



The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The Promise of Making Migration Work for all in the Arab Region



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**The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular
Migration: the promise of making migration work
for all in the Arab region**



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I. The road to the Global Compact for Migration

The historic endorsement of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#) in 2018 represented a major milestone in migration governance. The GCM is the culmination of a decade-long international dialogue on migration issues in major global forums¹ that led to the General Assembly adoption of the [New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#)² on 19 September 2016, which committed Member States to launching a process of intergovernmental negotiations leading to the adoption of a global compact for migration.

The GCM builds on a set of global frameworks including the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, which call upon Member States to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (target 10.7).³

The inclusive process followed in the development of the GCM ensured that it reflects the priorities and concerns of countries and regions across the globe. The Arab region participated actively during the consultation and negotiation phases. The key messages that emanated from the 2017 [Regional Consultation on International Migration in the Arab Region](#) were presented at the stocktaking meeting in Mexico in December 2017 and served to inform the subsequent negotiation phase leading up to the adoption of the GCM.

The Global Compact for Migration comes at a critical moment for the Arab region as it witnesses unprecedented population movements. In 2017, the Arab region hosted over 38 million migrants (close to 15 per cent of the global migrant population), while the number of migrants from Arab countries reached 29 million persons. Internal displacement is also an important feature of migratory flows in the region, with close to 15 million people internally displaced in 2017.

Migration in the Arab region is driven by complex and compounded socioeconomic and political factors that vary between countries and subregions. The main drivers include political instability, ongoing and emerging conflict and humanitarian crises, poverty, high unemployment, especially among youth and young women, marginalization and exclusion, widening inequality, low and unprotected wages and education that is low in quality as well as yielding poor returns, in addition to the region’s vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. These drivers often overlap causing unprecedented levels of migration in the Arab region.

Against this backdrop, Arab countries across the region have identified migration governance as one of their policy priority areas and, as a consequence, the region has witnessed a spike in migration-related policies and projects.

II. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) comes as the first comprehensive intergovernmentally negotiated agreement prepared under the auspices of the United Nations that addresses

¹ These include the two United Nations High-level Dialogues on International Migration and Development (held in 2006 and 2013) and the Member State-led Global Forum on Migration and Development, held annually since 2007.

² [A/RES/71/1](#).

³ Frameworks include: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which also commits Member States to “cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, with full respect for human rights” and “to increase cooperation on access to and portability of earned benefits, enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills, lower the costs of recruitment for migrants and combat unscrupulous recruiters” (para. 111); the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and its recommendations concerning measures to mitigate risks associated with disasters; and the Paris Agreement of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

migration governance. The GCM, with its 23 objectives and their associated commitments and suggested actions, provides a 360-degree approach to help achieve safe, orderly and regular migration.

Adopted at the Marrakech Conference in Morocco on 10 December 2018 by 165 United Nations Member States and formally endorsed by the General Assembly on 19 December 2018 as a non-binding agreement, it marks a historic turning point in migration governance and provides states with the flexibility to pursue implementation based on their own migration realities, capacities and priorities.

The global compact, anchored in international human rights law, upholds the principles of non-regression and non-discrimination. It ensures effective respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, across all stages of the migration cycle and carries a strong human dimension to it. It places individuals at its core and promotes the well-being of migrants and the members of communities in countries of origin, transit and destination.

The Global Compact for Migration considers that migration is a multidimensional reality that cannot be addressed by one government policy sector alone. It promotes a whole-of-government approach to ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government.

It also promotes a broad multi-stakeholder partnership to address migration in all its dimensions by including migrants, diasporas, local communities, civil society, the media and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance.

Furthermore, it is rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and builds upon its recognition that migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the sustainable development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses.

Most importantly, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration reflects many key issues and priorities of migration governance in the region. Its 23 objectives cover a whole spectrum of topics related to numerous facets of migration for better governance of migration at local, national, regional and global levels. Its goals are at the same time mitigating the negative causes of migration and fostering its positive consequences.

Indeed, the GCM is a blueprint on how States can best manage migration and cooperate more effectively with one another and with other stakeholders, based on their own migration realities and capacities.

III. The new approach to migration governance

The Global Compact for Migration is grounded in the common understanding that, when properly managed, migration has a potential to enhance sustainable development for all. What follows are some entry points that embody the spirit of the GCM and that could assist States in developing migration-related policies that ensure the protection and empowerment of migrants and capitalize on the development potential of migration for countries of origin, transit and destination.

Evidence-based approach

The GCM underscores the importance of managing migration through policies and practices that are clearly grounded in evidence. Establishing effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks is also clearly dependent on the availability of a wide evidence base. To this end, the GCM highlights the importance of the collection, analysis and dissemination of accurate, reliable and comparable data, which is disaggregated by sex, age, migration status and other relevant characteristics.

Apart from informing policymaking and ensuring its coherence, data is a key element for informed public discourse, providing a base of evidence about the benefits and challenges of migration and helping

dispel harmful and misleading narratives and stereotypes. Migrants themselves also benefit greatly from the availability and accessibility of quality migration information and data which can inform them about their rights, obligations and options for safe, orderly and regular migration and raise awareness of the risks of irregular migration.

Rights-based approach

One of the fundamental principles underpinning the GCM is that all people including migrants are entitled to the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. The GCM reiterates that it is the overarching obligation of Member States to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all migrants at all times, regardless of their migration status.

By establishing human rights as a cornerstone of migration governance and placing people squarely at the heart of it, the GCM serves as a tool to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities faced by migrants at different stages of migration. It highlights the specific needs of various groups of migrants, such as women and children, and calls for addressing these needs through adopting gender-responsive and child-sensitive measures that ensure migrants are protected and empowering them as agents of development.

Integrated approach

The GCM acknowledges that achieving the desirable state of safe, orderly and regular migration is impossible through a fragmented approach to migration governance. Instead, migration issues need to be integrated both horizontally into all relevant sectoral policies, and vertically into development planning and at the local, national, regional and global levels. Moreover, it is not sufficient to reflect the rights, needs and potential of migrants as a part of development strategies, but the implications of migration need to be considered in infrastructure planning and budget allocations as well.

The GCM puts special emphasis on integrating the perspectives and priorities of local authorities into development strategies, programmes and planning on migration, as a means to ensure good governance as well as policy coherence across levels of government and policy sectors.

Participatory approach

The GCM recognizes that in order to address migration in all its dimensions and to make migration work for all in countries of origin, transit and destination, the participation of all segments of society is inevitable. As a part of this whole-of-society approach, the GCM promotes broad multi-stakeholder participation and partnerships including migrants, diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, national human rights institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance.

IV. Follow-up and review of the GCM

To measure the progress on achieving the GCM objectives, regular and effective follow-up and review is required. Mirroring the different but mutually reinforcing levels of implementation of the GCM, the follow-up and review will take place at the national, regional and global levels. The reviews at all levels should be aligned with the spirit and letter of the GCM and guided by its guiding principles.

Member States are encouraged to prepare voluntary national reports to measure their progress and identify challenges hindering their achievement of the GCM objectives. They are invited to present the results during the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF). The IMRF will serve as the primary intergovernmental platform to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the GCM, including how it relates to the 2030 Agenda. According to the resolution of the General Assembly on the

modalities and organizational aspects of the IMRF⁴ adopted on 19 July 2019, the first IMRF shall take place during the first semester of 2022 and thereafter every four years. It should result in a progress declaration that is concise, evidence-based and action-oriented.

Recognizing that most international migration takes place within regions, the GCM also called for regional-level reviews, which are essential building blocks of global discussions on the progress in implementing the GCM. The first regional reviews will take place in late 2020, alternating with discussions at the global level at a four-year interval, in order to effectively inform each edition of the IMRF.

In the Arab region, the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, co-chaired by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the League of Arab States (LAS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and incorporating 16 other United Nations agencies, with support from the UN Network on Migration, will coordinate a follow-up and review process at the regional level. The review process will culminate in a regional conference organized in December 2020, which will bring together representatives of Members States to present their national reports, in addition to broad participation of stakeholders and engagement of partners. It will also be an opportunity to take stock of input from regional consultative processes and other relevant subregional, regional and cross-regional processes, platforms and organizations. The outcome of the regional review process will feed into the global review process.

⁴ [A/RES/73/326](#).



