

## PHILIPPINES

### GCM Thematic Consultations One – Panel Two – Social inclusion and cohesion

#### Summary of discussions

The second panel of the GCM thematic consultations Panel will focus on social inclusion and cohesion. The explored ways and means to promote social cohesion in destination societies; in particular, the ways and means to promote economic, social, political, and cultural rights, including in respect, health, education, and adequate standard of living.

The discussion was enriched with the remarks delivered by the three panelist: **SHARON MOSHAVI**, who is the Senior Vice President, New Initiatives, and International Center for Journalist (ICFJ); **MICHELE LEVOY** who is currently serving as Director of PICUM, the *Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants*; and **ANITA BAY BUNDEGAARD** who is the International Advocacy Director of the Save the Children International. Our appreciation to their contribution.

Social cohesion and inclusion has already been affirmed in the New York Declaration approved by the UNGA in 19 September last year. In that Declaration, UN Member States reaffirmed and committed to fully protect the safety, dignity and human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, regardless of their migratory status, as rights holders, and in full respect for international human rights law and other relevant standards.

Moreover, UN Member States also strongly condemned acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against migrants, and the stereotypes often applied to them. They also pledged to combat with all the means at their disposal the abuses and exploitation suffered by migrants in vulnerable situations, and addresses their special needs in accordance with obligations under international law.

While recognizing that social inclusion and cohesion are particularly challenging, the panelists and delegations speakers stressed the need to promote a human rights-based approach and to re-orient the dominant narratives on diversity and inclusion away from the ones based on fear. Despite the complexity of the issues, the speakers also stressed the importance of addressing social inclusion and integration in the Global Compact negotiations, which would be a unique opportunity to strengthen links of migration to sustainable development and align with objectives and targets of Agenda 2030.

The following are some of the major points raised to address inclusion and cohesion:

1. Recognition and appreciation of contribution of migrants to host societies. Participants stressed the important fact that if we want inclusion, then we must value migrants (Colombia). Migrants make positive contributions to development particularly when they are integrated. Diversity benefits the prosperity of the society (Canada). In this regard, IOM's Director General, pointed out that there are two major challenges which should be overcome – for States and other stakeholders to **learn how to manage the narrative and the diversity**.
2. The GCM should give due attention to the importance of staying as close to the **real world** as possible, as well as **identifying effective national approaches and practices** which could be replicated across several countries (NHRIs). It is important for GCM to develop a **transparent accountability framework** to enable effective monitoring and reporting (Terres de Hommes).
3. **The critical role of the mass media**, particularly social media, in influencing narrative on migration was also emphasized. Objective and quality reporting on migration can help to change the narrative. It is important to educate media professionals in **telling an objective and true story** of such a complex issue as migration, rather than engaging in populist rhetoric and oversimplifications. Positive narrative of migration leads to social cohesion (South Africa, Bangladesh, Mexico, IOM). Personal stories of individual migrants are much more powerful than only presenting statistics and data to the public, though migrants should not be presented as victims only.
4. The important values of **diversity and multiculturalism**, which have acquired negative public perception, should be overcome. Some of the ways to do this are (a) to have credible data (Bangladesh) and, (b) in partnership among the international community, media other stakeholders, to inject reliable conversation which is evidence-based; facilitate access of journalists to migrants and refugees; support media literacy training at schools and recognize that media is an ally.
5. All participants confirmed the **importance of complying with international human rights law provisions** (e.g. Bulgaria). Social inclusion should become an important element of the Global Compact (Chili). Most of the governments agreed to the **importance of ensuring access of migrants to basic services**, such as education and health, regardless of their status (Argentina), paying particular attention to those in vulnerable situations such as women and unaccompanied minors (EU, Turkey, IFRC).

6. Human rights should be promoted and protected throughout the entire migration cycle, which highlights the importance of inter-state cooperation and agreements (ILO), including on readmission (Bulgaria). Some States, however, maintained that anything beyond what they termed as "fundamental" human rights would not necessarily apply to irregular or undocumented migrants.

7. Many participants among governments, panelists and international organizations (WHO, IFRC, Sri Lanka as former Chair of the Colombo Process) called for health to be mainstreamed as a topic throughout the whole GCM process and the various thematic sessions. Health is a basic human right and is reflected as such in existing human rights standards and the WHO Constitution, the 2008 WHO Resolution as well as the recent Executive board decision requesting WHO, IOM and HCR to develop a Framework for priorities and guiding principles on the health of migrants and. A recent 2nd Global Consultation on migrant health resulted in a political 'Colombo Declaration', which was proposed to inform the GCM process (Sri Lanka).

8. Moreover, access to health is extremely important in the context of social inclusion and social cohesion as it is a basic human right of all (Switzerland), regardless of migrant status (Thailand). Migrants in irregular situation are particularly vulnerable to denial of their right of accessing health services. Stigma in receiving societies and inadequate policies lead to social exclusion and inhibits access to preventive care, which results in damages and costs to the public health in whole communities. To promote public health and identify efficient responses, it is vital to enable access to preventive treatment rather than offer only emergency services, as well as address mental and physical health of all community members. Evidence counters the narrative that migrants are a drain to health systems and in fact often under-utilize services.

Panelists and speakers provided concrete examples of national policies to promote the health of migrants and emphasized that access of migrants to equitable health services and financial protection in health are central to reach rights-based health systems and to protect public health; are cost effective and facilitate integration and social inclusion; and, moreover, to achieve sustainable development goals that 'leave no one behind'. SDGs in particular UHC (target 3.8) will not be achieved unless the healths of needs of migrants are met. Migration health issues require the long-term targeted commitment of multiple stakeholders/sectors, a whole of society approach, and evidence based approaches.

9. Access to education, particularly primary and secondary education, received a lot of attention among the participants (Estonia, Slovenia, Terres de Hommes). Right to education should be a part of inclusion policies as exclusion from education breeds discontent and undermines social cohesion, increasing costs to countries of transit and destination and negatively impacts well being of migrants. Education is a long-term investment of the society, which is proven to yield positive results, such as learning the language and cultural norms of the receiving societies, hence promoting social inclusion and cohesion. Yet, many children are still denied right to access education due to their

undocumented status and being in immigration detention. Several effective practices promoting rights of migrant children to education have been highlighted (Italy, Thailand). Approaches of international actors, such as Save the Children also deserve consideration and inclusion into the GCM negotiations.

10. The issue of **establishing firewalls**, whereby social service providers offer services without the obligation to report cases of irregular migration to immigration authorities, has acquired varied support among the participants of the consultations. A considerable group of countries called for the establishment of such "firewalls" which would facilitate service provision in such areas of education and health. Some countries, however, were justifying the right of immigration authorities to request information on irregular migrants from social service providers (Australia).

11. There was broad agreement that social inclusion and integration should be comprehensively tackled through a **whole of government and whole of society approach**, highlighting the role of **local authorities**, communities themselves, civil society, private sector and migrant associations themselves (Estonia, Ecuador, EU, Chili also referring to IOM's work at local level, Norway, Costa Rica, Canada): Local development plans should include social and economic inclusion as their components (EU). Diaspora can play an important role in integration of migrants (Chili).

12. The **key role of the private sector** should be looked into to ensure effective integration (Canada), including consideration of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and taking measures against abusive employers (Sweden). Practical experience of promoting fair recruitment and labor rights protection should become an important part of the GCM, particularly the operational ways of ensuring rights protection in practice, such as fair and ethical initiatives of IOM and ILO.

13. While effective **labor market inclusion** of migrants is also seen as key to social inclusion, still too many migrants are denied right to decent working conditions and freedom of association, in particular migrant women (ILO). It is important to ensure equal remuneration to workers who perform same amount of work (Nepal). Several concrete and practical instruments have been developed by ILO, which could become important tools of the Compact. For one delegation, social inclusion is dependent on skills recognition (Colombia).

14. Integration was referred to as a **two-way process**, with responsibilities of both receiving communities to welcome newcomers but also of migrants, as well as citizens, to respect existing laws and traditions (Australia, Canada).

15. However, several delegations differentiated of integration support to migrants **depending on their legal status**. Sovereignty of states was noted – not all states provide the same access to the same services and benefits to all migrants – it often depends upon the status of the migrant and the purpose for which they are in the country. Norway spoke about its welfare model, which is based on strong participation of all members of the community in public life and employment, extending the same

expectation of active participation to migrant communities. Integration support to **legally residing migrants** should be provided as soon as possible (Lichtenstein) including access to education and labor market. Importance of **language training and learning the culture** of the destination country was highlighted, including mentioning of some innovative approaches (Lichtenstein, Austria, Slovenia).

16. Some states referred to the importance of **public confidence in the application border protection** to public attitude towards migrants. As the public is confident that border protection is robust, the public also has a positive attitude toward migrants.

17. One delegation reiterated the importance of developing **return and readmission** mechanisms, as well as differentiating between statuses and rights of refugees and migrants, stressing the right of states to determine who has right to reside on their territory and varied degree of social and economic rights to nationals and foreigners (Jordan).

18. Delegates highlighted the importance of **international cooperation** in the context of enabling migrants' access to social services (Turkey). Well-integrated migrants can become important actors of development. This is not relevant for countries of transit, however (Libya) as migrants cannot be included into transit countries.

19. Several delegations referred to the importance of **ensuring synergy between the provision of the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact of Refugees**. In the context of social cohesion and integration, several governments have developed legislative frameworks guaranteeing persons under international protection equal rights with other foreigners legally residing on their territories (Estonia, Ecuador, Ethiopia). Challenges of mixed flows were mentioned in particular while determining who has rights to protection and all associated social support services (Malta). Some countries, like Libya, however, called not to mix the two compacts and differentiate between statuses and rights of migrants and refugees.

20. Participants referred to various **effective practices and policies** in their countries addressing the issues of social inclusion and integration, in particular focusing on information provision and counselling (Malta; Turkey; Japan); establishment of support centers (Turkey); scholarship programs (Hungary); promotion of diversity (UAE); language training (Austria, Lichtenstein); experiences of **regularizations** (Dominican Republic, Brazil); capacity building to service providers (Switzerland – on-line platform aiming at building intercultural skills of health professionals). Canada offered to provide a whole range of effective practices of integration and social inclusion.

21. Challenges of **varied capacities and resources** were also mentioned by several States highlighting the importance of international cooperation and burden sharing (Hungary, Dominican Republic).

22. **Gender equality** was referred to as an important aspect of social inclusion (Sweden). Mainstreaming gender in policies can help prevent exploitation in the work force.

Several delegates posed **questions** to the panelists some of which, however, were left unaddressed. Specifically:

- 1) Chile: on important role of the media in social inclusion and cohesion.
- 2) Austria: on the role of the private sector in ensuring effective social inclusion and cohesion.
- 3) Mexico: inquired how the GCM could foster a balance between the security concern and the desire to ensure social inclusion. What specific concrete measures should be included? Which tools already exist to promote inclusion?

**Conclusions:**

- In conclusion, there is a shared responsibility among States and other stakeholders to promote and protect the rights of migrants.
- There is a need to improve and positively transform the narrative of migration in order for social cohesion and inclusion takes place in reality.
- It is important to overcome the barriers to inclusion and cohesion. It is equally important to introduce practical solutions. A mapping of what states do in terms inclusions and cohesion - of access to health care, education and social services for migrants regardless of status – should be done to feed into the GCM process.
- States will remain at the forefront of this endeavor. **END**