

Session with multi-sector stakeholders - 16 May 2022
Migrant and diaspora organization - Statement

Paddy Siyanga Knudsen, Vice President - Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT)

"Has the GCM helped catalyse change? Has it helped enable engagement? What key challenges would you identify? "

For the GCM to be put to good use - for the benefit of migrants, diaspora and their families as well as society-, countries require on-the-ground national and local conditions, context and mindset that recognise the wider contributions of and fosters the active engagement of migrants and diaspora in countries of origin, transit and destination.

The question of the GCM catalysing change or enabling engagement with diaspora today remains unanswered for a number of reasons. There is still much to do in the intermediary work of unpacking the GCM at national, regional and local levels for states to govern migration with a focus on the people on the move, instead of the borders. Bigger than this, there is also a continuous process to socialise the people - the general public - in understanding the relevance of common principles and objectives of the GCM in helping to shape a balanced narrative and their perceptions on migrants and diaspora. Migrants and diasporas are an important part of our lives...

For migrant and diaspora organisations, assessing progress in the implementation of the GCM would require a methodical process within a solid monitoring framework that has multi-sector stakeholder participation (governments - all levels, civil society, private sector, academia, migrants and diaspora). It would be complementary process to the other monitoring frameworks and give teeth to GCM, revolve around mutual accountability and simply ask countries to adhere what they have already signed up for (in SDG framework, human right frameworks and many conventions that advocate for the rights of migrants and their families).

Nevertheless, it has been insightful to view the global, regional and national responses to recent real-life emerging migration challenges through the lens of the GCM ambitions, principles, objectives and prescriptions. The GCM has been tested - some tough reality checks felt vividly by people on the move whether for labour migration to mixed migration flows. Since Feb 2022, we have witnessed millions of Ukrainians and foreign nationals fleeing their homes in Ukraine. Thankfully, borders and homes were open to receive people. However, even in times of visible distress, we continue to see limited visibility on the plight of so called Third Country Nationals (predominantly these are men, women and children from Africa, Middle East and Asia). Few pathways for education mobility and work opportunities remain limited and scarce even for temporal needs for those Third country nationals have spent years of their lives in universities, work places and cities of Ukraine, a country they called home. Yes, for TCNs, the burden of responsibility is both with countries of origin and host states (frontline, EU and beyond) but its really hard NOT to notice the limited duty of care towards TCNs. The vibrations of these less-than-best-practice are felt even more strongly by other migrant and diaspora groups in similar scenarios around the world or in the same host countries, as they see doom their long struggles on regular pathways, regularisation and social protection, lets not even dare talk about integration. From global and national institutions all the way to the people, we can go beyond condemning discrimination and taking real positions on eliminating its roots through fostering multiculturalism and inclusive societies. And yes, the opening of doors to some should give us hope that where there is a will, there is a way and remind us that in a migration crisis, no one should be left behind.

Under the People's Migration Challenge, an initiative from the civic space with migrant and diaspora organisations, we have spent time to listen in from non state actors and partners reacting to SG's report and

progress declaration and also followed the regional reviews. There has been concerns on watering down and toning down of important work that civil society, migrants and diaspora have been advocating for - better and more on social protection and migrants' rights. While the work of champion countries and champion moments many give us comfort, the bulk of work in front of us remains to be done.

What do we want: A GCM that catalyses change will have to go beyond the window dressing to empowering national actions.

(1) It will have to seek a more objective approach to the use of data (GCM 1) in migration policy making at national levels;

(2) it will look beyond the usual migration toolbox to provide all migrants with legal identity and documentation (GCM 4) as we all know its the access key to basic needs, inclusion, social cohesion and social protection;

(3) it will also seek best practice and non-discriminatory policies in providing regular pathways (GCM 5) and advancing to fresh and renewed thinking on regularisation and immigration policies that have need to be healed from the sting of racism and discrimination.

(4) For diaspora, it will require intentional listening to the voices in their diversity and with their needs at the centre of conversations to inform policies, before we assume their ease of participation and contribution to sustainable development for home and destination countries (GCM 19, 20) which includes political participation in both homelands and destination countries.

What else is needed:

We need all those not comfortable with the GCM to join the dialogue table. For the United Nations, the compact still has key players that have not signed up and want to abstain from GCM referencing - advocacy is needed at that level. How shortsighted will these governments continue to be with the mobility and migration challenges we see in relation to economic crisis, COVID, conflicts and climate change? What worse scenario are we waiting for to intentionally recognise and listen to the whole-of-migrants and whole-of-diaspora?

We need to build knowledge bridges to allow evidence from the local to feed the global focus, with a special focus on voices from the subnational and grassroots. The link to the important work under research and academia space is key in reinforcing evidence based policy.

We need to walk the talk on scaling up best practice: champion countries and gold standards need to be supported financially and technically from various sources including state budgets, development cooperation budgets, private sector with strategic and intentional engagement of diaspora.

Again, we need a sound monitoring framework so we can to be as determined as the progress declaration intends to be, we must strive for a GCM with enough teeth, maybe not a full grinding set, but solid enough to chew through migration challenges.

Finally, a practical need for dialogue and engagement: to accompany the true act of solidarity for engagement with civil society for the next reviews and particularly the next forum for the IMRF, there is need to bring in the civil societies early and intentionally. This time around, coming to this IMRF as a Zambian national was a "visa marathon" with "acts of miracles" - and it shouldn't be! How ironic that civil society actors from countries in the global south faced huge struggles (visa and financial) to attend the IMRF, hosted in New York. So from first hand experience, migrant and diaspora organisations know how barriers in migration and mobility policies impact lives, which hinder and push out migrants and diaspora, leaving a huge part of society excluded.