

Meeting of the Friends of the Forum
9 September 2013, Geneva

Report of Civil Society Activities
John K. Bingham, ICMC
GFMD Civil Society Coordinating Office

Check against delivery

Ambassador Åckerman Börje, organizing partners and colleagues in migration and development,

With 22 days left before the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development at the UN in New York, kindly permit me to spend most of this brief report focusing on substance rather than process.

In fact, just two items regarding the GFMD process:

- the **comprehensive report** of the Civil Society Days of the GFMD 2012, including final break-even income and expenses, has been published and is available on www.gfmdcivilsociety.org, as well as the www.hldcivilsociety.org websites. Copies will be further sent directly to all GFMD focal points, among others. As you may recall, a summary of Civil Society's key "Recommendations and Benchmarks" from the GFMD 2012, which is also available on those same websites, was published and circulated in the first quarter of this year.
- regarding our shared commitment to **financial sustainability of the GFMD**, ICMC and civil society partners continue to accept the challenge of raising ourselves the largest portion of funds—last year, more than 2/3rds—that support civil society's participation in the GFMD. But to be clear: civil society has appreciated the *target* for government contributions to the civil society portion of the GFMD that has been explicit in your formal budgets of the past two GFMDs. This target is a concrete element of the financial sustainability of the civil society component of the GFMD, and a central symbol of civil society's place and common enterprise with you in GFMD work. For our part in active fundraising, I am happy to report to you that we have recently received word of important, multi-year funding that the European Commission will soon be providing to civil society, in part for GFMD activity and also for migration and development work in the civil society network worldwide. I look forward to reporting to you fuller details shortly.

Now the rest: substance. Without interruption since the end of the last Global Forum meeting, civil society has been working to take the substance of migration and development issues to the higher levels—and higher expectations of this year's HLD rather than the GFMD per se. On substance, most in civil society see these GFMD and HLD processes not as events but as a movement, with the HLD providing significant additional drive and gears.

Civil society organizations and networks worldwide have focused on a core set of 8 issues and proposal of a 5-year collaboration on those issues with states [available on the table on the side of the room.]¹. As I

¹ The 5-year plan is also available in English, French and Spanish at <http://hldcivilsociety.org/five-year-action-agenda/>
[A two page grouping of the 8 issues matched to the 4 HLD roundtables, is available in English on the back tables and at www.hldcivilsociety.org.](#)

reported to you at our Friends of the Forum meeting in February, civil society developed the 5-year plan at plenary and working sessions of the civil society meetings of the GFMD in Mauritius and the World Social Forum on Migration in the Philippines in the third and fourth weeks of November 2012. Hundreds of civil society leaders and networks from around have signed onto and support this action plan.

Civil society proposes this 5-year collaboration to States for a distinct output of the High-level Dialogue. Among other things, it responds to two strong recommendations in both the states' and civil society assessments last year of the GFMD process. First, to pursue multi-year planning and action. Second, to improve civil society's engagement with governments within and in follow-up to GFMD processes.

The 5-year, 8-point action plan

The 8 issues are familiar to all engaged in the GFMD, past, present—and without doubt future. Many have already been the subject of concrete – and frequently quite similar – recommendations by States and civil society in those processes. All of them link directly to the formal programme of the HLD: in fact, two points each to the 4 HLD roundtables.

- **Corresponding most directly to HLD Roundtable 1, focussing on development issues**

1. Integration of migration into the **post-2015 development agenda** to address not only the contributions that migrants make to development in countries of origin and destination, but also the possibilities for better policy planning and coherence that can make migration more genuinely a choice and not a necessity, and greater gain than drain. This development agenda would work to affirm both the right to migrate and the right to remain at home with decent work and human security. As such, it links migration to UN development concerns regarding poverty, health, gender equality, financing for development and sustainable development, and to future development goals.
2. Models and frameworks that facilitate the **engagement of diaspora and migrant associations** as entrepreneurs, social investors, policy advocates and partners in setting and achieving priorities for the full range of human development in countries of origin, heritage and destination.²

- **Corresponding most directly to HLD Roundtable 2, focussing on the rights of migrants**

3. Reliable, multi-actor mechanisms to address the assistance and protection needs of **migrants stranded in distress**, beginning with those trapped in situations of war, conflict or disaster (natural or man-made) but with the same logic and urgency with respect to migrant victims of violence or trauma in transit. This should include specific attention to egregious gaps in protection and assistance for migrant women who are raped, and the thousands of children that are unaccompanied and abused along the major migration corridors in every region of the world. Benchmarks could include further work and multi-stakeholder capacity-building on frameworks developed by agencies with such responsibilities including IOM, UNHCR and the UNODC, and the consolidation of relevant principles and practices under existing refugee, humanitarian and human rights laws.
4. Models and frameworks that address the needs and **rights of migrant women** in their specificity, including policies and programmes that enable women workers to have the choice whether to migrate or remain in home countries, and legislation that enables migrant women, regardless of status, to have access to basic services; recourse to the justice system; and

² This point was added to the original 5-year plan in early 2013. The reference to “countries of heritage” conveys the fact that second or third generation family members are increasingly recognized as part of and active within diaspora communities and associations in the countries to which their parents or grandparents migrated.

protection against all forms of violence. The rights of migrant women should be addressed as a separate goal and also seen as a cross-cutting concern in all of the seven goals. In addition, mechanisms should consider the best interests of **children** in the context of migration, including their rights.

- **Corresponding most directly to HLD Roundtable 3, focussing on partnerships**

5. Benchmarks for **promoting the exchange of good practice and enactment and implementation of national legislation** to comply with the full range of provisions in international conventions that pertain to migrants even outside the labour sphere, with particular concern for rights in the context of enforcement policies, rights to basic social protection and due process.
6. **Redefinition of the interaction of international mechanisms of migrants' rights protection**, which recognizes the roles of the GFMD and the GMG, albeit limited, revives emphasis of the distinct mandate of the ILO for worker protection, and more coherently, aligns protection activity of agencies including ILO, IOM, UNHCR, the OHCHR and UNODC. This would be in the context of the UN normative framework, and involve a thorough evaluation of the GFMD process, including questions of accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and outcomes. A goal would be to institutionalize the participation of civil society in future governance mechanisms.

Corresponding most directly to HLD Roundtable 4, focussing on labour mobility

7. Identification or creation, and implementation, of effective standards and mechanisms to **regulate the migrant labour recruitment industry**, something that civil society is convinced is within reach, thanks to a growing convergence towards reform among countries of origin, transit and destination, and among private sector actors and funders as well as NGOs, trade unions and migrants themselves. Benchmarks could include a global synthesis of existing recruitment problems and solutions, national or transnational; a global convening of legitimate private recruitment actors; development of a compact on reducing abuses in the recruitment field, etc.
8. Mechanisms to guarantee **labour rights for migrant workers** equal to the rights of nationals, including the rights to equal pay and working conditions, to form and organize in trade unions, to ensure portability of pensions, and to have paths to citizenship for migrant workers and their families. This recognizes the long-term needs of many nations for migrant workers, while guaranteeing human security and rights to those workers to meet economic, demographic and development needs while affirming the States' role to protect the rights of all workers. Benchmarks could include addressing the movement of peoples in the global trade agenda and national progress in complying with the worker-related international conventions, in particular ratification and implementation of the UN Migrant Workers Convention and the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers.

These 8 issues formed the agendas for the Informal Interactive HLD Hearings of civil society at the UN 15 July, two full days of preparatory meetings of civil society the weekend before it, and many of the **21 prep events that** NGOs, trade unions, migrant and diaspora associations, academia and the private sector organized around the world to work on these issues specifically towards the HLD, which included:

- **regional consultations** in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Canada–United States, Europe, South America and West Asia³

³ A consolidated report of messages and recommendations of these meetings is available from their organizer, the Global Coalition on Migration, at <http://hldcivilsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Consolidated-Global-Report-from-Regional-Consultations.pdf>.

- **national consultations in** Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mexico, Nepal, South Korea, Thailand and the United Kingdom;
- **thematic consultations in the Netherlands** (European Diaspora Conference), Switzerland (Joint Reflections on Migration and Development), Germany and Switzerland (Regional Diaspora and Development Roundtable) and the United States with support from Mexico (Fourth International Forum on Migration and Peace).

All told, some 600 civil society actors worldwide participated in these consultations and meetings ahead of and specifically linked to the HLD⁴.

The UN GA Resolution called for the Hearings, held at the UN 15 July, to provide civil society's most formal input to the HLD—its “big moment” in the official HLD process. 400 representatives of grass-roots, regional and international civil society organizations presented their experience and recommendations on the eight points of the 5-year plan to 100 Governments, the European Union, and UN and other intergovernmental agencies. About half of the organizations were migrant or migrant led; many of the speakers were migrants themselves. In addition to 49 speakers from diaspora and migrant organizations, human rights and development groups, labour organizations, and the private sector, representatives of the Governments of Australia, Bangladesh, Israel, Mexico, the Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States as well as the European Union and IOM took the floor⁵. An official ten-page report summarizing the Hearings and key recommendations has been prepared by the Office of the President of the General Assembly and will be circulated to states ahead of the HLD, as required by the GA Resolution adopted in December.

What we ask of states at the HLD

Civil society asks states to endorse this 5-year approach to collaboration as a distinct output of the HLD.

Civil society's 5-year Plan does not call for a new UN institution; nor a new process. It looks for collaboration, not confrontation, with you, in real time. It looks for convergence, not necessarily full consensus: a strong convergence from states matching a strong convergence from civil society, for action. Thanks to years of working at these issues in the GFMD and corollary civil society processes like the People's Global Action on Migration, Development and Human Rights and the World Social Forum on Migration, global civil society has achieved that convergence.

We turn to you now. Civil society has great expectations for the HLD—expectations that are ambitious, but practical; expectations of ourselves as well as of you. Seven years of trust building and investment in these processes: we can move forward on a good number of things. And we have to.

Permit me to close with three questions to you, most respectfully, which many are asking in civil society:

1. Is your government participating at ministerial and implementing levels at the High-level Dialogue?
2. Even if, like many in civil society, your government has certain concerns about the GFMD process, will you also express value—and perhaps suggestions for improvement—in the GFMD process?
3. May we count on your government for commitment at the HLD to collaboration with civil society over the next 5 years?

Thank you.

/Copies of this report will be circulated with the record of the meeting.

⁴ A full list of these events and their organizers is available at <http://hldcivilsociety.org/activities/>.

⁵The full programme and list of presenters is available at <http://hldcivilsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Final-Programme-Interactive-Hearings-15-July.pdf>.