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Migration Department*

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A Briefing Paper

Introduction

In preparation for the Global Forum on Migration and Development to be held in Istanbul, Turkey in October 2015, and on occasion of holding the First Meeting of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration (ARCP) at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States on 27 and 28 April 2015, a special session was dedicated to reflect on the Arab member states vision towards the agenda of the Global Forum on Migration and Development was discussed during the second day of the meeting, and the following points were agreed upon:

I. Concerning human mobility and well-being of Migrants

1. Emphasize the principle of shared responsibility between countries of origin and destination, develop comprehensive and balanced approaches and visions to safeguard and protect the rights of migrants and their family members and raise their awareness about their rights and means to defend them in every possible way.
2. Considering the growing phenomenon of xenophobia, participants emphasize the need to protect the rights of migrants and seek to support them, as enshrined in regional and international instruments and to keep them out from political agendas and racist practices.
3. Urge the European Union to include the issue of the rights of migrants in the New European Neighbourhood Policy, which is currently being under discussion.
4. Recall for examination of the conditions of Arab migrants and expatriates in their different countries of residence, in light of the changes taking place in these countries with a view to unifying positions to protect the rights of migrants in accordance with regional and international conventions.
5. Shed light on vulnerable and marginalized groups of migrants, and raise awareness about women and children issues through programmes that inform on their rights.
6. Call on countries of destination to facilitate family reunion procedures, in a way that enhances protection of migrants from different forms of violence, trafficking and exploitation and to ensure their access to the necessary legal protection.

7. Urge countries of destination to set out and advance effective policies that aim at integration of migrants so as to achieve social cohesion, safeguard their linguistic, cultural, religious rights and to ensure they exercise these rights.
8. Urge countries of destination to take the necessary measures to ensure protection of the rights of migrant workers through reform of legislations, commitment to international instruments and treaties, and setting out fair and transparent mechanisms for their recruitment procedure and protection of their rights.
9. Support means of combating irregular migration, smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and prevention of criminal networks, by raising awareness about their risks, enacting necessary laws and enforcing them.
10. The importance of coordination at both regional and international levels to render assistance to refugees, and emphasize the need to protect migrants and refugees, and their rights, particularly in times of crises.
11. Encourage ratification of all the fundamental international conventions of human rights and labour rights of migrants.
12. Seek solutions to the problem of forced returnees, particularly workers.
13. Facilitate mobility by simplifying entry visa and residency procedures for different purposes (education, scientific research, culture, training, and others) in accordance with relevant international conventions and treaties.

II. Migration as a factor in development

Recognizing the impact of migration on development and on achievement of Millennium Development Goals and UN Post-2015 Development Agenda in Arab States, Participants value the progress made by Arab States through their participation in bilateral, regional and international dialogues, Arab and international cooperation in the field of international migration, formulation of policies and programmes to foster the relation between migration and development, and through implementation of some reforms in labour markets and migration regulations at national level .

In this context, Participants emphasize that migrants from, to and between the Arab States, participate in social and economic development endeavors. Therefore, we should seek to:

1. Coordinate with international parties to emphasize the need that short-term policies setting out means of combating irregular migration should be associated with long-term approaches that address the root causes of irregular migration flows, highlighting the relation between migration and development.
2. Pay attention to Arab skilled migrants, and encourage benefit from these scientific and technical expertise to support sustainable development efforts in countries of origin and destination, motivating them to support national development programmes, to transfer knowledge and expertise they gained and modern technologies to their home countries, and linking them with Arab scientific institutions and entities acting in the same areas of specialization.

3. Encourage individual and collective initiatives submitted by some Arab migrants in order to assist and benefit their home countries and enhance its development in different areas.
4. Value the initiatives undertaken by some Arab States towards establishing consultative councils that encompass a group of scientists living abroad in order to provide scientific and technical consultancy in various fields.
5. Encourage countries of origin and destination to provide frameworks and mechanisms concerned with transfer of knowledge through migrants.
6. It is important that countries of destination conduct regular studies on their labour market needs and access, thus allowing countries of origin to develop appropriate education and training policies.
7. It is important to seek regularly updated records of Arab skilled migrants in cooperation between countries of origin and destination, so as to facilitate seeking their assistance when needed to contribute to development of their countries of origin.
8. Emphasize the importance of providing incentives for migrants remittances to serve development; through the following:
 - Call on countries of origin and destination to take the necessary measures to facilitate remittances of Arab migrants, through procedures that aim at reducing the transfer costs, increasing remittances flow within official channels, and developing joint programmes to encourage those migrants to invest in their home countries.
 - Urge countries of destination to consider tax exemptions on funds transferred to countries of origin, and to provide financial, technological and administrative support.
 - Call on countries of origin to consider diversified investment channels in individual and community projects, provide incentives to achieve the maximum benefit from remittances, and provide appropriate conditions to maximize the benefit from these remittances in advancing the social and economic development efforts and keep them away from political pressures.

III. Enhancing international cooperation on emerging issues in migration and mobility:

The steady growth in the number of refugees and displaced persons in the Arab region has become a burden on development plans. This requires concerted international efforts to reduce these burdens through the following:

1. Pay due attention to the situation of Arab countries hosting refugees and provide the necessary assistance to these countries to enable them to properly deal with large numbers of refugees through capacity building programmes for officials working in institutions dealing with refugees and help host countries improve the living conditions of those refugees, provide the necessary humanitarian aid away from political agendas, and seek to fund the projects that motivate them to return to their home countries without associating these projects with the crisis.

2. Emphasize the importance of protection and care for human rights of all migrants, including refugees, displaced persons and victims of human trafficking, all of which necessary to enhance their contributions to both countries of origin and destination.
3. Provide protection and take the necessary measures to rescue irregular migrants at sea and provide decent shelters for them.
4. Provide services and multisectoral response against all forms of violence associated with displacement and armed conflicts, targeting women, youth and children, and provide funding to ensure availability of the appropriate multisectoral response from health, psychological, social, security and legal services to confront violence based on gender, and allow their access for all the population affected by the conflict.
5. Stand against all forms of racial discrimination; develop suitable mechanisms to highlight the positive image of Arabs and Muslims through programmes that introduce the Arab civilization and the correct Islamic values.
6. Support bilateral international cooperation in the field of migration, through conclusion of agreements on migration management to seek solutions for the different and relevant problems.
7. The importance of coordination at regional and international levels to improve the living conditions of refugees and provide the necessary humanitarian assistance for them. In this context, Participants value the Arab endeavours exerted to develop mechanisms that help coordination and cooperation between international organizations acting in the field of international migration, as well as with the Arab States (i.e. establishment of the Working Group on international migration in the Arab region, co-chaired by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration (ARCP).