country/regional level, [migration network hub discussions](#), [migration week](#) (SG's biennial report on the GCM), multi-stakeholder hearing, policy debate and round tables.

Open Discussion 2: Engagement modalities at the IMRF

Moderated by Dr. Jean D'Cunha, Senior Global Advisor on International Migration, UN Women, discussions were held in line with the following *guiding questions*:

- *How can the widest, balanced geographical representation of stakeholders be ensured in the process?*
- *Are there any types of stakeholders that would face particular difficulties participating? How to ensure participation of migrants? How to ensure balanced participation from across the region?*
- *What types of inputs are envisioned to the IMRF?*
- *What are the main challenges and opportunities observed by stakeholders who participated in the GCM regional review process?*
- *What are some good practices and lessons learnt from the national level engagement?*

Participants from the floor asked questions about the guidance on CSO participation to the IMRF. Ms. Maulik responded that the IMRF is under the General Assembly's rules and regulations, and therefore, accreditation is required for CSOs to be registered for participation in person. It is well noted that many

migrants associations are not registered; and at this point in order to include those voices, organizations which have large seats among accredited are encouraged to provide seats to those migrant workers.

Another participant also asked about the difference between the UN Network on Migration and the working groups. At global level, stakeholder organizations are welcome to join global working groups across different thematic areas such as alternative to detention. At the country level, each UN Network on Migration has different engagement modalities with the government and stakeholder partners since it is primarily an internal coordination mechanism among the UN agencies. It was suggested that the stakeholders who wish to learn more about the UN Network on Migration and how they can contribute to the process to contact their local IOM office as the Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration for further information.

Recapitulation of the Discussions

by Ms. Sara Salman, Regional Advisor on Population Affairs, UN ESCWA

Thanking the active engagement and contribution of the participants, Ms. Salman summarised the key issues raised throughout the dialogue:

- Importance of continued whole of society approach
- Learn lessons from COVID-19 to improve migrants rights to health, education and other basic services
- Need to intensify skills development
- Better protect vulnerable migrants
- Revamping protection system for migrant workers
- Ensure engagement of all stakeholders at local as well as national level
- Strengthen advocacy empowering migrants' voices
- Put more efforts to combat xenophobia in the region
- Encourage more research by engaging academic institutions
- Create an enabling environment for evidence-based policy through improved data collection and partnership.

Closing Remarks

by Mrs. Carmela Godeau, Regional Director, IOM Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa

Thanking all participants for the fruitful discussions, Mrs. Godeau once again highlighted the importance of a whole-of-society approach when it comes to implementing the GCM and its objectives, and therefore enhancing cooperation and partnerships, notably in the framework of the UN Networks on Migration, at country and regional level, will be key to ensuring the success of the IMRF.

She noted that there are 15 UN Networks on Migration in the region including three - Morocco, Iraq and Egypt are part of the Champion country initiative, helping other States to generate key insights, lessons learned and positive practices to support the implementation of the GCM in the region. At the same time, she encouraged relevant stakeholders to reach out and engage with the National Networks in their respective country to improve migration governance, together as "One".

She highlighted a key priority at present is to enhance participation as much as possible and ensure that stakeholders from the Arab region, both at country and regional levels, are actively giving inputs to the substantive elements building up to the IMRF. These include virtual consultations and webinars as well as written components such as engaging in the discussion platforms on the Migration Hub, submitting written entries to the Repository of practices and to the Network Secretariat as well as announcing pledges.

4. Relevant documents

- UN General Assembly Resolution 73/326. Format and organizational aspects of the international migration review forums (A/RES/73/326): AR / FR / EN
- UN General Assembly Resolution 73/195. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195): AR / FR / EN
- IMRF Roadmap and Annexes: AR / FR / EN
- IMRF Calendar: [HERE](#)
- Guidance for Country and Regional Networks: [EN](#)