

# Global Coalition on Migration *Human Rights and Dignity for All*

## Statement at meeting with Co-Facilitators, during informal thematic consultation on International Cooperation & Global Governance of Migration

We thank the Co-Facilitators for the opportunity to participate in this session.

We see the migration compact as emanating from two different impulses. These are in tension with one another and have implications for the compact and for the broader future of international cooperation and governance of migration.

On the one hand, states' willingness to engage in this process within the UN rubric marks the culmination of more than a decade of work and marks a unique opportunity to move toward cooperation and coherence to migration governance at all levels.

But the compact process also emerged from the September 19 Summit, which was motivated by the sense of urgent need to deal with large, irregular movements of migrants and refugees primarily from the Mediterranean toward Europe.

We are concerned that for many states, overwhelming concern about large movements is leading in a direction that compromises the opportunity that the compact—as the culmination of more than a decade of efforts—represents.

Specifically, we see a retreat into short-term, sometimes even short-sighted, approaches, when what is needed is **long-term, far-sighted thinking** toward frameworks for cooperation enabling collective action to reap individual and collective benefits that are **sustainable over the long-term**.

The short-term approach is rooted states' assertion of their sovereign right to control who may enter and stay on their territory, with a focus on **whom they remove from their territory involuntarily or incentivize to move voluntarily under threat of involuntary removal and force another state to readmit**.

The threat of deportation, and the demonstration effect of actual deportations are being used—and are being advocated as essential to “migration management”—explicitly to deter people, ostensibly for their own benefit, from attempting “risky” journeys.

**This is not a long-term strategy.**

As emerged in the previous thematic discussion on drivers, the deterrence framework does not address the underlying reasons that people move irregularly. At the systemic level, forced and reluctant returns are likely to exacerbate the circumstances that cause people to leave in the first place. Returns to situations where there is no prospect of either integration or reintegration are likely to be destabilizing, causing further internal displacement and re-migration rather than development.

Focusing on deterrence and returns does not address the rights violations and decent work deficits in countries of origin, nor does it address the real labor demand in destination countries and the fact that irregular migrants providing this labor often face exploitive conditions. **A long-term strategy must deal with all of these issues.**

The pretense that reintegration or integration will take place in involuntary and reluctant situations is belied by mounting evidence that it does not and will not—that on the contrary, involuntary returns and returns that are voluntary in name only.<sup>1</sup>

We hear all the time and heard repeatedly at the thematic on drivers that migration must be a choice, not a necessity. Returning to a country of origin, and the timing of that return, should also be a choice—and not a “choice” under threat of forcible return. **And this is where real discussion on reintegration and its benefits for migrants and for development countries of origin and destination needs to go**, moving beyond the focus on remittances.

The centrality and priority of this human choice element should be a key feature guiding *all* aspects of the governance of human mobility. The more regular, legible, transparent choices people retain about their mobility—and in particular choices about moving back and forth, e.g. returning temporarily to a country of origin while working in another country, and then back again—the less likely they are to want or need to move in irregular ways that states perceive as challenging.

The focus on work toward the compact needs to remain on achieving real progress toward facilitating human mobility in a way that meets the needs and aspirations and respects the rights of those who move, while also contributing to the sustainable development of states of origin, transit and destination.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> In the words of a leading migration expert writing for GiZ:

It is wishful thinking to associate forced and ‘reluctant voluntary’ return with economic development. It is generally unrealistic to expect socially and economically marginalised return migrants to make any significant contribution to ‘development’ in Morocco. From these returnees’ perspective, it was their migration that represented opportunities for personal advancement and development. In fact, many of them wish to remigrate. Their forced or ‘reluctant voluntary’ return often increases their feeling of marginalisation. De Haas 2016, pp 3-4 (<https://www.giz.de/fachexpertise/downloads/giz2016-en-moroccan-migration-trends.pdf>)