



Arab Forum for Sustainable Development-2021

The Arab Decade for Transformative Change: Accelerating Action on the 2030 Agenda in the Arab Region

29-31 March 2021

Special Session on Migration governance in the Arab region: Priorities, Opportunities and lessons learnt from the first GCM Regional Review Conference.

Concept Note

30 March 2021

1. Title:

Migration governance in the Arab region: Priorities, Opportunities and lessons learnt from the first GCM Regional Review Conference.

2. Background:

Migratory flows have long shaped the Arab region, the origin, transit and destination of millions of international migrants. In 2019, the number of migrants hosted in the region was estimated to have exceeded 40 million. In recent years, migration has gained salience on the agenda of policymakers in the Arab region notably following the adoption by most Arab countries of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on mobility with countries imposing strict restrictions and limitations of movements within their territories and transnationally to curb the spread of the virus. Furthermore, notwithstanding the fact that migrants have largely contributed to the continuity of essential businesses, such as healthcare, including sexual and



reproductive health care food and different services sectors. They have been disproportionately affected by the socio-economic effects of the pandemic. Indeed, they are less likely to obtain access to the needed support in case of losing their income, increased xenophobia or becoming infected with the virus. Such vulnerabilities compound with other challenges for migrants, particularly those in irregular situations, who might fear coming forward for assistance for fear of arrest, detention and deportation. Women migrants risk being excluded from support if their particular vulnerabilities and challenges are not taken into account in the response provided to the pandemic. Children in irregular migration situations, especially those who travel unaccompanied, are at a particularly acute risk of abuse and exploitation and in some cases – detention and pushbacks at borders. Children of migrant workers constitute another vulnerable category. Countries of the region have also been facing increased challenges due to the pandemic such as important flows of returning labor migrants, decreased remittances that require enhanced efforts with regards to migration governance.

Arab countries have been committed to Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) by working towards advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which the GCM is rooted, and realizing the SDGs, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.7 “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”

The Arab countries are striving to achieve both the SDGs and the GCM objectives. In recent years, a number of migration-related policies, strategies and plans have been enacted across the region. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many promising practices have emerged, with countries providing free health screening and testing, as well as improving flexibility on immigration requirements to ensure migrant have regular status and formal employment for example.

These promising practices, along with migration trends, priorities and challenges were highlighted in the first regional GCM review in the Arab region completed in February 2021. This year-long process brought together relevant stakeholders at the national and regional level in an open and



continuous dialogue to evaluate the progress made in implementing the GCM and to charter a roadmap for improving migration governance in the region.

3. Session Objective:

This session aims to enhance mainstreaming of migration in the development rhetoric, frameworks, and efforts, specifically in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The session seeks to build knowledge and foster dialogue among participants on key issues and challenges hindering good migration governance in the region and threatening the resilience of migrants. It provides participants with the platform to share good practices, key achievements and challenges to date building on the findings of the first regional GCM review in the Arab region.

4. Contribution to the theme of AFSD-2020

The 2030 Agenda recognized that well-managed migration plays an integral role in achieving sustainable development. Accordingly, several goals and targets are directly and indirectly related to migration, most notably SDG 10 on Reducing Inequalities, Target 10.7: facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. In addition, SDG 8 on Promoting Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All, target 8.8: protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment. Furthermore, SDG 16 on promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies and SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls are of particular importance.

To accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure a transformative change ensuring LNOB, it is crucial to promote the protection of the human rights, and empowerment of migrants, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic where they face heightened vulnerability. Fulfilling the commitments for the GCM objectives, the SDGs will ensure this principle of LNOB in response to COVID-19.



5. Themes of the Interactive Discussion:

The themes of the interactive discussion will include:

- Key achievements, good practices, and challenges on migration governance in the region.
- The impact of COVID-19 on the resilience of migrants in the region.
- Priority areas for actions and policy recommendations for improved migration governance, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda and the GCM.

6. Targeted Audience:

This session targets policy makers, representatives of civil society organizations, and experts among others to foster the spirit of inclusion and partnership among all relevant stakeholders, as exemplified in two GCM guiding principles calling for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to migration governance.

7. Tentative Agenda

10 mins	Organizers	Welcoming remarks and Overview of the GCM Review Process
7mins	UN Network Secretariat	Brief on the Regional Review Conference and the way forward to the IMRF
7 mins	Member State Representative	Country experience on the implementation of the GCM and SDGs
7 mins	Member State Representative	Country experience on the implementation of the GCM and SDGs
7 mins	Dr. Ayman Zohry	Key findings from the multi-stakeholder consultation on the implementation of the GCM for the Regional Review in the Arab Region
7 mins	Sara Al Khatib Nourhan AbdelAziz	Key findings from the stakeholder consultation on women, children and young people



7 mins

Dr. Ibrahim Aqel

Access to basic services and social protection for migrants

in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

30 mins

Moderator

Q&A Session and Closing

Dr. Amira Ahmed

8. Organizing Partner(s) and Main Focal Point(s):

IOM

Kristina Mejo, Senior Regional Liaison and Policy Officer

Hind Kinani, Regional Research Officer

ILO

Ryszard Cholewinski, Senior Migration Specialist

UNESCWA

Sara Salman, Regional Advisor on Population Affairs

UNFPA

Dr Hala Youssef, Policy and Data for Development Adviser

Dr Shible Sahbani, Regional Adviser

UNICEF

Teona Aslanishvili, Child Protection Specialist (Justice for Children and Migration)

UNWOMEN

Jean DCunha, Senior Global Advisor on International Migration.

LAS:

Enas Fergany, Director of Refugees, Expatriates, & Migration Affairs Department



Mai Ali, Refugees, Expatriates, & Migration Affairs Department

Lina Aziz, Refugees, Expatriates, & Migration Affairs Department