

Stakeholder Consultation for West and Central Africa ahead of the (sub-) regional reviews of the GCM for Africa 2024

KEY MESSAGES FOR AFRICAN MEMBER STATES

We, the stakeholders in the West and Central African region, recognize the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) as a comprehensive migration policy instrument for advancing people-centered and right-based migration governance in our sub-region and the entire continent.

We also recognize the pivotal role of the GCM in realizing existing (sub-) regional policy frameworks - such as the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, ECOWAS Vision 2050 which are complementary to delivery of continental African Union Agenda 2063. We also acknowledge the importance of these policy frameworks in shaping national and sub-national policies and strategies in addressing our collective migration and development agenda.

We acknowledge the unique roles of the ECOWAS member states in implementing the GCM objectives, driving West Africa's migration and development priorities, while also protecting the rights and dignity of migrants in both transit and destination countries. With the 'whole-of-society' approach being a major principle of the GCM, we recognize the significance of meaningful and sustainable partnership between ECOWAS member states and relevant stakeholders in promoting free movement within the sub-region, as well as advancing people-centered migration agenda in the region.

Within the context of the insights gathered from the **Stakeholders Consultation on the GCM Review** held in Dakar on August 28, a number of key messages are proposed to West African member states in light of this ECOWAS Consultation. In this regard, we present the following recommendations.

Political and Socio-Economic Stability

- Strongly prioritize **promoting political stability and addressing increasing disintegration** within the ECOWAS Community
- Strongly prioritize **meaningful implementation of existing policy frameworks** on migration and development, including the ECOWAS protocol on free movement, the ECOWAS Gender and Migration Framework, the Global Compact on Migration, among others.
- Strongly urge **the ratification of existing regional migration frameworks** - such as the AU Free Movement Protocol.
- Prioritize the **protection of migrants' rights and well being**, even in the face of socio-political crisis - such as diplomatic crisis, war and civil unrest, disease outbreak, among others.
- Strongly **invest in economic growth and development both at the country and sub-regional levels**, with aim of creating sustainable jobs and improving people's standard of living, which will in-turn minimize irregular migration in the sub-region
- Invest in nature-based and people-centered **climate adaptive strategies to address climate-induced displacement and migration** in the region, leveraging sustainable green solutions.
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- Meaningfully engage the private sector and international players to **invest in quality education and relevant transferable skills** to improve the quality of available workforce, while also promoting labor exchange among countries with a view of advancing national and regional economic development priorities.
- Strongly invest in **national and regional technological infrastructure** to unlock youth innovation and avail business opportunities for migrant populations and advance cross-border business opportunities.
- Strongly prioritize improving **social protection and addressing social developmental challenges** - such as violent conflicts, civil unrest, climate crisis, food shortage, healthcare crisis - to minimize forced displacement and irregular migration in the sub-region.
- Urge member states to treat **migration as a multidimensional issue**, through integration of migration priorities into their public policies, such as national development plans, agriculture, education, healthcare, technology, agriculture, among others.

Regional Integration, Free Movement, and Labor migration

- Prioritize renewed commitment to **regional integration in West Africa**, through investing political and economic instruments that will remove artificial barriers to free movement in the sub-region.
- Strongly commit to meaningful **harmonization of migration policies and strategies**, including visa and residence permits across the West African region
- Invest in **sustainable transportation infrastructure** (both land and air) to facilitate easy and seamless mobility within the West African region
- Strongly prioritize **liberalizing regular and legal pathways**, through exploring several migration pathways, such education, skills exchange, green innovation, among others.
- Develop and implement a **West African framework for the recognition of skills and qualifications** to enhance labor mobility and harness skill portability across the region.
- Strongly urge member states to work together against **external influence in securitizing or restricting free movement within the region**, as well as arbitrarily abuse of migrants' rights
- Significantly harness **the agency of women and children migrants** in promoting migration and development in the region, while also identifying the need to protect them.
- Develop and implement **collective sub-regional strategies** to combat illicit migration patterns, such as intelligence exchange, sub-regional border police partnership, among others, while also integrating local and border communities into border management strategies

Protection of Migrants and Migrant Workers

- Protect human rights of migrants and migrant workers by **adapting and implementing the GCM Objectives and other international instruments** on labor migration standards.
- Enhance social protection, access and integration through regular pathways for migrant workers regardless of their migratory status, at both transit and destination countries
- Encourage **bi-lateral agreements to promote the protection** of labor migrants, women, and children, as well as enhance safe and right-based movements
- Prioritize the **protection of migrants' rights against racist and xenophobic attacks**, both within and outside Africa.

- Member states must **stop the politicization of migration**, which usually creates a negative narrative around migrant populations and sets the scene for coordinated xenophobic attacks and racism.
- Protect returnees and support **sustainable reintegration processes**, rather than view them as data collection objects.

Research and Data

- Strongly urge significant **investment in scientific research and accurate data** that unpack relevant information on migration patterns within the region, as well as the lived-reality of migrant populations - which could help government and regional bodies to implement policies that protect migrants.
- Strongly encourage **existing data to be made available to the public and diverse end users** in order to advance evidence-based policy advocacy and intervention programs.
- Advocate for the **integration of population and multi-sectoral data** to enhance evidenced-based migration programs and interventions.
- Strongly **foster partnerships with non-state actors on research and data**, as essential partners in supporting evidence-based decision making.

GCM Process

- Explore strong **network and partnership between governments and non-state actors**; including research institutes, diaspora organization, civil society, migrant groups, women and youth groups - with the purpose of promoting a 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach in implementing (as well as monitoring the implementation) of the GCM objectives in West Africa.
- Encourage consistent periodic **open dialogue and knowledge exchange** on pertinent migration issues with civil society organizations, researchers, diaspora organizations, migrant populations, victims of trafficking, among others.
- Strongly urge member states to actively **participate in regional and global migration processes**, advancing the needs of vulnerable migrant populations and West Africa's migration priorities, as well as contributing to the changing migration landscape in the continent.