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What is the Global Compact on Migration? Updated 27 April

APRIL 13, 2017 BY ADMIN

GCM Global Compact FAQs April 27 **(PDF)**

UN Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration FAQs

UPDATED 27 April, 2017

What is the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration?

The September 19 Summit and the New York Declaration

On September 19, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly hosted a **High-Level Summit** in New York (http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit), marking the first time world leaders, heads of state and government, came together at the UN with the aim of improving international cooperation and governance of migration and refugee issues.

The **New York Declaration** was the outcome of this Summit (summary and link to full text at http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration). In it, the 193 UN Member States committed to negotiating two "Global Compacts", a "**Global Compact on Refugees**" and a "**Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration.**"

The Summit and the resulting compact process show how important international migration issues have become on the international stage. States are showing a new willingness to cooperate with one another on migration policy. **The stakes are high: depending on what forms this cooperation takes, states' cooperation could be good for migrants, or bad.** Migration is a high priority, but amidst a wave of populist scapegoating of migrants and rising racism and xenophobia around the world, it is a difficult time to negotiate an agreement to protect migrants' rights and interests.

States committed in the New York Declaration to protect the human rights of all migrants, regardless of status, but they did not say how they would do this. In the current climate many states will feel pressure to backtrack on their commitments. **This is why civil society voices, especially the voices of migrant organizations and communities, must speak out clearly and effectively on our own behalf** on the policy issues states will be addressing as they work towards this Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration.

The compact *could* establish a framework and mechanisms for

- more and better mobility options,
- at lower cost and
- with greater security, respect for human rights, and access to justice when rights are violated.

But states' cooperation with one another **could also be harmful to migrants**—for example

- reaching agreements on returns/deportations that would make it easier for states to separate migrants from their lives and families and return people to countries that have little to offer in the way of decent work or social support, or
- supporting the expansion of highly restrictive circular migration programs that require migrants to give up fundamental rights and freedoms for the opportunity to work in another country.

As stakeholders and rights-holders, migrants must be prepared to speak up in this Global Compact process, so that international cooperation and governance of migration protect migrants' human rights and reflect migrants' perspectives and interests. Civil society can work with states and other stakeholders to identify ways to improve mobility options, reduce costs, and improve safety, security, and access to justice, while opposing measures that fail to protect migrants' rights.

What is a "Global Compact"?

The **Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration** will be an agreement states make with one another. States have committed to completing it in time for another UN conference to be held in New York in September 2018, where they will formally adopt it. There is more information on the timeline for consultations and negotiations below.

While states have the final say (as long as they stick to the human rights obligations they have already made), other stakeholders "**including civil society, scientific and knowledge-based institutions, parliaments, local authorities, the private sector and migrants themselves**" will be able to contribute their views, opinions, and expertise to the process through a variety of different channels (see further details below).

The compact will

- present a framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migrants and human mobility,
- deal with all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, developmental, human rights-related and other aspects of migration."[1]

The Global Compact will not make new law, but **its provisions must be consistent with states' obligations under existing international human rights law and labor standards**.

What will all these commitments and frameworks be about? What will they do?

In the New York Declaration, states included a list of 24 topics, issues or "elements," that the compact might address.[2] Some of these are welcome and could pave the way toward positive developments. Others are framed in ways that will be challenging for migrants, such as the element on return and readmission, "improving cooperation in this regard between countries of origin and destination." In addition to some abstract issues like improving governance of migration, other key issues on the list to be addressed include:

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Global Compact Update, May 21 2017
Key issues for the Global Compact
Useful UN docs, statements & related resources on the human rights of migrants

- **“Effective protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants,** including women and children, regardless of their migratory status, and the specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations”
- Combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance towards all migrants
- The inclusion of migrants in host societies, access to basic services for migrants and gender-responsive services
- Remittances, including lowering costs of sending remittances
- Addressing migration drivers (such as absence of decent work opportunities, loss of livelihood due to climate change or disaster)
- Consideration of policies to regularize the status of migrants
- Protection of labour rights and a safe environment for migrant workers
- Promotion of labour mobility, including circular migration
- Recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills and cooperation in access to and portability of earned benefits
- International cooperation for border control
- Combating trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and contemporary forms of slavery

It is difficult to tell at this stage how some of these issues will be addressed, but relevant **international human rights and labor rights standards already exist,** and agreement on frameworks to support their implementation at regional, bilateral and national levels could be a positive outcome that migrant and other civil society organizations could not only advocate for during the consultation and negotiation process (described below), but also monitor progress on after the compact is agreed.

What is the process and the timeline for this Global Compact?

Earlier this year, states agreed on the process and timeline. The process will have three phases: 1. Consultations, 2. Stock-taking, and 3. Negotiations. Between **April and November 2017** there will be a very busy schedule of **consultations**, most of which will offer at least informal opportunities for civil society and other stakeholder participation. The consultations will be organized by the UN Secretariat and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), together with the relevant UN agencies like the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), and, in the case of the regional consultations, the UN Regional Commissions.

There will be six global thematic consultations. The 24 elements listed in the New York Declaration have been consolidated into six thematic areas, with a global multistakeholder consultation devoted to each. These elements and perhaps others will also be discussed at **regional consultations.**

1. **Human rights of all migrants**, social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance (May 8-9, Geneva, see http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/compact-partners for information and to apply **by May 2** to attend)
2. **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, (May 22-23, New York)
3. **International cooperation and governance of migration** in all its dimensions, including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration (June 19-20, Geneva)
4. **Contributions of migrants and diasporas** to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits (July 24-25, New York)
5. **Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery**, including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims (September, Vienna)
6. **Irregular migration and regular pathways**, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures (October, Geneva)

There will be four regional intergovernmental consultations, organized by the UN Regional Commissions according to the priorities of the respective member states, for Africa (ECA), Asia (ESCAP), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Arab states (ESCWA). They will take place between August and November. There will also be sub-regional consultations in advance of the regional consultations in some cases.

IOM has asked its country offices to suggest to governments that they hold **national multistakeholder consultations** that include all relevant ministries/offices and levels of government as well as civil society and other stakeholders and so far **over 50 have agreed.** The list of which countries is not available yet, **but be on the lookout, it should be available soon.**

There will also be five or six regional CIVIL SOCIETY consultations, one connected to each of the four regional intergovernmental consultations plus one for Europe (tbc) and probably one for the Central/North American corridor. These are being supported by IOM in conjunction with regional civil society partners in each region. These may take place either several weeks before or immediately before the respective intergovernmental regional consultation (held by ECA, ESCAP, ECWAS, ECLAC). **Be on the lookout for information for your region!**

There will be additional consultations in conjunction with existing **Regional Consultative Processes** (RCPs).

Phase 2, Stock-taking. After the consultations, there will be an **intergovernmental stock-taking conference in Guadalajara**, Mexico, in early December, where inputs from the consultations will be presented and discussed, then consolidated as the basis for a draft. The co-facilitators– the Swiss and Mexican governments– will produce a **first draft** of the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration **by February 2018** which will be the basis for the intergovernmental negotiations culminating in the compact (**Phase 3**). Negotiations should be concluded by the end of July ahead of the September conference.

Over the course of the consultation, stock-taking and negotiation phases, there will also be several **multistakeholder hearings**. Most of these will be in New York, including one in late July and another on December 18. Others will be held in 2018 during the negotiations. A multistakeholder **Steering Committee** is currently being formed and will hold calls to select participants in the hearings. For more info and to apply, see http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/compact-partners.

How can we get useful up to date information about it throughout the process?

The Global Coalition on Migration has an email listserve devoted to the Global Compact, and will send out weekly updates. You can send a message to coordinator@gcmigration.org asking to be subscribed as well as indicating your organization’s particular interests, constituency and priorities. You can also follow GCM on Facebook and Twitter @GCMigration.

Useful links to Global Compact-related sites

http://gcmigration.org, Global Coalition on Migration website (which also has links to GCM members' websites)

http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit, UN page on the 19 September High Level Summit on Refugees & Migrants (**Note:** this http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/ site should soon be updated to serve as a compact info site, new Steering Committee and Thematic Consultation application info already available at http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/compact-partners).

http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration, Summary of the commitments states made in the New York Declaration (full text available directly at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.1).

https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration, IOM's Global Compact site, with updated information on thematic consultations, regional consultations, stakeholder meetings, etc.

[1] Modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the global compact for safe, regular and orderly migration, A/71/L.58

[2] See New York Declaration Annex II, para. 8, A/71/L.1

FILED UNDER: GLOBAL COMPACT TAGGED WITH: GCM, GLOBAL COMPACT ON MIGRATION, MIGRANT RIGHTS

Statement to Human Rights Council March 10

MARCH 13, 2017 BY ADMIN

34th regular session of the Human Rights Council

10 March 2017

Enhanced interactive dialogue on the human rights of migrants in the context of large movements

Comments by Monami Maulik

International Coordinator, Global Coalition on Migration

Excellencies and colleagues, particularly migrant organizers and civil society friends.

It's an honor to be invited to speak on behalf of civil society and our members of the Global Coalition on Migration. The **Global Coalition on Migration** (http://gcmigration.org) is a multi-sectoral coalition of civil society organizations, most of which are migrant-based or migrant-led. These include large regional networks in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, together with labor, policy, and faith-based organizations.

The GCM together with many other civil society organizations – has been actively mobilizing our bases across regions and strategizing for concrete inputs into the upcoming consultations and the subsequent negotiating process towards the adoption of a Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. We look forward to the opportunity for dialogue today on working towards a genuinely inclusive process.

Migrants today and including those in the context of large movements, are ***facing a human rights crisis at all stages of the migrant journey-***

- ***in their places of origin,***
- ***in transit and at borders,***
- ***in places of destination***
- ***and, often, upon return.***

With inadequate access to regular and safe channels for migration, migrants are pushed into attempting dangerous journeys where they risk exploitation and violence from State and non-State actors.

States militarize and externalize borders in the name of deterring such movement — deploying policies from push-backs and border closures, to detention (including of families and children), to expedited removal procedures that deny effective access to asylum— and that are punitive and disregard human rights. But that's not all. There is no evidence that fences, border walls, detention and other excessive border control measures are a deterrent – they do not prevent people from attempting as well as succeeding in irregular entry, especially when they are responding to unmet labor demand in destination countries, reunification needs with family members, as well as in seeking international protection.

However, *human rights challenges and vulnerabilities migrants face do not result exclusively from the context of large movements, irregular movements, or indeed from movement at all.* Migrants are not always "on the move." They are also people who are residing outside their country of citizenship who often live and work in precarious conditions and face criminalization merely because of their irregular migration status.

Within the current context of growing xenophobia in rhetoric and policies, migrants are increasingly the scapegoats of deeper economic, social and political transitions within many receiving societies. Where discriminatory policing practices lead to profiling based on race or perceived migration status, many migrants and their families live in perpetual fear preventing them from raising their voices, joining trade unions or accessing basic public services.

This fear is well founded, and this is why firewalls are so important to migrants' safety, security, and exercise of basic rights such as access to education and healthcare. Firewalls keep immigration enforcement authorities separate from local law enforcement and public service provision. And yet effective firewalls are far too rare. There are some current developments that GCM is concerned about in both the United States as well as the European Union that would require city officials as well as health care providers, social workers, school administrators and homeless shelters to report undocumented migrants to the immigration authorities.[1]

In order to identify promising practices on the protection of the human rights of migrants in vulnerable situations, it is central to recognize that first and foremost migrants are rights holders at all times, whether they are in transit at the border or in any country.

GCM and our civil society partners therefore applaud the ***migrant-centered perspective of the Principles & Guidelines*** on the human rights protections of migrants in vulnerable situations within large and/or mixed movements. This migrant-centered perspective also lends itself to developing practical measures and actionable commitments where civil society also plays a role in monitoring and implementation at the national and local levels.

For this reason, it is essential that the Global Compact process elevate genuine migrant participation. This means that, civil society and particularly **migrant-led organizations** ***ourselves must be engaged in a sustained and meaningful manner.*** Migrant organizations, should be involved as central actors from the phases of design, development, implementation and monitoring of the Global Compact. ***To this end, the Global Coalition on Migration and civil society partners are actively mobilizing to translate the human rights commitments of the New York Declaration into concrete action***. With a diverse base of regional members, we see our twin objectives this year as (1) broadening the conversation and access to information on the Global Compact itself and (2) enhancing the capacity of migrant organizations to effectively contribute to the compact process. For many civil society and migrant organizations engaged on the ground, the Global Compact is far removed from their daily experience addressing immediate migrants' rights challenges. It is imperative that the Global Compact process does not leave behind the very communities on the ground that it seeks to address. As such, our coalition members are actively engaged in developing accessible resources and webinars on the Global Compact– across thematic issues and in a bottom-up process. ***Understanding regional, national and local contexts and existing best practices will be key in identifying the distinct challenges, common issues and actionable solutions in practice***.

The Human Rights Council could contribute to the process of development of the global compact

by working with civil society, human rights mechanisms, National Human Rights Institutions in the consultation process on actionable commitments and how they can be implemented. The Council can also play a role in encouraging states to incorporate Principles and Guidelines into the Global Compact. Lastly, it is essential to specifically call attention to regularization programs – it is very welcome that regularization was included in list of measures to be explored in the Global Compact Process.

In ensuring that the human rights of migrants remains a central element within the global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, it is significant that the first of the six thematic consultations will address the "Human rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion, and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance." However, it also imperative that the ***human rights of migrants be a cross-cutting concern across*** all consultations (at the global, regional and national levels), at multi-stakeholder hearings, in stock-taking and during negotiation of the Global Compact itself.

Concluding Remarks:

Civil society is committed to upholding existing human rights norms and instruments and to raise our concerns to measures in the Compact that would undermine these norms and their implementation– particularly in the context detention, returns, trafficking and smuggling. In addition, we will proactively offer practical recommendations based in existing member expertise and regional dialogues ***on issues of critical importance to our members including on labor rights, increased regular migration pathways, regularization, firewalls, ending child detention.***

In keeping with the commitments of Member States' in the New York Declaration while recognizing the realities of current political climates at national and regional levels, it will be strategic to achieve a rights-respecting Global Compact as a foundation for longer-term and graduated timeline of outcomes. The success of the Global Compact process, and of the global migration governance processes it launches, will depend upon the inclusion and engagement of many sectors of civil society, including grassroots migrant-led and migrant organizations and communities.

FILED UNDER: BLOG, EVENTS & ACTIONS

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

'What is the Global Compact and the process for consultations?"
Frequently Asked Questions on the Compact

GCM Issue Briefs for the Compact

Issue Briefs:

- Promoting Human Security & Supporting Mobility Options: Addressing Drivers of Forced Migration in the Global Compact and Other Complementary Processes and Frameworks
- Ensuring Human Rights of All Migrants, Social Inclusion and Non-Discrimination in the Global Compact
- Key issues for the Global Compact

Summary of the Global Compact

As agreed at the September 19 Summit on Refugees and Migrants, and expressed in the New York Declaration coming out of the Summit, UN Member States will develop a Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration by September 2018. In the New York Declaration, states committed to "reaffirm, and… fully protect, the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status."

The GCM together with many other civil society organizations – has been actively mobilizing our bases across regions and strategizing for concrete inputs into the upcoming consultations and the subsequent negotiating process.

Migrants today and including those in the context of large movements, are **facing a human rights crisis at all stages of the migrant journey**

- **in their places of origin,**
- **in transit and at borders,**
- **in places of destination**
- **and, often, upon return.**

As a coalition of mainly migrant and migrant-led organizations, GCM is emphasizing that **migrants are both stakeholders in the Global Compact process and rights-holders**, and will participate as fully and effectively as possible in the consultations and negotiations culminating in the Global Compact. We seek to demonstrate strong civil society support for upholding existing human rights norms and instruments, engaging with states and other stakeholders to support the effective implementation of these instruments, and to oppose any provisions that could undermine these norms and their implementation– particularly in the contexts of detention, returns/deportations, trafficking and smuggling.

GCM is developing outreach and education tools including a webinar series to familiarize member organizations/networks and civil society more broadly with the Global Compact process. GCM members will engage:

- with national governments;
- in the various regional consultations taking place this year;
- in the six global thematic consultations to be held in New York, Geneva, and Vienna between May and November 2017;
- in the multistakeholder hearings at the end of the year and into 2018;
- as well as informally with governments and in the intergovernmental stock-taking and negotiating processes.

GCM will offer focus on issues of critical importance to its members—

- labor rights including recruitment reform and access to justice;
- more and better opportunities for labor migration, respecting migrants' labor rights;
- toward commitments to regularization and firewalls and against dangerous and unsustainable returns/deportations;
- ending the use of detention for deterrence and abolishing child detention in all circumstances.

Statements made by GCM Members at the UN Thematic Consultations

4th Thematic Consultation, New York (July 24-25, 2017)

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

- Statement of Oscar Chacon, Executive Director, Alianza Americas
- Statement of Neha Misra, Senior Specialist, Solidarity Center
- Statement of Lisa M. Simeone, Secretary, Global Migration Policy Associates
- AFL-CIO Intervention: meeting with Co-facilitators
- Video recording of the 4th thematic consultation
- Resources from the multi-stakeholder hearing on July 26th

3rd Thematic Consultation, Geneva (June 19-20, 2017)

International co-operation and governance of migration in all its dimensions, including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission integration and reintegration

- Statement from Catherine Tactaquin
  Executive Director, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
- Global Coalition on Migration statement from co-facilitator meeting
- Migrant Forum in Asia statement from co-facilitator meeting
- Solidarity Center statement
- Statement prepared by Trade Collective on behalf of Women in Migration Network
- Women in Migration Network statement

2nd Thematic Consultation, New York (May 22-23, 2017)

Addressing Drivers of Migration, including Adverse Effects of Climate Change, Natural Disasters and Human-made Crisis, through Protection and Assistance, Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication, Conflict Prevention and Resolution

- Rex Marlo Varona representing Migrant Forum in Asia in Panel I (click for video)
- Roula Hamati representing Migration Forum in Asia and Cross-Regional Network Arab region in Panel II (click for vide0)

1st Thematic Consultation, Geneva (May 8-9, 2017)

Human rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism,

xenophobia and intolerance

- Statement from Monami Maulik, International Coordinator, Global Coalition on Migration

Related Processes on the Global Compact:

Human Rights Council, 34th regular session
Enhanced interactive dialogue on the human rights of migrants in the context of large movements

- Statement of Monami Maulik, International Coordinator, Global Coalition on Migration

HRC Side Event on Migrants in Crisis Situations

JUNE 18, 2015 BY ADMIN

> *"…panelists and participants affirmed that the **Human Rights of Migrants** must be central to all responses to crisis situations, and that migrants' rights must be protected at ALL times…"*

Geneva, 17 June 2015

GCM member, Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), organized a side event today during the 29th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), on **Migrants in Situations of Crisis from a Human Rights Perspective**, co-sponsored by GCM, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and the UN Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers & Members of Their Families (MWC).

PRESIDENT
PHILIPPINES

Moderated by **John Bingham** of ICMC, panelists and participants at this side event affirmed that the human rights of migrants must be central to all responses to crisis situations, and that migrants' rights must be protected at *all* times, as migrants' vulnerability in crisis situations is directly tied to the degree to which their rights are protected and upheld in non-crisis times.

Enrico T. Foss, the Consul-General of the Philippine Permanent Mission to the UN, kicked off the panel by providing an overview of the Philippines' foreign policy and crisis preparedness mechanisms, Mr. Foss emphasized the importance of political will and cooperation between origin and destination countries in securing safe relocations or repatriations for migrants caught in crisis situations. He also outlined the Philippines' participation in the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative, highlighting its role in complementing other initiatives, guidelines, and frameworks that are also looking at responses to migrants caught up in crisis situations.

Sara Prestianni of Arci and Migreurop followed by presenting on the current crisis of migrants in the Mediterranean. She strongly asserted that the reason so many are dying at sea and in the desert is that there is no legal access for these migrants to European territory; the only remedy is to open legal migration channels, which would render emergency search and rescue responses and "burden sharing" concerns among member states unnecessary. She also reminded participants that beyond the numbers quoted in media, the migrants we are talking about are all individuals — not only men and women, but also many unaccompanied minors who represent the future of Europe.

Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna of the Malaysian Migration Working Group, reported on the significant human rights violations against migrants on the Thailand/Malaysia border, where 60 migrant detention camps have been found, 28 of which were found to have 139 mass graves. These camps and gravesites are linked to human trafficking rings operating in the region. At the time of this discovery, several boats arrived on the shores of Thailand. Governments in the region have not been allowing these boats to land, providing supplies and then pushing them back out to sea. It is estimated that ~6,000 Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants remain adrift, and search & rescue teams are unable to locate them until today. Sumitha emphasized that pushing boats back to sea is not an option — these migrants are human beings deserving of the safety and protection of the law.

PRESIDENT
PHILIPPINES

Oscar Chacon of the National Alliance for Latin American & Caribbean Communities (NALACC) reported on thousands of unaccompanied minors from Central America who have been apprehended in their attempts to cross the US/Mexico border. He indicated that this story is suddenly being labeled a crisis, but it has been unfolding gradually over some time as a result of poverty, the desire for family reunification, and violence related to organized crime in many Central American communities. He noted that when the numbers of children apprehended year over year on the US and Mexican sides of the border are examined, there is clear evidence that Mexico has assumed the role of a US external border; increasing numbers of migrant children are being apprehended before they are able to cross into US territory. He emphasized that people crossing borders deserve protection, not incarceration or deportation.

Finally, **Som Prasad Lamichhane** of the Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) reflected on the recent and devastating earthquake in Nepal, and the significant impact this disaster has had on migrants and their families. With so many homes and livelihoods destroyed in and around Kathmandu, many are attempting to leave the country to earn money to support their families, depleting the local labour supply needed for rebuilding. Conversely, migrant workers in destination countries with employer-tied visa regimes and who want to return to Nepal to assist with reconstruction need to seek a release from their employers—some of whom are reluctant to provide this clearance. Those who were getting ready to migrate just before the earthquake are now in dire financial straits, having not only taken out loans to finance their migration but now needing to rebuild homes that have been destroyed. Som emphasized that countries of origin and destination must cooperate to deal with crisis situations when they occur, understanding their impact on migrant workers and their families.

GCM will continue its efforts in organizing global civil society advocacy around migrants in crisis situations by jointly co-organizing an European civil society regional consultation on the MICIC Initiative alongside the MADE Network. This will take place next week on 24 June in Brussels, on the eve of the MICIC Eastern Europe & Central Asia regional consultation. GCM and MADE also are planning to co-organize an entire series of such regional civil society *consultations in conjunction with all of the states' MICIC regional consultations over the next 12 months. The human rights of migrants will be a central theme and cornerstone of all of GCM's capacity-building and advocacy efforts around migrants in situations of crisis.*

(Onsite report by Karen Campbell. Edited by Colin Rajah.)

FILED UNDER: UNCATEGORIZED

GCM Statement: Migrants in Crisis Situations Around the Globe

JUNE 10, 2015 BY ADMIN

Migrants in crisis situations around the globe:

Rights-based policy action urgently needed

(Download full statement in PDF-form here.)

GENEVA, 10 June 2015 – In recent weeks we have witnessed a heightening of migrant and refugee crises and the callous response of nations focused on blocking access and deterrence rather than upholding and respecting migrant and refugee rights and international law. These multiple sites of crises stem from conflict, persecution and economic need that reflect imbalances in global economic and political power resulting in flawed global development policies. They become deadly when nations refuse to provide safe and legal means for migrating.

The Mediterranean—site of massive tragedies and migrant deaths

The latest European Union proposals to deal with the challenge of migrants crossing and dying in the Mediterranean is full of stop-gap measures that will certainly stir greater anxieties while avoiding the messy business of addressing the reasons why people are desperately seeking safety and new homes across international borders. This proposal reflects a disturbing international trend of states' "managing" migrants caught in crisis situations through greater migration enforcement, even while they tackle much-needed humanitarian needs.

Members of the Global Coalition on Migration (GCM) are outraged by the record numbers of migrants dying in the Mediterranean, a majority of whom are Sub-Saharan Africans attempting to escape the crises in Libya and Syria. We are also appalled by the flawed policy response by the EU, its member states, and other states. While rescue operations and humanitarian assistance are welcome, the EU's decision this past month to triple resources oriented first for border enforcement and to focus on migrant smugglers, points to its major policy thrust. The EU has said it will launch a military operation to identify, capture and destroy boats used by smugglers, and is seeking the UN Security Council's approval and support. This is a shameful slide from Italy almost singlehandedly doing search-and-rescue last year, to the whole of Europe choosing search-and-destroy this year.

But as the UN Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights of Migrants, Francois Crepeau, has said, overemphasizing the focus on smugglers is highly problematic. Smugglers flourish when immigration policy restrictions create their "market": driving migrants and refugees desperate to move for survival—but with no legal ways to do so—to board unseaworthy boats in the hands of often dangerous and unscrupulous smugglers.

Cracking down on migrant smugglers reflects a view of migration as a crime and results in migrants experiencing even more crisis and abuse. It will also misdirect much needed resources and policy responses away from providing adequate rescue and relief.

Michele LeVoy, Director of the Europe-based Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), asserts, "Migration is not a criminal activity. Policy responses which treat it as such are ineffective and inappropriate and make migrants increasingly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and trafficking."

Punitive measures dominate United States-Mexico border policies

Thousands of migrants have died in the US-Mexico border region, where access to safe migration is extremely limited and out of sync with rights to safety from violence and civil wars,the reunification of families, and the realities of people needing work, and labour markets needing workers. Mega-charged border enforcement programs, including expedited detention and deportations, family internment camps, the construction of border walls and the largest federal immigration enforcement agency in the world have not deterred migrants and refugee border crossers, but have made the passage increasingly dangerous and potentially fatal.

Large numbers of Central American children and their parents are once again arriving at the U.S. border, as they did last year, when nearly 70,000 unaccompanied children arrived. Yet, the US has relied on punitive measures, recently opening a large-scale "family" detention center in Dilley, Texas, in the face of opposition by local communities and rights groups.

Catherine Tactaquin, Director of the US-based National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, comments, "Migrant deaths in the Mediterranean and along the US- Mexico border are both tragic and painful. But this loss of lives can be prevented, and people can migrate safely across borders if only governments would act courageously and strategically. Providing visas that match rights and realities can save lives and end the criminalization of migrants."

Migrants abandoned in the Indian Ocean

In recent weeks, thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing persecution in their home countries have been left adrift in the Indian Ocean. Crackdowns on smugglers have resulted in the abandonment of boatloads of people at sea, and the refusal of countries in the region to allow them to land has left hundreds adrift in deplorable conditions. Those who have managed to make it to shore have been captured and sent to detention centres in Malaysia and Thailand with little respect for due process.

This marks yet another humanitarian crisis for migrants. For too long, ASEAN has failed to address the oppression and persecution of the Rohingya. There must be an immediate regional response to rescue those who remain at sea or in the hands and prison camps of smugglers, to guarantee non-refoulement, to provide status and safety, and to release those who have been unjustly detained in government centers. ASEAN must not continue to wash its hands of its responsibility to protect and uphold the human rights of all people, including the Rohingya.

In South Africa and elsewhere, economic desperation contributes to tensions

The xenophobic attacks on migrants in South Africa are both sad and disheartening. These stem from, and were exacerbated by, the underlying desperate competition for limited jobs and resources by migrants, interlaced with that of South Africans, both of whom already endure fragmented citizenships. This has resulted in such bloody battles for economic scraps made worse by attempts to divide "foreign" and "local." Milka Isinta, Co-Chair of the Pan-African Network in Defense of Migrants Rights (PANiDMR), observed, "It is unfortunate that African governments are silent on this issue and not taking leadership in addressing the root causes of migration, nor developing policies to protect migrants within their borders."

The GCM calls on states to uphold the human rights of migrants, and to immediately respond to such crises with robust rescue operations that address the immediate health and safety needs of migrants trapped in these situations, and ensure they can fully access their rights—including to longer-term assistance and protection for refugees, children, victims of torture, trafficking, trauma and violence. States should reverse courses of action that rely on flawed, punitive border enforcement measures and instead shoulder the responsibility to develop more safe and legal channels for migration as long term solutions, along the standards set forth in the **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families**. And states' operations at such border zones should align with the **Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders** as set forth by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The GCM urges the states' **Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative** to develop a broad set of Principles and Guidelines for states' responses that lift up the saving of migrant lives, ensure migrant human rights, and prevents such crises situations for migrants.

Governments and civil society alike must have as a priority the safety, human rights and dignity of all migrants. We cannot afford to wait on disaster upon disaster to take humane action.

The Global Coalition on Migration – GCM is an international coalition of regional and international networks of migrant associations, migrants' rights organizations and advocates, trade unions, faith groups, and academia, collaborating on international migration policy advocacy.

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