

The Global Compact on Migration at the 10th GFMD Summit Meeting

28-30 June 2017, Berlin

The Global Forum on Migration and Development's (GFMD) 10th Summit Meeting held in Berlin in June 2017, was devoted to “a new social contract on migration and human mobility,” and was designed to provide substantive input to the Global Compact process. This report distills the highlights of the GFMD 2017 that have a bearing on the Global Compact and the migration-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of September 2016 identified 24 aspects of migration that the Global Compact might address. These were then clustered under six themes in the “Modalities Resolution,” establishing the procedures for implementing the Global Compact. Without prejudging the structure of the Global Compact, this report uses those same themes to present the highlights of the GFMD 2017.

First, some general observations that pertain to all clusters:

Delegates called for an ambitious Global Compact that is more than a declaration of principles or a collection of good practices. The commitment that States made in Agenda 2030, in Target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, was not only to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, but *to cooperate internationally* to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration. The Global Compact creates an opportunity for States to come together to work on issues that most countries recognize as important and actionable. Several overarching priorities were identified, on which it will be possible to assess the Global Compact's success: Do the resulting actions improve the lives of migrants and those who live and work with them? Do they counteract the current toxicity of the debate on migration? Do they put in place governance structures for international migration that fostered cooperation? Do they expand the availability and use of evidence (rather than perception) as a basis for policy making and program design? Do they better protect migrants and promote inclusion? Do they come close to fulfilling the aspiration of Agenda 2030 to “leave no one behind”? Do they – in the end – facilitate legal forms of international migration and mobility?

Greater shared responsibility leads to greater shared opportunity. International migration is inherently transnational, so management of these increasingly complex flows cannot be managed by just one or two countries. States must work together, as well as with migrants, civil society organizations (CSOs) and private enterprises to find common solutions and opportunities in migration.

1. Human rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance

Integration and social cohesion should be seen as equal priorities alongside the effective management of migration. Investments in facilitating legal migration need to be accompanied by robust access for migrants to social protection, rights, and services. Similarly, investments in

integration need to be seen as part and parcel of the goal of facilitating safe and orderly migration. Promoting integration can help to mitigate tension with receiving communities, and maintain confidence in migration outcomes.

Civil society, the private sector, and local governments are key players in promoting social cohesion and building connections between migrants and receiving communities. When developing migration frameworks, access to basic social services (like health care) needs to be considered alongside protection of basic rights.

Policies to manage migration and facilitate integration should take into account gender, particularly the relative disadvantages women may face. Jobs women do, particularly domestic work, place them at greater risk for exploitation or abuse by employers and are largely shielded from public scrutiny. In addition, women often face barriers to integration, particularly where they have moved through non-labor channels, including family care responsibilities that keep them out of work or language courses, and lower levels of education or work experience.

The Global Compact could serve as a platform for developing agreed, common standards for integration and for measuring integration.

Protecting the rights of migrant children, particularly those who are unaccompanied, had a thorough review at GFMD 2017. NGOs working together presented specific goals, targets and indicators on child protection which could serve as a template for other issues addressed in the GCM.

2. Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures

Several measures were explored at the GFMD to increase the rewards and lower the costs and risks of migration.

Standards have been developed from several quarters on fair recruitment: there is fairly widespread understanding of what needs to be done but limited consensus on how to make regulations stick. The GCM could help promote a race to the top among recruiters, working with private-sector employers and recruiters toward a goal of having employers pay the cost of recruitment rather than migrants (as is usually the case with highly skilled professionals). Recognition of qualifications was also discussed, and identified as an area for action in which international cooperation is essential.

A compelling portrayal of the workings of skills partnerships also seemed to suggest a way forward toward greater skills mobility. Slightly different from the classic “triple win” project (in which migrants, countries of origin and countries of destination all benefit from migration), the skills partnership described involves an employer strengthening a local institution to train people for that company’s particular needs—resulting in a better “match” between skills acquired and in demand. The training included technical as well as language skills, and increased the supply of skilled graduates for the domestic labor market as well as for international employers.

3. International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions, including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration

Recommendations from the 2017 GFMD for the GCM process can be grouped around four topics:

Policy and institutional coherence: The GCM should include a commitment to a “whole-of-government” approach to migration governance, covering all policy dimensions of migration, as well as the need for both vertical and horizontal coherence at all levels of governance. Robust and transparent monitoring and review mechanisms need to be established to ensure policy coherence, and alignment between policies and their implementation. At the same time, the GCM should remain open for policy plurality and leave room for different policies to be tried, so that migrants do not become “victims of policy coherence”.

Multi-stakeholder involvement and (regional) partnerships: The GCM should stress the importance of the participation of representatives from local governments and the private sector as well as civil society organizations, including associations of migrants and the diaspora, in the planning process of national migration policies.

- It should encourage enhanced cooperation and partnerships between different actors, and promote the exchange of information, best practices, and cooperation between all stakeholders to ensure coordination, complementarity and coherence across all activities.
- Roles, tasks and responsibilities of each of these stakeholders need to be clarified.
- The GCM should encourage the establishment of coordination mechanisms at the national and the international level to ensure a cohesive and cross-sectoral approach to migration policy development.

Fact-based governance / impact orientation / monitoring: The GCM should stress the importance of evidence-based governance and policy development. It should promote the collection, analysis and sharing of data on migration (including data disaggregated by gender) as well as the establishment of evidence-based indicators. It should set standards for monitoring to ensure accountability, and could act as a platform for agreeing on common approaches and standards for measuring progress.

Return and reintegration: GFMD 2017 saw extensive discussion on the topic of return migration. Sustainable return migration necessitates the cooperation, participation and partnerships of a broad range of actors, including migrants, civil society and governments in host countries and countries of origin and/or transit. The GCM should encourage the inclusion of reintegration into migration policy development to effectively link return and reintegration policies between host countries and countries of origin and to enable returning migrants to become the catalyst of socio-economic development in their home communities.

4. Contributions of migrants and diasporas to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits

The GCM should encourage national development plans, Poverty Reduction Strategies, National Adaptation Plans of Action and sectoral development planning to incorporate migration as a factor in development, and to consult with members of migrant and diaspora groups.

Tackling the cost of migration is a logical priority for the Global Compact Framework, which could include initiatives to lower the costs of documentation, travel and recruitment, among other things. GFMD participants noted that the lowest-skilled migrants often pay the highest fees to recruiters for low-skilled jobs abroad and that recruitment systems are often poorly regulated.

Lowering the cost of transferring remittances has long been articulated as a goal of international cooperation, most recently as SDG Target 10.c, but the costs remain stubbornly high in too many remittance corridors, especially those connected to sub-Saharan Africa. The GCM provides an opportunity for states to develop an actionable commitment to work together and with other stakeholders on a comprehensive plan to reduce the cost of migrant remittances and meet the SDG target.

The ability of migrants to return to their countries of origin and contribute to development there could be enhanced if the portability of earned social security benefits, such as pension claims, were improved. The GCM could develop bilateral, regional and global frameworks for cooperation on this issue.

The lack of successful development has often been seen as a major cause of migration, and the potential for development cooperation to address some of the “root causes” of migration has recently drawn increased attention. However, reducing migration should not be the goal of development policy, according to several participants. The mission of development policy is to eradicate poverty and stabilize communities. Official development assistance should not be linked to readmission and returns policy, and development resources should not be diverted to migration policy goals.

5. Addressing drivers of migration, including adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters and human-made crises, through protection and assistance, sustainable development, poverty eradication, conflict prevention and resolution

The Global Compact negotiations present an opportunity to arrive at a common understanding of the meaning of terms such as “forced migrant” and “vulnerable migrant.” The discussions at the GFMD recognized that there are large new groups of forced migrants who do not fall under the Refugee Convention but are nonetheless in need of protection. Particular concern arises from the situation of people whose livelihoods have become unsustainable as a result of climate change, whose numbers are potentially very large. Who is responsible for protecting and assisting them if their own governments are unable to do so? Humanitarian assistance is not an adequate answer for long-term displacement; it is important for interventions in crisis situations to involve development actors such as the World Bank, at the very beginning of a large movement of people.

The GFMD Summit in Marrakesh in December 2018 will focus, among other things, on people compelled to leave their homes because of the effects of climate change.

6. Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims.

The 2017 Summit of the GFMD did not explicitly focus on issues surrounding smuggling and trafficking. However, the theme ran through many of the roundtables and plenary sessions, reiterating past GFMD discussions of the need to

protect the rights and attend to the needs of victims of trafficking and smuggling, especially the most vulnerable among them. Speakers at the 2017 Summit particularly focused on the needs of migrant children. Identifying potential and actual trafficked persons was again identified as a priority for action, as well as using the full force of the law to prosecute traffickers without putting their victims in greater jeopardy.

Conclusion

Delegates to the Berlin Summit strongly endorsed the role of the GFMD as a “safe space” for informal discussion, sharing of experience and formation of partnerships. They also noted the importance of the GFMD’s emphasis on the relationship between development and international migration, a singular focus that has been preserved even as GFMD discussions have broadened to include other aspects of migration such as human rights and governance. They foresaw an important role for the GFMD in helping states to find ways to achieve their migration goals consistent with the SDGs, and contributing to the practical and cooperative formulation of the Global Compact on Migration.

The Global Compact on Migration could be a point of inflection in international cooperation on human mobility, as States commit themselves to bring some policy ideas to fruition, and work together to develop collaborations in new fields. Very few countries, for example, have well-thought-out programs for regular migration of low-skilled workers – although such programs might be a substantial contribution to reducing irregular flows and to increasing legal and orderly types of migration.