FIRST REGIONAL FORUM
OF CHAMPION
COUNTRIES IN
THE AMERICAS

Good practices for the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration

27 - 28 September 2023

Panama City, Republic of Panama

ACRONYMS

CARICOM   Caribbean Community and Common Market

CELADE   Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (Spanish acronym)

COMMCA   Council of Ministers for Women of Central America and the Dominican Republic (Spanish acronym)

CORETT   Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (Spanish acronym)

ECLAC   Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

GCM   Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

ICRC   International Committee of the Red Cross

ILO   International Labour Organisation

IMRF   International Migration Review Forum

IOM   International Organization for Migration

LGBTIQ+   Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and more (+)

MMPTF   Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund

OHCHR   Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

PAHO/WHO Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization

PPT   President pro tempore

RCM   Regional Conference on Migration

RNCOM   Regional Network for Civil Organizations on Migration

SACM   South American Conference on Migration

SDGS   Sustainable Development Goals

SICA   Central American Integration System (Spanish acronym)

UNDP   United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA   United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

UNNM   United Nations Network on Migration

UNODC   United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

USAR   Urban Search and Rescue Team of Panama

USFROH   Humanitarian Border Security Unit of Panama (Spanish acronym)

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INTRODUCTION

Since the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration[1] (GCM) in 2018, the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) has played an active and significant role in the implementation, follow-up and review of the GCM. To date, there are nine champion countries in the Americas; six of them are Member Countries of the RCM (Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Panama) and three are Member Countries of the South American Conference on Migration (SACM) (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru).

In May 2022, the progress made in implementing the GCM was reviewed at the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), resulting in an agreed intergovernmental Progress Declaration[2]. The dialogue held during the IMRF reaffirmed the aspirations and objectives of the GCM and the importance of international cooperation in facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, which supports the 2030 Agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The First Regional Forum of Champion Countries in the Americas is part of the Work Plan for 2023 of the Republic of Panama as President pro tempore (PPT) of the RCM. The Plan states that this activity aims to replicate good practices in migration matters through the exchange of strategies, good practices, tools, initiatives and public policies that contribute to successful migration governance and the strengthening of regional cooperation with other champion countries, as well as other RCM Member Countries.

OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE FIRST FORUM

The objective of the First Regional Forum of Champion Countries in the Americas was to promote greater collaboration among champion countries in the region and beyond, as well as with other Member Countries, with a view to advancing the implementation of the GCM, as appropriate, and contributing to the 2030 Agenda.

The expected results of the Forum were as follows:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of government officials in the region concerning migration trends, policies, practices, tools and experiences relating to migration governance.
- Development and dissemination of a joint communiqué.
- Improved mechanisms in the RCM Member Countries to share information and good practices relating to migration governance.
- Enhanced cooperation in migration governance among the RCM Member Countries, in accordance with regional and global frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

The RCM Member Countries, Observer Organizations of the RCM and the Regional Network for Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM) met for two days. In addition, other champion countries of the Americas, Africa and Europe also participated in the Forum (see Appendix 1).

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[1] See Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
[2] See Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum

In order to achieve the expected results, the Forum used methods such as panels, knowledge cafés, thematic round tables and spaces for dialogue on cooperation. Representatives from the RCM Member Countries and Observer Organizations played different roles, including the role of moderators (introducing the segments of each session), presenters (introducing topics during lecture sessions), facilitators (facilitating, moderating and stimulating debates) and rapporteurs (preparing a brief report including the fundamental ideas). Furthermore, several sessions were briefly introduced by experts to provide an overview of the main challenges and opportunities relating to the themes discussed. During other sessions, participants worked based on guiding questions provided by the facilitators.

This report presents the main ideas discussed during the various sessions, as well as good practices, tools, policies and conclusions and recommendations that emanated from the two-day meeting.

OPENING SESSION OF THE FIRST REGIONAL FORUM OF CHAMPION COUNTRIES IN THE AMERICAS

The opening remarks were given by Ivor Pittí, Vice-Minister of Public Security of the Republic of Panama; Michele Solomon, Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean of the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and Jonathan Prentice, Head of Secretariat, United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM).

Vice-Minister and President pro tempore of the RCM Ivor Pittí warmly welcomed the participants of the First Regional Forum of Champion Countries in the Americas. He emphasized the responsibility taken on by champion countries in addressing migration in all its dimensions in a holistic manner with a "whole of society" approach to promote safe, orderly and regular migration with full respect for the human rights of migrants. Furthermore, he reaffirmed the commitment of Panama to address irregular migration with a humanitarian approach. He also called on the other countries to work in a coordinated manner in implementing public policies aimed at improving migration governance.

Michele Solomon, IOM's Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean thanked Panama as PPT of the RCM, the RCM Executive Secretariat, the Government of Canada, UNNM and all the countries participating in the Forum. In addition, she highlighted that the champion countries have proven their commitment to the GCM through active participation in the Regional Review carried out in April 2021; their contributions to the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) held in May 2022; the identification of regional priorities for the RCM; and the collection of good practices. Furthermore, she stated that the First Regional Forum of Champion Countries in the Americas is a milestone and a key opportunity to work towards well-managed migration, making migration visible as a key element of sustainable development. Moreover, she pointed out the challenges faced in the region in providing humanitarian assistance, saving lives, combating organized criminal actions of traffickers and migrant smugglers, and ensuring the dignified return and sustainable reintegration of migrants.

Jonathan Prentice, Head of the Secretariat of UNNM, congratulated Panama for its leadership and commitment in implementing the GCM. He saluted the other champion countries as their efforts encourage other States and help gain a technical understanding of regional cooperation and seek solutions in migration. He highlighted that the UNNM supports the integration of the GCM into the national planning processes of the champion countries and that the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF) supports implementation of the GCM to build resilient societies for the benefit of migrants and host communities. Mr. Prentice emphasized that the Forum will be a space to propose innovative ideas and address the impact of climate change and prevention of the loss of life of migrants in transit. For the future, he stated that the Forum would lay the groundwork for coordinated efforts as countries prepare for the second round of Regional Reviews of the GCM.

Finally, IOM's Regional Director and the Head of the Secretariat of the UNNM reiterated their support to continue strengthening regional dialogue and the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

INTRODUCTORY SESSION
CURRENT PANORAMA, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF MIGRATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

The initial presentation was made by IOM, highlighting key topics, dynamics, challenges and the importance of migration at the global level. In 2020, migrants accounted for 3.6% of the world population. Thus, migration is a reality around the world, with a high prevalence in the Americas. Almost half of this population group are women and girls. The feminization of migration could be related to the search for new opportunities and family reunification, or fleeing from violence, poverty, discrimination and inequality. Migrant boys, girls and adolescents, women, and LGBTIQ+ populations are often more vulnerable to violence, discrimination and exploitation throughout the migration process.

The main countries of destination in the region are the United States and Canada. Furthermore, 62% of the migrants worldwide are migrant workers; that is, migration is linked to job offers, as well as the search for employment opportunities and the improvement of living conditions. According to a recent joint study of IOM and the Boston Consulting Group[3], labour shortages are reaching unprecedented levels in 30 of the world's largest economies, with a total annual cost of more than US$1 billion dollars. Migrants usually work in crucial sectors of national economies, such as agriculture, construction, health care, education, tourism, etc. Hence the importance of protecting the labour and human rights of migrant workers and optimizing the benefits of labour migration for countries of origin and destination. While migrants only account for 3.6% of the world population, they generate approximately 9.4% of the world GDP[4].

Regarding the contributions of migrants to their countries and communities of origin, remittances are one of the most important economic flows - much more important than official development assistance - and a source of development.

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[3] Boston Consulting Group and IOM, Migration Matters: A Human Cause with a $20 Trillion Business Case, 2022.
[4] McKinsey Global Institute, People on the Move: Global Migration's Impact and Opportunity, 2016.

Migration has also been marked by the death and disappearance of migrants in the Americas. Regarding trafficking in persons, women and girls continue to be the main victims of this crime, being subjected to sexual exploitation and forced labour, especially in the Americas. In the past decades, natural disasters, conflict and violence have been the main drivers of internal displacement. The impact of climate change and natural disasters will lead to increased migration and internal displacement in the years to come.

The 2030 Agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, is a call for action to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and improve the quality of human life around the world. In this regard, advancing the implementation of the SDGs is essential for addressing adverse factors related to migration. In addition, it is important to recognize that the principle of leaving no one behind includes migrants.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the positive contributions of migrants to sustainable development. In fact, migration promotes inclusive growth and sustainable development, if it is well managed, safe, dignified and human and if governments ensure that migration policies and practices are rights-based.

In conclusion, migration is a fundamental characteristic of the world in general and of the Americas in particular. All the above highlights the challenges, opportunities and common interests in the region in finding appropriate, sustainable and rights-based solutions for the protection of migrants and their families and the sustainable development of communities and countries of origin, transit, destination and return.

SESSION 1
PROTECTING MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

7 REDUCE VULNERABILITIES	**8** SAVE LIVES	**14** CONSULAR PROTECTION	**15** ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES
Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration	Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants	Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle	Facilitate access to basic services for migrants

GENERAL PANORAMA

Migration is a global reality. It is estimated that in 2020 there were 281 million international migrants around the world. Due to the magnitude, complexity and dynamics of the migration in the region, protecting the lives, dignity and human rights of migrants, and particularly those in vulnerable situations, is an enormous challenge for transit countries that have witnessed record numbers of irregular entries.

In this context, tens of thousands of migrants are in highly vulnerable situations due to hazardous conditions along the migration route, gender-based violence, abuses by traffickers and migrant smugglers, lack of shelter and limited access to health care and psychological support, among others. Women and boys, girls and adolescents, and especially those who travel unaccompanied, as well as persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTIQ+ communities are the populations that are most exposed to these risks. Regional cooperation and shared responsibility are required to strengthen protection and assistance capacities, which are often insufficient in countries of transit and destination.

The first panel was facilitated by the Office of the United National High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with a thematic introduction by IOM and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Saving lives and providing humanitarian assistance and protection throughout the migration cycle are established in Objectives 7, 8, 14 and 15 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). Experts analysed the vulnerability and protection needs of migrant populations due to their condition, identifying that humanitarian actions

are key to saving lives, alleviating suffering and preserving human dignity. Access to protection, humanitarian aid and basic services such as water, sanitation, food and shelter is becoming more and more difficult for migrants as the increased number of migrants exceeds the response capacity of States. Organizations such as IOM and ICRC work to prevent family separation, disappearance of persons and loss of life in the context of migration. Both organizations are working within the framework of UNNM to develop recommendations aimed at strengthening cooperation related to missing migrants and providing humanitarian aid to migrants at risk. The recommendations will be integrated into the next report of the General Secretary on implementation of the GCM. Experts recognized how ethnic origin, gender, age, physical condition, chronic diseases and disabilities place vulnerable persons at a disproportionately high risk when they cross borders. In addition, the crisis concerning missing migrants was discussed during this session, and authorities from some States pointed out that the scarcity of resources and data limits systematic efforts to search for or identify persons who disappear along the migration routes. In this regard, protecting migrants becomes increasingly urgent, as the migration routes - by sea, air and land - are becoming more and more dangerous. Hence the importance of coordination, the complementarity of activities, the search for effective solutions and the dissemination of good practices in protection.

In further analysing the identified obstacles, the participants explored the practical challenges as well as those related to legal frameworks. From an operational viewpoint, the panellists highlighted the insufficient resources which limit the detection and systematic follow-up on persons in vulnerable situations in the context of the increasing transit migration. Furthermore, experts pointed out that challenges the region faces relate to assistance and communication with the families of missing migrants, training of relevant officers on how to report and record cases, tracing and locating missing persons and channelling searches, and coordination among the authorities involved in the search for and identification of missing migrants. Moreover, panellists stated that the lack of legal and procedural uniformity renders cooperation among countries difficult.

Regarding opportunities and/or solutions, discussions were held on the importance of strengthening cooperation to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in transit. Country representatives proposed the development of centralized digital databases to record migration flows throughout the region. These databases could include basic data such as entry and exit dates, together with vulnerability indicators such as health status, age, gender, or risk factors related to trafficking in persons. The participants agreed that these tools would help expedite the referral of persons at risk between different organizations and across international borders.

Consular networks were also highlighted as a solution for collaboration. Experts stated how consular offices are well positioned to provide support services that are available to the citizens of the countries they represent. In addition, strengthening relations between consular officers and diasporas was considered to be a way to reinforce the resources for protection in communities with large populations of migrants. Furthermore, coordination between consular networks, ministries of foreign affairs, justice and protection systems, committees of relatives, etc. also need to be strengthened. During the debates, the creation of regional protocols was promoted to cover issues such as health care and assessment of the needs of persons in vulnerable situations, access to humanitarian aid, awareness-raising on xenophobia, monitoring and early alert systems, use of biometric data, coordination and border communication.

GOOD PRACTICES, POLICIES AND TOOLS RELATING TO **PROTECTION OF MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS**

GOOD PRACTICES

✓ Inter-Agency Working Group - IOM

✓ Child Protection Officers and assistance for vulnerable groups - National Institute of Migration Mexico

✓ Change to visitor for humanitarian reasons - Mexico

✓ "126 te orienta sin fronteras" virtual orientation platform - El Salvador

✓ Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) Welfare Programme - Mexico

✓ Education without Borders strategy (INEA) - Mexico

✓ Beta Groups for the protection of migrants - Mexico

✓ Protection and assistance for boys, girls and adolescents based on a consular model with a psychosocial approach - Guatemala

✓ "Ante todo son niños" campaign - Ecuador

✓ "¿Qué pasa? ¿Qué hago?" information campaign - Guatemala

✓ Temporary Assistance Centres for Migrants (CATEM) - Costa Rica

POLICIES

✓ Comprehensive Migration Policy - Costa Rica

✓ National Integration Plan 2023-2027 - Costa Rica

✓ National Policy against Human Trafficking 2020-2023 - Costa Rica

✓ Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) - United Nations General Assembly

TOOLS

✓ Assistance model for unaccompanied adolescent migrants - Mexico

✓ Protocol for assistance and humanitarian aid for Salvadorans abroad - El Salvador

✓ Protocol for assistance and protection of unaccompanied or separated foreign boys, girls and adolescents - Costa Rica

✓ Protocol for assistance to foreign boys, girls and adolescents whose parents, relatives or guardians are in a deportation process - Costa Rica

✓ Protocol for the detection, assistance and comprehensive protection of boys, girls and adolescents in need of international protection: refugee status applicants, refugees or stateless persons - Costa Rica

✓ Protocol for the regularization of the stay of foreign boys, girls and adolescents under the protection of the National Child Welfare Agency - Costa Rica

✓ Missing Migrants Project - IOM

✓ Humanitarian Report 2022-2023 - International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

✓ Global Compact on Refugees - UNHCR

✓ Regional Coordination and Information Exchange Mechanisms in the Search for Missing Migrants in the Context of Migration - ICRC

✓ Follow-up assessment on the Global Compact for Migration - Mexico

✓ Consular consultation mechanism between the countries of the northern triangle of Central America and Mexico (TRICAMEX)

✓ Protocol for assistance to migrants in special migration situations - Costa Rica

SESSION 2A
MIGRANT SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

9 COUNTER SMUGGLING	**10** ERADICATE TRAFFICKING	**11** BORDER MANAGEMENT
Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants	Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration	Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner

GENERAL PANORAMA

The Americas are facing major challenges relating to migrant smuggling and trafficking. Traffickers facilitate irregular migration along dangerous migration routes where migrants are exposed to the risks of death, theft, violence, crime and human rights violations. Trafficking networks also operate in the region to exploiting victims through forced labour, sexual exploitation and other abuses.

The countries of the Americas have taken action to combat trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling through legislation, policies, capacity-building and regional initiatives. However, challenges remain due to limited capacities and coordination, obstacles relating to the capacity of local actors to identify these crimes, lack of referral mechanisms and clear responsibilities, insufficient data collection and information sharing, limited resources to help victims and low levels of judicialization. Further efforts are required to combat criminal networks, assist victims, address the causes and guarantee border security, defending the rights and security of migrants. Regional cooperation and alliances with civil society are essential.

Objectives 9, 10 and 11 of the GCM call for the strengthening of transnational efforts to combat migrant smuggling and trafficking, promoting orderly and humane border management. The panellists conducted an in-depth dialogue, through the Knowledge Café method, led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC),

analysing various challenges and needs related to migrant smuggling and trafficking networks operating between the borders. In round table discussions, representatives of the participating countries described the complexities of preventing, investigating, prosecuting and judicializing both crimes and providing assistance and protection to victims. Furthermore, participants addressed the vulnerability of migrants and the violations of their rights by criminal trafficking and migrant smuggling organizations and highlighted the difficulties in identifying victims: sociodemographic profiles and the main purposes of trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and related crimes, as well as lack of information.

In further exploring the challenges in combating migrant smuggling and trafficking, discussions focused on differences in legislation and resource availability that affect the joint efforts to punish the crimes. At the regional level, the challenge is that differences exist in how national legislations define and punish both crimes, and the variability among the different national frameworks complicates investigations of the criminal networks in different jurisdictions. Participants identified the importance of local-level coordination and awareness-raising of communities as a way to address these challenges. In addition, it was recognized that language barriers and the continuous turnover of relevant officers disrupt efforts to follow up on these crimes.

Regarding border management, a challenge that was highlighted was that remote and isolated parts of some borders pose logistical obstacles that hinder appropriate surveillance to detect irregular migration and illegal activities. Furthermore, financial and staffing constraints that impede the appropriate control of migration flows through official border crossings were mentioned as significant difficulties. Moreover, participants recognized that officers in charge of providing initial assistance to migrants would benefit from specialized training to be able to better identify those individuals who are vulnerable to exploitation by migrant smuggling or trafficking networks. In addition, it is important to begin to compensate victims financially for the harm suffered.

Regarding the challenges and opportunities related to cooperation in combating migrant smuggling and trafficking, debates focused on reinforcing cooperation for the early detection of persons in vulnerable situations. One opportunity/need is to develop standardized regional protocols for the comprehensive assessment of the risks faced by migrants and to conduct studies to learn about the new modes of migrant smuggling and trafficking. Country representatives recommended the implementation of pilot tests of coordinated multi-institutional control actions at key points of transit along the main migrant smuggling and trafficking routes, stating how this would enhance border management. In addition, it is important to explore public-private alliances to strengthen support, assistance and protection services for potential victims.

In sharing information, participants identified the exchange of information through regional technical working groups as a key good practice. In addition, they mentioned the work and actions carried out by the Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (CORETT) as the institution in charge of adopting and promoting regional standards, policies and processes to combat and prevent migrant smuggling and trafficking and strengthen assistance for victims of trafficking. Furthermore, the Beta Groups of Mexico are another important tool. During the past 33 years, the Beta Groups have been searching for and rescuing migrants. Moreover, the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team of Panama, in charge of the search and rescue of migrants, is composed of paramedics and rescue units in the jungle and is part of the National Border Service, among others. All of the above are key elements in combating migrant smuggling and trafficking and strengthening border management.

GOOD PRACTICES, POLICIES AND TOOLS RELATING TO **PREVENTION OF THE CRIMES OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS**

GOOD PRACTICES

✓ National Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Fund (FONATT) - Costa Rica

POLICIES

✓ Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR) - Panama
✓ Genetic databank to identify missing migrants - El Salvador

SESSION 2B
REGULAR CHANNELS FOR THE ADMISSION AND STAY OF MIGRANTS

4 LEGAL IDENTITY AND DOCUMENTATION	**5** REGULAR PATHWAYS	**12** SCREENING AND REFERRAL
Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation	Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration	Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures

GENERAL PANORAMA

Expanding opportunities for regular migration remains a key priority in the Americas, as limited visa options and often complex administrative procedures hinder pathways for regular migration for the purpose of work, study and family reunification as well as for humanitarian reasons. Objectives 4, 5 and 12 of the GCM highlight the need to enhance access to legal identity, diversify visa options, simplify admission processes and make migration procedures more efficient and predictable.

In recent months, some countries have adopted measures to expand and facilitate pathways for regular migration. However, further efforts are required to reduce barriers, expand visa categories, reduce processing times and costs, reinforce the protection of migrant workers and offer more migration options for humanitarian reasons, as well as options for migrants who have already left their countries of origin in an irregular manner and who are in transit or destination countries. Increased regional cooperation could help identify good practices to continue expanding opportunities for regular migration.

Panellists conducted a dialogue through the Knowledge Café method, led by the Regional Network for Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM), addressing the various challenges faced by migrants regarding access to regular admission channels. Far too often, international migration is a necessity and not a choice.. In the absence of

accessible pathways for regular migration or in scenarios forcing people to migrate due to structural causes, some choose the option of irregular migration, facing high risks on their journey. Country representatives recognized the difficulties in ensuring the equitable application of admission rules and residency requirements for the different visa categories. The participants held panel discussions to thoroughly address the need to facilitate entry and residency through regular channels in order to reduce the risk of migrating irregularly as well as living and working in unsafe environments.

Pathways for regular migration help reduce the risks of vulnerability for migrants. Participants analysed the challenges in expanding and facilitating regular channels for admission and stay, and shared examples of the obstacles that migrants face in seeking regularization of their migration status or accessing channels for regular entry. The main obstacles that were recognized included lack of consular assistance, fear due to irregular migration status, limited language skills, lack of access to legal aid as well as lack of documentation and/or identification of migrant boys, girls and adolescents, which prevents them from accessing the education system in countries of destination even when this is not prohibited by the country's legislation. In addition, difficulties relating to certification and accreditation of competencies were mentioned. Regarding work visas, document issuance and related costs challenges remain that need to be overcome. Furthermore, misinformation disseminated through social media and the limited scope of available information about access to pathways for regular migration were also identified as obstacles.

Other challenges included inconsistencies between the different visa categories, which increases the complexity of access for migrants. In addition, the importance of specialized training for relevant officers was mentioned to enable them to grant admission and stay in a uniform manner in order to prevent discrimination and abuse of power. Participants shared examples of lack of information during the process, long response times, limited access to social rights and guarantees, as well as growing delays which discourage persons from initiating visa application processes to ensure their regular stay or lead them to abandon initiated applications. Within this framework of challenges, participants highlighted the importance of cooperation through regular exchange of information on innovative policies and actions aimed at promoting flexible agreements on residence.

The dialogue focused on promoting the flexibility of admission channels, as well as priorities and opportunities to expand and facilitate pathways for regular admission and stay, ensuring the use of clear, transparent and rights-based criteria to respond to the specific needs of applicants. Prioritized opportunities included the development of standardized regional guidelines on accreditation and revalidation of labour and education competencies; continuous follow-up and review of the admission requirements to ensure that they are practical and accessible for vulnerable populations; and reducing costs related to regularization processes, facilitating the issuance of documents and considering more comprehensive programmes that include regularization as well as access to work permits. In addition, the working groups suggested to explore public-private alliances aimed at establishing assistance centres for migrants that could provide advice on document requirements and low-cost legal services.

And finally, regarding good practices to expand and facilitate channels for regular admission and stay the following were highlighted: labour mobility programmes, family reunification programmes, student visa opportunities, regularization processes for foreign nationals in countries of destination, changes and amendments to legislation on refuge and asylum, issuance of humanitarian visas, etc. Furthermore, mobile units for regularization aimed at decentralizing assistance and facilitating information in various languages were mentioned as well.

GOOD PRACTICES, POLICIES AND TOOLS RELATING TO **ACCESS TO CHANNELS FOR THE REGULAR ADMISSION AND STAY OF MIGRANTS**

GOOD PRACTICES

✓ Regional Study: Migratory Regularization Programmes and Processes - Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Dominican Republic - IOM

✓ Temporary agricultural worker programme Mexico - Canada (PTAT)

✓ International regularization programme for Colombian nationals - Chile

✓ Mobile regularization brigades - Chile

✓ Unique Foreigner Registry (RUEX) - Panama

✓ Visas and work permits - Nicaragua

POLICIES

✓ Law on refugee status determination - El Salvador

TOOLS

✓ Canada Immigration: Economic and family immigration programme, refugee resettlement programme, temporary worker programme, student exchanges, qualified workers - Canada

SESSION 3
CONTRIBUTIONS OF MIGRANTS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

6 RECRUITMENT AND DECENT WORK	**16** INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION	**19** MIGRANT AND DIASPORA CONTRIBUTIONS	**20** REMITTANCES
Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work	Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion	Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries	Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants

GENERAL PANORAMA

Migration and migrants make important financial, social and cultural contributions to communities of origin, transit and destination that are essential to sustainable development in the Americas. In countries of origin, remittances of migrants are a lifeline for their families and communities. The savings of migrants put food on the table of their families and facilitate access to education, health care and housing, among others. In many countries, remittances of migrants account for 19% or more of the GDP. This is a significant macroeconomic support. Networks of migrants promote trade, investment and transfer of competencies between countries of origin and destination. The contribution of migrants to sustainable development has been demonstrated through trade, entrepreneurship, payment of taxes, and participation in social security systems.

In Central and North America and the Caribbean, for example, a 1% increase in the number of migrants in a country is associated to an average increase of 0.23% in exports, as found in an analysis spanning from 1990 to 2020. This is equivalent to an estimated increase of US$7.751 in exports for each additional migrant. Furthermore, migrants also bring various capacities, perspectives and vibrancy to societies throughout the region. Harnessing all the potential of migration for development is fundamental to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region. While progress has been made in this regard, further efforts are required to guarantee rights, promote social cohesion, reduce transaction costs of remittances and strategically leverage the benefits of migration for the achievement of the SDGs.

Objectives 6, 16, 19 and 20 of the GCM seek to promote the protection of migrants and their inclusion, the participation of diasporas and the reduction of transaction costs of remittances with the aim of maximizing benefits. This panel was facilitated by El Salvador, with expert support from IOM and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The panellists highlighted the importance of individuals and remittances in the link between migration and development. Participants conducted an in-depth analysis of the challenges in optimizing the contributions of migrants and promoting inclusion in countries of origin, transit and destination. Country representatives recognized the challenges that remain about harnessing the contributions and the social capital of migrant populations and building cohesive multicultural communities. In addition, a need was identified for recognition of skills and competencies of migrants as well as labour market insertion in the face of market supply and demand, through migration governance, inter-institutional and multi-actor efforts, the development of policies on entrepreneurship to promote the autonomy of migrants, as well as fair and ethical recruitment and evaluation and follow-up on the implementation of projects, programmes and plans. The participants agreed on the importance of addressing these issues in a collective and orderly manner.

Furthermore, experts recognized that diasporas are not homogeneous and that, therefore, gaining their trust is crucial to the development of countries. In addition, they emphasized that the contributions of migrants go beyond remittances and are related to the capital, ideas, values, technologies and knowledge of the diasporas. Hence the importance of reducing the transaction costs of remittances, as stipulated in Objective 20 of the GCM, in accordance with Target 10 c) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Participants recognized the need for inclusion strategies aimed at building welcoming communities through multi-stakeholder programmes promoting social, economic, political and cultural integration.

Regarding opportunities and/or solutions, participants engaged in a committed dialogue focused broadly on strengthening cooperative approaches, proposing pilot initiatives such as mobile information centres to provide guidance to communities of migrants on employment options, integration, language skills, training opportunities and regularization. In addition, they suggested public-private programmes with experienced professionals as mentors of migrant entrepreneurs and/or returned migrants, a regional labour mobility programme, and regional agreements aimed at providing access to social security. They also highlighted the role of remittance corridors as collaboration platforms for financial education and promotion of self-employment, productive investment and savings.

The country representatives agreed that migrants need to be empowered to achieve their full inclusion and make visible the benefits of migration for the development of countries. Therefore, it is crucial to work on developing collective perspectives in countries of destination to combat xenophobia and promote a more broad and humane view of migration. The following challenges were mentioned: increasing migration, the need to train state officials, the dissemination of alternatives to the traditional high-cost remittance transfer services, and working with second and third generation diasporas. Multisectoral collaboration is essential in addressing obstacles in order to achieve social integration across borders and increase access to participation.

GOOD PRACTICES, POLICIES AND TOOLS RELATING TO THE **CONTRIBUTIONS OF MIGRANTS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

GOOD PRACTICES

✓ Integration centres for migrants - Mexico

✓ "Paisano" remittances: FINABIEN card - Mexico

✓ Regulations for the operations of private employment agencies, related services and reforms - Honduras

✓ Amnesty Program - Belize

✓ Self-employment work permit - Panama

✓ 2x1 "Trabajando Unidos con los Migrantes" programme - Mexico

✓ Temporary agricultural worker programme Mexico-Canada

✓ Building climate resilience programme - Belize

TOOLS

✓ Diaspora - IOM

✓ Diaspora Mapping Toolkit - IOM

✓ Code of ethics for employment agencies - Honduras

✓ Training on the Montreal Recommendations on Recruitment - Honduras

SESSION 4A
COLLECTION AND USE OF ACCURATE AND DISAGGREGATED DATA AS A BASIS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICIES

1 DATA

Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies

GENERAL PANORAMA

A strong capacity in the collection and analysis of data on migration is essential for the development of evidence-based policies, follow-up and evaluation of government policies, as well as an informed public discourse. Timely data provide information on trends, needs of migrants, labour market needs and the impact of migration on development, among others.

Initiatives are under way in the region to address these weaknesses in terms of statistics and analysis of migration. However, continued efforts need to be implemented to strengthen national approaches to data collection, promote comparable definitions and strong methodologies, generate experience in data analysis, and facilitate access to and enable the exchange of regional data in a responsible manner. Furthermore, enhancing data systems and collaborating with experts will help reinforce the evidence base to develop policies aimed at maximizing the benefits of orderly and regular migration in the region.

The country representatives used the Knowledge Café method to conduct an in-depth debate led by IOM, addressing the obstacles in obtaining disaggregated information and access to complete data systems on migration. Participants shared specific examples of lack of data or inconsistencies in data which lead to the lack of visibility of migrants with certain profiles, rendering them more vulnerable and at risk of not being represented in policy

debates. Some participants recognized that the existing limitations in frameworks for the collection of data on migration continue to hinder the development of evidence-based policies that respond to the realities on the ground. The members of the discussion tables agreed that evidence and data are crucial for decision-making and for moving towards governance based on protection of the human rights of migrants.

Regarding lack of data, the main areas that need to be addressed are procedural obstacles, correct registration and existing resource constraints. In addition, data collection on migration is limited; insufficient information is collected on gender, education, skills, vulnerability profiles, etc. Furthermore, it is also important to record data on the main points of transit, internal displacements, the impact of climate change and disasters, migrant smuggling, trafficking in persons, exploitation and reports of missing migrants. A challenge that was identified is that not all countries have the technology, competencies and protocols that are required to collect data beyond entries and exits, especially in more remote areas or at borders with high transit levels.

During the debate, participants recognized the complexities they are facing due to lack of availability of a regional database with forensic data, as well as a DNA database to identify deceased and missing migrants. This is exacerbated by insufficient technical knowledge or standardized instruments. Furthermore, country representatives addressed the complexities relating to the harmonization and exchange of data on migration due to national restrictions or lack of coordination among government institutions. Moreover, governmental data and recent studies on the causes of migration and its effects continue to be limited. The participants also mentioned the need to link variables such as migration and health, integration and social security, and return and psychological health, among others.

Regarding the priorities and opportunities to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation concerning data on migration, the importance was highlighted to reinforce collaborative approaches for the collection, management, processing and analysis of data for decision-making and for the harmonization of guidelines and technical procedures aimed at facilitating the exchange and use of data. In this regard, government representatives suggested the collection of data through the regional Human Mobility Observatory proposed by Panama as PPT of the RCM. In addition, participants highlighted the need for collaboration among countries in the validation of competencies to enable labour integration in countries of destination.

Furthermore, the working groups recognized the need for regional collaboration concerning validation of competencies and diplomas in order to enable labour insertion in different countries in the region. In this regard, participants identified the challenge of developing minimum disaggregation criteria considering the variables of gender, age, nationality and disability. Moreover, it was deemed necessary to include some items to identify ethnic and/or cultural characteristics of each person.

GOOD PRACTICES, POLICIES AND TOOLS
RELATING TO DATA COLLECTION AND USE

BUENAS PRÁCTICAS

HERRAMIENTAS

✓ Humanitarian Border Security Unit of Panama (USFROH)

✓ Regional Migration Data Unit (RMDU) - IOM

✓ Unique Foreigner Registry of Panama (RUEX)

SESSION 4B
COOPERATION IN FACILITATING SAFE AND DIGNIFIED RETURN AND READMISSION, AS WELL AS SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

21 DIGNIFIED RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration

GENERAL PANORAMA

With the growing migration, the return and readmission of migrants have gained more importance in Latin America and the Caribbean. Different modes of return are occurring, including forced return and voluntary return. Objective 21 of the GCM underscores the need to cooperate in matters relating to safe and human return and readmission and the improvement of assistance for sustainable reintegration. Countries in the region have developed policies and programmes to receive and reintegrate returned migrants. However, significant constraints remain in terms of the required capacity and resources to provide appropriate services and promote support for the economic, social and psychosocial reintegration of returned migrants, guaranteeing their rights. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the need to address sustainable reintegration at the individual, community and structural level, considering the multiple repercussions of the return of migrants and the need for more effective interventions. Enhanced regional cooperation and shared responsibility are essential to strengthen support for returned migrants and sustainable reintegration in all countries. In addition, investing in data collection, infrastructure and alliances with communities are also key elements in promoting the sustainable reintegration of returned migrants.

During round tables facilitated by RNCOM through guiding questions, participants exchanged ideas on the challenges of facilitating dignified return and ensuring sustainable reintegration; they shared specific examples of returned persons who faced difficulties in accessing adequate livelihoods or basic social services required for their

appropriate reintegration. The participants agreed that the States should, in good faith, reinforce the protection of the human rights of migrants and guarantee their right to health care and social protection, as well as interpreting services and legal representation during the return and reintegration process[5]. In addition, a need was highlighted to provide assistance to and follow up on returned migrants with protection needs in contexts that render them vulnerable or place their lives at risk.

Furthermore, participants addressed the main challenges in facilitating safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration, highlighting procedural obstacles and sociocultural, political and economic constraints that migrants face during the process of return, readmission and sustainable reintegration. Members of the round tables referred to the difficulties of returned migrants in terms of fulfilment of the requirements for access to social services and protection without appropriate guidance or support systems. Other identified challenges were the risks and obstacles that returned migrants could face upon returning to situations with limited labour and social opportunities, especially those persons who had left their countries of origin due to war, social violence and poverty. In addition, participants mentioned difficulties relating to reintegration due to the absence of holistic programmes aimed at ensuring more sustainable processes.

An in-depth analysis was made of the differences between contexts in countries of origin and destination regarding professional integration, certification of competencies, types of support available for reintegration, the social stigma faced by returned migrants, and difficulties in ensuring lasting reintegration for some returned migrants. Furthermore, participants recognized the need for rights-based regulatory frameworks and comprehensive awareness-raising programmes in countries of origin and destination to address the above-mentioned complexities. Moreover, a need exists to effectively guarantee the right to legal identity and to use consular registration to access services. In addition to these concerns, the increase in mixed migration flows limits the response capacity of governments and promotes "express" or massive returns that can lead to violations of the rights of migrants.

Regarding priorities and opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation with the aim of facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, debates focused on social and institutional dimensions. On one hand, coordinated efforts and communication are required, as well as finding solutions considering the well-being of returned migrants and persons with protection needs, especially boys, girls and adolescents, women, LGBTIQ+ populations and people who escaped from situations of generalized social violence. On the other hand, regarding dignified, safe, regular and orderly reintegration processes, participants recognized the need to ensure access to social security and dignified retirement for migrant workers. In addition, measures are needed to follow up on reintegrated persons. Another aspect that was highlighted was the role of the private sector in sustainable reintegration processes and the need to promote community-level actions in order to harness the benefits of migration.

Other identified priorities included the promotion of campaigns on safe readmission and reintegration, competency and education validation processes through consulates, and basic support in communities with returned populations. In addition, country representatives mentioned the need to implement coordinated efforts together with international organizations to reinforce cooperation in countries of origin, transit and destination through effective return and reintegration programmes that are coordinated at the local, national and regional level. Furthermore, participants emphasized the importance of making resources available to promote self-sufficiency through specific workshops on financial education and capacity-building of migrants to enable them to save and invest upon their return.

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[5] The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) is based on international human rights legislation and reaffirms the commitment of States to respect, protect and realize the human rights of all migrants. The GCM is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and each of the nine basic instruments of international human rights law. See OHCHR and Migration.

GOOD PRACTICES, POLICIES AND TOOLS RELATING TO **SAFE AND DIGNIFIED RETURN AND READMISSION**

GOOD PRACTICES

- ✓ Comprehensive financial education week for Mexicans abroad - Mexico

- ✓ "Sembrando Vida" programme - Mexico

- ✓ "Jóvenes construyendo el futuro" programme - Mexico

- ✓ "Héroes paisanos" programme - Mexico

- ✓ "El Salvador Más (+)" programme - El Salvador

- ✓ Training to strenghten associations of Guatemalan migrants abroad - Guatemala

- ✓ Institutional round table for comprehensive assistance to returning Mexican families - Mexico

TOOLS

- ✓ Social Development Observatory (SEDESOL) - Honduras

SESSION 5
PREPARING FOR THE REVIEW OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION TO BE CONDUCTED IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN 2024

This session was led by the Director of the Secretariat of the United Nations Network on Migration (UNNM). The panel addressed the context and progress made in the implementation of the GCM, the objectives achieved through the recording of good practices in the United Nations Migration Network Hub and the importance of the agreements and commitments taken on by the Member States. The UNNM representative highlighted that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is the first multilateral framework developed under the auspices of the United Nations to strengthen international cooperation in all aspects relating to migration. In addition, he underscored that the GCM is an instrument to promote better conditions for migration governance and sustainable development, addressing the different dimensions of migration at the local, national and regional level.

The GCM recognizes that migration is a global phenomenon and therefore, regional reviews help to gain a deeper understanding of the reality in the region. Furthermore, the UNNM representative emphasized that IOM, as the Coordinator of UNNM, supports the Member States in the development and organization of regional reviews to identify the progress made in the implementation of the GCM. In this regard, the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) is the inter-governmental platform to discuss and present advances at the global level. Therefore, follow-up and reviews of the GCM should be continuously performed in order to assess progress and as an opportunity to drive the migration agenda.

While the GCM does not establish a specific review methodology, dialogue among countries, and regional consultative processes serve to exchange information, good practices and regional challenges, identify key actions, and develop public policies aimed at furthering the understanding of the phenomenon of migration in order to formulate recommendations. After the global review conducted in May 2022 (IMRF), the priority of safeguarding

the lives of migrants in humanitarian crisis contexts was adopted as a mandate. Through specific examples shared through the United Nations Migration Network Hub, the expert referred to the main progress made towards the achievement of the objectives of the GCM. The good practices recorded on the platform enable the identification of cooperation actions and serve as examples for other Member States. Although assessing progress in the achievement of the objectives of the GCM is essential, the United Nations consider capacity-building at the country level to be the primary mission in managing international migration.

It should be noted that 40% of all the good practices recorded in the United Nations Migration Network Hub originated in Latin America and the Caribbean. The objectives where more progress has been reported in the repository of good practices are Objective 16 on inclusion and social cohesion, Objective 7 on addressing and reducing vulnerabilities in migration, and Objective 8 on saving lives. On the other hand, there are no good practices recorded for Objective 13 on alternatives to detention and Objective 14 on consular protection and therefore, an opportunity exists for coordination and joint efforts. Likewise, countries are expected to make progress towards the achievement of Objective 2 on minimizing the adverse drivers, as well as aspects relating to climate change. Regarding the agreements assumed voluntarily by the Member States, progress relating to 22 of the 39 pledges[6] has been recorded.

Finally, the Director of UNNM called for promoting follow-up as well as participative and inclusive reviews. Regarding the role of the champion countries in the development of the report for the coming year, the panellist highlighted the importance of continuing to work to be champion countries and actively fostering the implementation of the GCM. It is very important that the champion countries continue to add good practices in order to encourage other Member States to participate in the regional reviews and to continue working on the commitments undertaken. In consultations with the RCM Member Countries, a request was highlighted for a methodology of dialogue on migration in view of the upcoming review, as well as the need for a tool to facilitate follow-up and measurement of the indicators of the GCM to be able to report the progress more precisely. The participants agreed that it would be important to address these deficiencies collectively through enhanced coordination and guidelines to ensure that the review of the GCM is evidence-based.

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[6] See Pledging Initiative delivering on migration - IOM

TOOLS TO **PREPARE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION TO BE CONDUCTED IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBREAN IN 2024**

TOOLS

✓ Migration Network Hub - IOM

✓ Mechanism for national coordination on human mobility - El Salvador

✓ Protocol for humanitarian assistance and management for Salvadorans abroad - El Salvador

PRESENTATION OF IDEAS FOR COOPERATION AMONG CHAMPION COUNTRIES

Based on the sessions and a specific one on dialogue, the participants proposed ideas for cooperation based on good practices, lessons learned, opportunities and challenges addressed during the two-day event.

GROUP 1 - PROTECTING MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS (SESSION 1)

- Standardize mechanisms for assistance and rescue of migrants and refugees in transit through experiences and good practices reported by the Humanitarian Border Security Unit of Panama (USFROH) and the Beta Groups of Mexico, as groups specializing in the rescue of migrants; in addition, exchange good practices in the search for missing migrants.

- Create a mechanism for the identification of deceased migrants in the region through compatible and standardized databases and data collection systems.

- Create a protocol for consular assistance and services through strengthening the consular network.

- Provide training-of-trainers courses for officers who are in direct contact with migrants.

- Promote regular channels and registration of migrants in the region to enable traceability of information.

- Strengthen specialized shelters and protection services in the region.

- Standardize mechanisms for the registration and identification of labour and skills of migrants to grant temporary work permits.

GROUP 2 - MIGRANT SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND BORDER MANAGEMENT (SESSION 2A)

- Consolidate a regional coordination network and a response mechanism for migrants in transit who are victims of migrant smuggling and trafficking.

- Promote parallel financial investigations related to the crimes of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants through use of new technologies and the tracking of suspicious activities.

- Strengthen actions to provide access of migrants to information in different languages on the topics of crime reporting and access to justice.

- Enhance exchange of information in order to standardize crisis response actions.

GROUP 3 - REGULAR CHANNELS FOR THE ADMISSION AND STAY OF MIGRANTS (SESSION 2B)

- Standardize a system for the recognition of occupations and skills of migrants.

- Establish an information system to combat organized crime and fraud in regularization processes.

- Promote more humane, comprehensive and inclusive public policies aimed at promoting sustainable development.

GROUP 4 - THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MIGRANTS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (SESSION 3)

- Potentiate the contributions of diasporas at the social, political, cultural and economic level.

GROUP 5 - COLLECTION AND USE OF ACCURATE AND DISAGGREGATED DATA AS A BASIS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICIES (SESSION 4)

- Develop a platform to collect data on migrants who are victims of the crimes of migrant smuggling and trafficking.

- Share information in a database on missing migrants and their families.

- Reinforce collaboration among countries relating to the validation of competencies and networks of migrant professionals.

- Generate regional consensus on the collection of minimum and basic data on migrants (gender, age, nationality, disability, ethnic origin).

- Create the Human Mobility Observatory and approve the Andrés Bello Agreement[7].

GROUP 6 - COOPERATION IN FACILITATING SAFE AND DIGNIFIED RETURN AND READMISSION, AS WELL AS SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION (SESSION 4B)
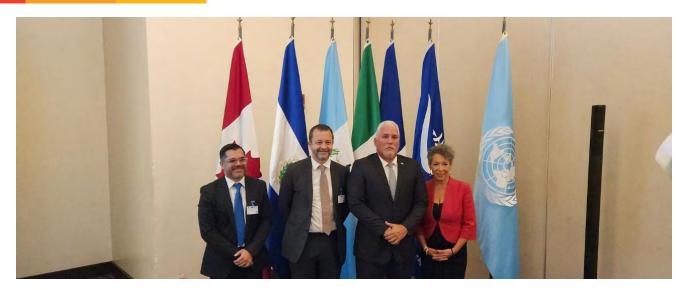
- Strengthen regional inter-institutional coordination for assisted voluntary return and special situations such as unaccompanied boys, girls and adolescents, victims of trafficking, and persons with disabilities or chronic diseases.

- Implement a follow-up and response system for reintegration processes in order to achieve sustainable reintegration.

RESULTS OF THE POST-TEST - SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACTIONS AIMED AT STRENGTHENING COOPERATION

- Follow up on the shared actions and good practices to establish specific actions and/or to promote their adoption by other States.

- Accompany each country's processes through exchange of information and data.

- Reinforce cooperation and actions within regional mechanisms such as the RCM.

- Train officers and invest human and financial resources with the aim of achieving good migration governance.

- Develop virtual thematic round tables with experts to address specific topics more in depth.

- Work towards the development of regional migration policies (for example, the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) initiative).

- Develop joint proposals for collective decision-making on migration governance in the region.

- Increase the participation of different countries in order to diversify dialogue.

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[7] The Andrés Bello Agreement, as an international inter-governmental organization, promotes the stengthening of integration processes and the establishment and development of a common cultural space. It seeks to generate consensus and courses of action in the spheres of culture, education, science and technology, with the purpose of achieving that the benefits that are generated contribute to the equitable, sustainable and democratic development of the member countries. See Organization of the Andrés Bello Agreement.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL OBSERVATIONS

For two days, the Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) and other champion countries of the Americas, Africa and Europe, with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Network on Migration, actively participated in the "First Regional Forum of Champion Countries in the Americas: Good Practices for the Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM)". The participating countries discussed the current panorama, challenges, and opportunities of migration and its linkage with sustainable development. They also shared policies, practices, tools and experiences in the area of migration governance.

The participating countries underscored the value of the GCM as a fundamental framework and common language to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities of migration. In addition, they exchanged experiences in combating migrant smuggling, human trafficking and forced labour, as well as practices to promote regular channels for the admission and stay of migrants and improve access to legal identity and proper documentation. During the Forum, country representatives reflected on the contribution of migrants to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, prioritizing the challenges that require coordinated actions in the collection and use of accurate data for public policy formulation, as well as promoting safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration.

Experts recognized the value of collecting and widely disseminating programmes and policies related to protection in different languages to promote access to those services. The conclusions focused on the need to establish sustainable structures to facilitate GCM implementation, review and follow-up.. In addition, opportunities were identified through dialogue to strengthen actions to combat migrant smuggling and trafficking. Authorities discussed how digital information platforms could help expedite the exchange of data in real time, show crime indicators and support ongoing investigations in combating transnational organized criminal networks in the region.

Furthermore, country representatives highlighted the importance of identifying and disseminating inclusion programmes and standardized training plans as well as detailed information on rights and available support services in the languages spoken by migrants. The participants prioritized migration management for the medium and long term with by enhancing the positive role and contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination, including by enriching societies through human, socioeconomic and cultural capacities.. Moreover, the participants recognized the need to map diasporas, considering their needs and promoting efforts aimed at empowering them.

Humane, voluntary, and dignified return and readmission should be linked to sustainable reintegration programmes. After sharing information, participants reiterated the importance of providing special support to boys, girls and adolescents, women, older adults, persons with disabilities and migrants in vulnerable situations. Moreover, collaboration in the exchange of knowledge among shareholders is essential in addressing technical and resource-related obstacles.

The post-test given to participants showed that the 93% of those who responded thought that the different, highly interactive formats used throughout the event were very good. In addition, 90% of the participants that took part in the exit survey/post-test completely agreed that the Regional Forum had allowed them to expand their knowledge and understanding of migration trends, policies, practices and tools and that this could facilitate collaboration and mechanisms to exchange information and good practices in migration governance. Furthermore, 90% of the participants expressed that cooperation is essential in addressing the challenges and opportunities of migration governance in accordance with regional and global frameworks and through the good practices, tools and actions shared during the event.

The Executive Secretariat of the RCM thanked all participants for their active contribution to this important dialogue and for their engagement in discussing migration matters addressed during the intensive debates, as well as for their commitment to work in a coordinated manner in preparing for the review of the GCM to be conducted in 2024. It was highlighted that IOM´s work is to support countries in their efforts to move towards the achievement of safe, orderly, regular and humane migration, and to promote international cooperation in migration matters, contribute to solving challenges posed by migration including humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, and enhance the benefits of migration for migrants, their families and communities in countries of origin, transit, destination and return. Finally, Panama as President pro tempore of the RCM thanked all participants for their valuable contributions before officially closing this successful meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants of the First Regional Forum of Champion Countries of the GCM in the Americas maintained a positive spirit and open, crosscutting dialogues in line with priorities and initiatives set forth in the RCM Strategic Plan. It focussed on exploring solutions based on cooperation. Country representatives took the opportunity to re-iterate their commitment to maintain and strengthen current exchanges in order to advance collectively in applying comprehensive solutions that are based on the human rights of migrants.

During the sessions of the Forum, country representatives emphasized the joint progress made in the implementa-tion of the GCM and actions aimed at reinforcing migration governance within the various national contexts in the region. The following recommendations and next steps are highlighted:

- In addressing the protection of migrants in vulnerable situations, the importance was highlighted of maintain-ing continuous communication on advances, challenges and good practices in protection in order to prevent the loss of lives. Furthermore, the need was recognized to manage and share information on vulnerability pro-files of migrants throughout all phases of the migration cycle.

- Collaboration mechanisms need to be created and strengthened to implement joint efforts in combating crim-inal networks in different jurisdictions. Examples of such mechanisms include the Beta Groups (Mexico) and the USAR Team (Panama). Regarding migrant smuggling and trafficking, multisectoral coordination is important to provide effective responses based on intelligence and protection. The greatest expectations are related to the strengthening of international cooperation through specialized training, joint initiatives and inter-institutional coordination focussing on safeguarding borders and protecting the rights of migrants. In addition, partici-pants recommended to continue working to counteract misinformation on migrant smuggling and trafficking through information campaigns.

- For migrants with specific vulnerability profiles, among others, the following aspects need to be considered: regular channels for admission and stay, whether for purposes of family reunification or for humanitarian or work-related reasons. In this regard, participants recommended to conduct multi-channel public aware-ness-raising campaigns to disseminate relevant information across borders through radio broadcasts, online platforms and mobile dissemination units. Furthermore, representatives of the participating countries recom-

mended to strengthen regional cooperation to promote the availability and accessibility of channels for the admission and stay of migrants in vulnerable situations through specialized initiatives to explore good practices relating to flexible agreements on residence and systems to ensure accessibility of documentation.

- The contribution of migration to host communities and countries of destination needs to be strengthened and made visible. In the discussions focused on next steps and opportunities, participants highlighted the need to establish sustainable coordination mechanisms to promote advances as well as the ratification of international agreements. In addition, they proposed to formalize permanent forums for multisectoral stakeholders - public, private, governmental and non-governmental.

- In order to move towards the achievement of the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration, accurate and disaggregated data need to be collected. Participants underscored the importance of prioritizing specific initiatives such as the development of versatile data collection tools integrated into service provision platforms to record information. In addition, the need was recognized to establish mechanisms for sustainable coordination among stakeholders through the creation of technical working groups composed of data specialists that generate timely, accessible, reliable and disaggregated information to enable a deeper understanding of the dynamics of migration. Furthermore, reports, publications and national newsletters are necessary as sound data inform decision-making and enable understanding the magnitude of the phenomenon of migration.

- The participants considered the development of digital portals as a priority, with detailed information on the rights of returned migrants and the support services available, in several common languages. In addition, they emphasized the importance of recognizing the skills and competencies acquired by returned migrants for use in the reintegration process. Furthermore, they recommended to reinforce knowledge sharing through inter-institutional efforts to explore various project initiatives and strengthen comprehensive assistance networks. They also highlighted that it is essential to promote networks and partnerships between migrant organizations, authorities and employers at the regional level to develop joint strategies aimed at fostering sustainable return.

- Finally, the participants recommended to facilitate access to the information resulting from and shared during the Forum; include more countries and civil society in order to enrich dialogue; incorporate testimonies and encourage the participation of migrants; and create more spaces for cooperation through the knowledge acquired during the sessions.

APPENDIX

FIGURE 1. JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ, FIRST REGIONAL FORUM OF CHAMPION COUNTRIES IN THE AMERICAS

Joint Communiqué

**FIRST REGIONAL FORUM OF CHAMPION COUNTRIES IN THE AMERICAS:
GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION**

**September 27 and 28, 2023
Panama, Republic of Panama**

The Government of Panama, in the framework of its Presidency Pro-Témpore of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) during the year 2023, and with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), convened the First Regional Forum of Champion Countries of the Americas: Good Practices for the Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), which was held from September 27 to 28, 2023, in Panama City, with more than 82 representatives from 17 countries.

The main objective of the Forum was to bring together the RCM Member Countries and other GCM champion[1] countries to promote greater collaboration, with a view to advancing the implementation of the GCM and contributing to the 2030 Agenda. To this end, participating countries discussed the current panorama and challenges, as well as the opportunities of migration and its linkage with sustainable development, sharing policies, practices, tools, and experiences in the area of migration governance.
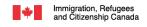
The representatives of the participating countries recognized the need to continue strengthening actions to ensure the protection of migrants in vulnerable situations, improve humanitarian assistance, reduce their vulnerabilities and, above all, save lives.

During the meeting, the countries exchanged experiences in combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking, as well as practices to promote regular channels for the admission and stay of migrants, and to improve access to legal identity and proper documentation.

Country representatives reflected on the contribution of migrants to the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda, recognizing the need to achieve their full inclusion and social cohesion and to create the necessary conditions for diasporas to contribute to sustainable development.

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[1] Azerbaijan, Colombia, Nigeria, ...

In addition, the collection and use of accurate data for public policy formulation, as well as promoting safe and dignified return for sustainable reintegration were key topics of discussion.

Participating countries underscored the value of the GCM as a fundamental framework and common language to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities of migration in a region characterized by migration. "The role of the champion countries in its implementation is key and I congratulate them for their leadership," added IOM Regional Director Michele Klein-Solomon.

Finally, the participants laid the groundwork to work in a coordinated manner in preparation for the review of the GCM in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in 2024, which will be an opportunity to strengthen regional and inter-regional cooperation on migration with the participation of all stakeholders.

The participating countries thank the People and Government of the Republic of Panama for their hospitality and efforts to carry out this first Forum in the Americas, as well as the Government of Canada, the Observer Organizations, and other members of the United Nations Regional Network[2] on Migration who supported the development of this meeting.

Contact:

- RCM Executive Secretary: crmst@iom.int

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[2] UNHCR, CEPAL, CICR, IFRC, OACNUDH, IOM, ILO, PNUD, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC.

APPENDIX 1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE FIRST FORUM OF CHAMPION COUNTRIES OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION IN THE AMERICAS

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
Belize	Gilroy Middleton	Chief Executive Officer	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration
Belize	Ramón Reyes	Immigration and Nationality Assistant	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration
Costa Rica	Marta Vindas Gonzáles	General Director of Migration	General Office of Migration and Immigration
Costa Rica	Eugenia Víctor Sánchez	Head of Planning	General Office of Migration and Immigration
Canada	Mónica Cuevas García	First Secretary (Migration)	Embassy of Canada to Colombia
El Salvador	María Elena Guzmán de Guzmán	Head of the Department of International Organizations and Intergovernmental Spaces	Office for Analysis and Human Mobility Alliances - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
El Salvador	María Elena Beltrán de Villatoro	Head of the Department of Humanitarian Management, Office of Human Mobility and Assistance for Migrants	Vice-Ministry of Diasporas and Human Mobility - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
El Salvador	Diana Marcela Vanegas Hernández	Ambassador	Embassy of El Salvador in Panama
El Salvador	Raúl Enrique Aparicio Martínez	General Consul	Diplomatic and Consular Representation of El Salvador in Panama
United States	Eric Aldrich	Regional Refugee Coordinator for Panama and the Caribbean	US Embassy Panama
United States	Emma Nagy	Deputy Regional Refugee Coordinator	U.S. Embassy Panama
Guatemala	Fabiola Mazariegos	Director of Migration Affairs	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Guatemala	Christopher Herrera	Third Secretary of the Office for Migration Affairs	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Honduras	Teresa de Jesús Sánchez Hernández	Executive Assistant to the General Office for Protection of Honduran Migrants	Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Honduras	Josué Flores	Officer, Global Compact for Migration	Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
México	Daniela Sánchez	Deputy Director of Links with Institutions and Civil Society	Unit for Migration Policy, Registry and Identity of Persons
México	Antonio García	Deputy Director of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs	General Office for Protection of Migrants and Linkage of the National Institute of Migration

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
Mexico	Jesús González Mondragón	Director of International and Inter-Institutional Relations	Unit for Migration Policy, Registry and Identity of Persons
Mexico	Santiago Mateos Cibrián		
Nicaragua	Miguel Ángel Ortez	Deputy Director of Borders	General Office of Migration and Immigration
Nicaragua	Heizel Pinnell Solís	Head of the Planning and Information Division	General Office of Migration and Immigration
RNCOM El Salvador	Vinicio Sandoval	Executive Director	GMIES
RNCOM Honduras	María Salgado Mendoza	Executive Secretary	FONAMIH
RCM ES	Luis Alonso Serrano	Executive Secretary	RCM Executive Secretariat
RCM ES	Marisol Aguilar	Technical Assistant	RCM Executive Secretariat
RCM ES	Renán Rodas	IT Specialist	RCM Executive Secretariat
RCM ES Consultant	Silvia Urbina	Consultant	Consultant for the RCM Executive Secretariat
RCM ES Consultant	Sara Rivas	Consultant	Consultant for the RCM Executive Secretariat

LIST OF NATIONAL GUESTS

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
Panama	Javier Barrios Cobas	Coordinator of the Presidency pro tempore	Ministry of Public Security
Panama	Seychell Mai Gutiérrez Tejada	Consultant	Mire
Panama	Silvana Miletic	Consultant	IOM/Ministry of Public Security
Panama	Luci Pottinger	Legal Assistant	Mire
Panama	Yaquelin Rivera	Legal Assistant	Mire
Panama	Johanna Aguirre	Head of Legal Affairs	Mire
Panama	Eleazar Bonilla	Attorney	Mire
Panama	Ayleen Hidalgo	Legal Intern	Mire
Panama	Elzebir Huffington	Migration Inspector / Technical Assistant to the Sub-Directorate	National Migration Service
Panama	Joel José Vega Rodríguez	Labour Inspector	MITRADEL

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
Panama	Jorge A Tapia Díaz	Labour Inspector	MITRADEL
Panama	Ricardo Alexis Moreno Sánchez	Inspector	National Migration Service
Panama	Auristela Rodríguez	Attorney	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Panama
Panama	Vittorio Arnall Quintero Martinez	Deputy Head of the Unit for Migrant Smuggling Affairs (UATIM)	National Migration Service
Panama	Carlos Alberto Cossio Calderón	Lieutenant	National Police Force
Panama	Eustace Edwin Ashby Vargas	First Sergeant	National Police Force/ Department of Judicial Investigation (DIJ)
Panama	Zulaimin Thare Ayala Bruce	Assistant Prosecutor	Public Prosecutor's Office, First Superior Specialized Prosecutor's Office against Organized Crime
Panama	Jeny María Moreno	Prosecutor	Public Prosecutor's Office
Panama	Edilma María alemán De Hoyos	Analyst	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Panama	Vanessa Maclove	Labour Inspector	MITRADEL
Panama	Layda B. Mojica R.	Deputy Director of Employment	Ministry of Labour and Labour Development
Panama	Karen Izolina Butterbaugh Box	Inspector I I	National Migration Service

EXTRAREGIONAL CHAMPION COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
Colombia	Martha Patricia Medina González	Director of the Office for Migration and Consular Affairs and Citizen Services	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ecuador	Marcelo Hurtado	Undersecretary of the Ecuadorian Migrant Community (e)	Undersecretariat of International Protection and Assistance for Immigrants
Peru	Walter Zumarán Dávila	Second Secretary	General Office of Peruvian Communities Abroad and Consular Affairs
Peru	Sheler Rojas Sucapuca	Third Secretary	General Office of Peruvian Communities Abroad and Consular Affairs

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
Nigeria	Dr. Betta Edu	Honorable Minister	Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation Federal Secretariat
Ghana	Lila-Karen Amponsah (Ms)	Senior Planning Analyst, National Development Planning Commission	
Ghana	Richard Atsu Kuadamah (Mr)	Head, Living Conditions Statistics, Ghana Statistical Service	
Azerbaijan	Mr. Vusal Huseynov	Head, State Migration Service	
The Gambia	Mr. Musa Camara	Director, Diaspora, and Migration Directorate	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation & Gambians Abroad
Turkey	Nurdan Erpulat Altuntaş	Director General of Consular Affairs	Director General of Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye

OBSERVERS AND EXPERTS

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
UNHCR	Juan Pablo Terminiello	Senior Legal Officer	UNHCR
ICRC	Anais Faure-Atger		ICRC
IOM	Rudi Maxwald	Senior Regional Liaison & Policy Advisor	Regional Office San José (RO SJO)
IOM	Erica Guevara	Research Assistant	Regional Office San José (RO SJO)
IOM	Michela Macchiavello	Labor Migration & Dev. Specialist	Regional Office San José (RO SJO)
IOM	Gabriel De Boisdeffre	United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Intern	Regional Office San José (RO SJO)
IOM	Raul Soto	Regional Migration Data Coordinator	Regional Office San José (RO SJO)
IOM	Jonathan Prentice	Director	UNNM Secretariat
IOM	Alejandra Gómez	Regional Programme Manager (AVRR)	IOM Mexico
IOM	Mariela Guajardo	Operations and Emergencies Officer	IOM
IOM	Giuseppe Loprete	Head of Mission	IOM Panama
IOM	Idiam Osorio	National Project Officer	IOM Panama
IOM	Karen Lohse	JPO (Humanitarian Devt & Peace Nexus Officer	IOM Panama

COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	INSTITUTION
OHCHR	Andrea Ospina		OHCHR
IOM	Michele Klein Solomon	Regional Director	Regional Office San José (RO SJO)
OIT	Juan Ignacio Castillo		
PNUD	Daniela Chaparro		
PAHO/WHO	Jorge Miranda	National Consultant for International Cooperation in Health	Office for International Affairs and Technical Cooperation of the Ministry of Health
UNICEF	Sayo Aoki	Emergency Manager	UNICEF LACRO
UNFPA	Jackeline Romio	Programme Specialist in Population and Development	UNFPA

APPENDIX 3. QR OF THE FIRST REGIONAL FORUM OF CHAMPION COUNTRIES IN THE AMERICAS