



“Future of the Forum” - Chair’s Paper

Introduction

The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) has entered its consolidation phase. The second meeting in Manila in 2008 should mark its existence as a viable state-led process. Its medium-term future looks promising, particularly in view of the hosting offers made by other governments through 2012.

But consolidation does not necessarily equate with institutionalization. While remaining faithful to its avowed informality, the GFMD process has encountered difficulties that could only be solved through the establishment of a light support structure. Such a support structure has now been agreed upon by the participating governments and is expected to be in place around the time the Philippines hands over the GFMD chairmanship to Greece in December 2008. This will enable the next Chair to benefit from its crucial support.

In general terms, the Operating Modalities adopted in Brussels have proven adequate to the process. But they need to be updated in view of recent developments. Beyond the more immediate issue of a light support structure, participating governments have demonstrated through their growing engagement in the Manila GFMD that there is a need for some of the longer term issues about the future of the GFMD to be addressed.

The Chair considers that, while not requiring immediate resolution, these issues should be reflected upon and discussed at future Troika, Steering Group and Friends of the Forum meetings, as they will help determine the continued relevance and usefulness of the GFMD process. Following is a brief description of the major issues identified for such discussion, and some key questions to consider:

1. GFMD Role Towards its Outcome Projects

The GFMD Operating Modalities indicate that a key objective of the Forum is “...to foster practical and action-oriented outcomes...”. Projects and action items resulting from the annual Forum meetings are a welcome follow-up to the discussions. Their outcomes in turn should enrich and advance the debates of ensuing GFMD meetings.

It is thus likely that the number of GFMD-generated projects will increase in the future, as a natural development and a way of bridging GFMD meetings. Participating Governments have a legitimate interest in being informed about implementation and progress of these projects, and

they expect the GFMD Chair-in-Office to provide this information. This function should be performed by the support structure.

In certain cases, implementation of GFMD-generated projects may require some coordination among the parties concerned. Some element of facilitation may also be necessary, for example to identify possible funding sources and to ensure linkage and relevance to the GFMD. While participating governments have generally agreed that the GFMD is essentially consultative in nature, and implementation of the outcomes is the responsibility of the participants, these support activities may still be necessary for the successful implementation of the projects, and the continuity they can help bring to the Forum.

Linked to this issue is the electronic Marketplace, devised and monitored by UNDESA to operate during the GFMD meetings. In Brussels, this Marketplace also led to some follow-up projects, many of which could not be implemented for lack of funding, or if implemented did not link directly to the GFMD Roundtables, or were subsumed under existing funded programs of international organizations. The Marketplace was suspended in 2008, pending the outcome of the light support structure debate.

How far and under what conditions should the GFMD take responsibility for follow-up activities? What role should the light support structure take in supporting implementation of such outcomes?

2. Links with the United Nations

The GFMD Operating Modalities mention that the link with the UN is primarily assured by the SRSG for Migration and Development. It also indicates that the Chair will convey the GFMD outcomes to the Secretary-General.

The GFMD has its origin in a proposal from the UN Secretary-General, endorsed by the participants of the High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2006. The UN Secretary General has made a point of attending GFMD annual meetings, as a mark of the importance that the UN attaches to the issues addressed at the meetings.

In a recent survey conducted by UNDESA, a large majority of participating governments indicated that GFMD constitutes a useful follow-up to the High-Level Dialogue, and they are satisfied with its existing links with the UN. Some governments are, however, advocating a closer association with the UN.

On his part, the SRSG has endeavored to increase his contacts with UN bodies concerned by making himself available for briefings on the GFMD process.

Do participating governments consider that the GFMD's present links with the UN are appropriate, or should a closer association with select UN bodies be pursued?

3. Relationships with the Global Migration Group (GMG)

Identified by the UN Secretary-General as an important multi-agency entity to enhance coherence among international organizations dealing with migration and development, the GMG is considered, as a whole or through its individual components, to be a source of expertise for the GFMD. Indeed, individual member agencies of the GMG have provided useful substantive

support to the GFMD Roundtable documents and session preparations. Going a step further, the GMG has put forward broad suggestions for providing consolidated support to the GFMD process, and the GFMD Chair-in-Office invited the GMG to submit a proposal regarding a possible role for the GMG in hosting the light support structure for the GFMD.

Recognizing the limitations of the GMG as a loose agglomeration of international agencies, the GFMD nevertheless notes that the GMG has the potential to be a major interlocutor and possible partner for the Forum.

How could GFMD engage the GMG more proactively - proposing possible areas of cooperation? How could the GFMD optimize the role of GMG as a GFMD interlocutor?

4. Relationships with Regional Governmental Organizations and Consultative Processes

Over the recent past, a number of regional or inter-regional initiatives have emerged in the field of migration and development. On the one hand, regional governmental processes on broader themes (trade, economic integration) have added this theme to their agenda. On the other hand, specific regional or inter-regional groups of governments focused on migration issues are increasingly considering the links between migration and development. It is estimated that up to thirty regional and inter-regional groups fall into one or the other category.

These initiatives involve governments that, for the most part, are also active in the GFMD process. Their deliberations and actions are often directly relevant to the GFMD process. In turn, the regional groups are following this global process with interest. This situation creates a commonality of interests, potentially beneficial for both sides.

To date, regional groupings have been associated to the GFMD in a very limited way. But growing interest and engagement in them may now call for a wider association. Such an association could take the form of observer status, which would have implications in terms of participation at meetings. This issue could be considered in relation with the debate in Roundtable 3 on Regional Consultative Processes.

Should regional organizations and processes be associated to the GFMD process independently from their constituent governments? What kinds of regional groupings or processes should be associated with the GFMD? Should this association be developed within the existing GMFD structure or should new consultative mechanisms be established to facilitate exchanges between regional groups and GFMD?

5. Relationships with Civil Society

Since its inception, the GFMD has endeavored to associate civil society with its meetings. This association has been established on the basis of two separate, consecutive meetings that communicate with, and report, to each other. This format preserves the state-led character of the Forum while offering to civil society representatives a platform to convey their views to governments.

One of the difficulties on the Civil Society side, is to gather representatives of all sectors of civil society, including private sector, employers and financial institutions. While NGOs and labor organizations are readily interested in joining, it seems that private sector representatives are less enthusiastic to gather under a civil society banner. They are nevertheless key players in both the migration and development fields, whose views and experiences should inform government debates.

Is the present nature of the association between Civil Society and GFMD satisfactory? Should it be reviewed to allow for a better balanced consultation of all potential stakeholders?

6. Funding

Until now, financing of the GFMD has not been an issue. Hosting governments have funded the meetings and related activities, with support from third countries and institutions. However, the informal manner in which funds are collected and utilized has proven to be limiting for the efficient running of GFMD affairs. The establishment of a support structure and the creation of a GFMD Trust Fund will help ease that situation.

To pursue the GFMD consolidation, it seems advisable to consider introducing some simple measures that would increase the efficiency and predictability of the GFMD funding. These could include the early presentation of a provisional budget by the Chair-in-Office accompanied by an early announcement of contributions and a systematic re-allocation of unused international contributions to the following Chair.

It would also be conceivable to envisage a diversification of funding sources, notably from non-governmental entities such as private foundations. Earmarked contributions would be acceptable, as long as they do not affect the integrity of the GFMD process.

Should the GFMD funding mechanisms be reviewed and improved through some simple measures? Should GFMD diversify its funding sources and engage in limited fund-raising with non-governmental entities?

7. Other Issues

Although not of immediate concern, the designation of governments chairing and hosting the GFMD is presently done without any particular conditions, apart from alternating between developed and developing countries. Suggestions have been made to establish criteria for selecting future Chairs.

Is the present designation system considered satisfactory or should selection criteria be established?