

10 February 2017

Consolidated civil society Steering Committee feedback on 1st draft GFMD 2017 Concept Note (15 December 2016)

As in previous years, at the invitation of the GFMD 2017 Chair the Civil Society Coordinating Office circulated for feedback the 1st Draft GFMD 2017 (15 December 2016) Concept note to the GFMD Civil Society International Steering Committee (ISC) for the GFMD.

In a spirit of shared purpose and solidarity, this document consolidates that feedback in three parts: a) themes and roundtables, b) format, and c) GFMD structure and interaction with civil society.

A few general observations:

- The ISC expresses strong appreciation for this - and future - consultations by the Co-Chair.
- Civil Society is particularly interested in hearing more about the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular migration
- Civil society is encouraged by the fact that the Co-Chair is “keen to promote more interactive discussion in outcome-oriented formats with greater civil society as well as business participation”, and welcomes any elaborations in that regard.
- The ISC welcomes the overall theme, towards a “*social contract*.” Not just a “compact”, but a “contract”; meaning something that is drafted by all stakeholders, and that is binding. We encourage a stronger reflection and development of this overarching theme in the sub-themes and roundtables of the Concept Paper, which we find lacking in the current draft.
- Migrants are stakeholders, but they are also rights holders. There is only one mention of rights in the entire document (specifically, labour rights, and even then only in a list of SDGs relevant to migration governance), which is cause for serious concern.
- Civil society would like to flag with concern the preoccupation with migrant containment and return in the Concept Paper. Linked to this, civil society expresses surprise and concern over the apparent space given to discussions on development policies, notably in Roundtable 3.1 as currently drafted, which, as further discussed on page 3 of this feedback, may even open to GFMD discussions of conditioning development aid upon migration control or containment. To our recollection, out of all the links of migration and development explored in the GFMD over the years, in two UNGA High-level Dialogues, the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals and the UNGA Summit in September 2016, none has ever connected migration and development in this way.

A. Suggestions on themes and roundtables

1. On the overall approach to a *Social Contract*, the Global Compact, and the SDGs.

Civil society welcomes the overall focus on achieving a global social contract on migration and development, insofar as it understands that a social contract is something that is drafted and agreed to by all stakeholders, and is binding. Further articulation to this effect regarding the purpose and meaning of a social contract would be a useful addition to the Concept Paper, both in the introduction as well as in the roundtables and related guiding questions.

We strongly endorse the effort made to orient the government programme around the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and the emphatic linking of the migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goals throughout the sub-themes. It would be useful to adapt the guiding questions to reflect this orientation in a clearer way, so that there is more coherence between these overarching processes and the results from each roundtable.

To further ensure this coherence, we recommend an additional session within the programme or a distinct focus in Common Space that specifically looks at the role of the GFMD in relation to the Global Compact process, in that the GFMD serves as both a source of multi-stakeholder expertise as the Compact is developed, as well as a natural starting point for the Compact's implementation when it is adopted. We are interested to hear more about the GFMD Ad Hoc Working Group on the Global Compact, as well as the input paper being prepared towards the Global Compact, and would be happy to contribute to these in a meaningful way.

The quality of the guiding questions can make or break a discussion, and in this paper we suggest they need improvement across the board. In general, the guiding questions in the 2016 Concept Paper were very well specified, and we would recommend using these as a useful reference point.

2. Comments per theme

Migration and development through national strategies: enhancing the effectiveness of domestic policies

Roundtable 1.1 – Tools and Safeguards for Policy Coherence – Finding the right policy mix to balance different interests and objectives

We welcome the focus on policy coherence, and agree that this is a critical issue in ensuring a functioning migration framework at all levels. However, it would be useful to specify what is meant by “policy coherence” in this context, and, as coherence can only be determined relative to defined goals, we suggest the clear identification of the objectives of this roundtable. We also strongly recommend reflecting these objectives in the guiding questions to a much greater extent.

In the spirit of taking a multi-actor approach, we suggest inviting local authorities, as well as national, international and supranational actors to be active participants in this discussion, with the idea that this would enhance the vertical coherence being sought.

We also suggest considering the ways in which “coherence” operates horizontally at every level, meaning that countries can benefit from engaging in a multilateral process at the same time as benefitting from bilateral ones. It strikes us that this speaks to the concept of a social contract, which is at the heart of this concept paper.

Roundtable 1.2 - From global agreement to implementation – national action plans form migration-related sustainable development goals (SDGs)

Civil society truly welcomes this roundtable's focus on implementation of the SDGs at national level, and for recognising the central role of the HLPF to this end.

Given that there are so many SDG targets that could be chosen, aside from the seven selected, which could actually have a more significant impact on migration and development, we strongly suggest incorporating the work already done to establish a comprehensive list of migration-relevant SDG targets for this session, such as that prepared by the International Organisation for Migration (<http://unofficeny.iom.int/sites/default/files/IDM-2016-New-York-background-paper-rev.pdf>). We encourage a more holistic approach to the SDGs, lest some goals and targets be side-lined if too much emphasis is placed on just these 7 targets out of 169.

We are surprised at the inclusion of 3.c to substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, given that this was not considered by the IOM and other international actors to be “particularly migration-relevant”. We note also that the phrase “brain drain”, is not referred to in the SDGs. We ask that this target is removed and others, e.g., relating to human trafficking (5.2, 8.7, and 16.2) and gender have a place in this list.

Further clarification is needed in the guiding questions for this session. For example, in the first guiding question, what is meant by “GFMD member states”, and it would be useful to define what is meant by such terms as “best practices”, e.g., whether this refers to implementing policies to achieve specific targets, or to monitoring their implementation. In the second guiding question “Which overall actions have been taken to mainstream migration policies and to protect especially vulnerable migrant groups?”, clarity would be welcome on whether this is a question about policy coherence and the extent to which migration phenomena are appropriately incorporated in other policy domains such as education, healthcare, social protection.

Migration and development through multilateral and bilateral partnerships: creating perspectives for inclusive development

Roundtable 2.1 – Moving beyond emergencies – Creating development solutions to the mutual benefit of host communities and displaced persons

More than any other, this roundtable seems vague and overbroad. While it is good to move beyond emergencies—and civil society actors work at this on the ground every day—often in direct partnership with governments and international and regional organizations, it is not clear to us what specific discussion this table will have.

Civil society is concerned at the apparent focus of this roundtable on development as a means of preventing forced displacement, without the important clarification that the goal is to truly help make migration a choice and not a necessity. A bright red line for many in civil society would be crossed if this discussion took the step into considering *conditioning* development aid on migration control or containment, which we vehemently oppose.

We also point out that mixed flows of migrants today are a very diverse group. We advise that they not be designated by the same label; whether they are “voluntary” or “forced migrants”, they are not all “displaced.” Given this, we suggest expanding the title and discussion of this roundtable to include all migrants.

Finally, the first guiding question seems to call for a full conference—or two—when it asks “how can development actors contribute to crisis prevention”, and then goes on to raise “slow onset disasters like desertification or environmental degradation”. While civil society wholeheartedly endorses discussion within the GFMD of climate and environment induced migration, it is important to frame such discussion more tightly.

Roundtable 2.2 – Fostering the development impact of return migrants

We ask that the Chair take great care in approaching the issue of return in such a way as to ensure honest, constructive dialogue, in the full spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New York Declaration, and in conformity with widely ratified international treaties, not least of them the 1951 Refugee Convention and Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We ask that voluntary return, the value of preparation for return and providing reintegration support are given more prominence in this roundtable as vital elements of this discussion. We further ask that any discussion of forced return or enforcement-related return be straightforward in its framing, exercising great prudence to distinguish from what is genuinely voluntary return.

We further feel that this roundtable should look at the issue of return in a broader way, rather than focusing on returned migrants as just development actors. We suggest re-wording the title to *“Supporting the social and economic inclusion and contributions of return migrants”*, given the fact that return migrants will be able to have a more significant development impact if their human rights, social inclusion needs and potential contributions are recognized as such.

In this direction, we suggest that at least one guiding question of the roundtable asks how migrants as stakeholders might be involved in the partnerships between origin and destination countries.

Finally, it would be helpful if certain references in the roundtable description were tightened and made more consistent, including terms like “receiving societies”, “receiving state”, “and countries of origin”. The use and combination of such terms are especially confusing in the fourth paragraph, where the final sentence is also hard to understand.

Migration and development: finding strategies beyond the State

It is heartening to see that the different stakeholders’ mutual interaction and trustful collaboration is, as the Concept paper puts it, of supreme importance to the Co-Chairs. To further this aim, we suggest that meaningful civil society, and indeed private sector, participation in the roundtables of sub-theme 3 would add significant value to the discussions of these two roundtables on finding strategies beyond the state and to foster the collaboration needed between these actors.

Roundtable 3.1 – Raising the global talent pool – harnessing the potential of the private sector for global skills partnerships

We are intrigued by the framing of this this roundtable? We wonder if it is framed widely enough for all the governments that will be participating in the GFMD? Is it intended to focus principally on pre-migration skills-building and preparation of migrants for labour markets abroad? Will this roundtable directly touch on cross-border recruitment of migrant workers?

We would suggest that the thematic focus and guiding questions be oriented more broadly, but within a clearer defined context. We were also unsure on the meaning of the last guiding question, in particular the term “local enterprises” there.

We would note that many business enterprises started and/or run by migrants or refugees and members of the diaspora do thriving transnational business and should be actively sought to participate in this roundtable.

Roundtable 3.2 – Strengthening Cooperation – enabling civil society contributions in migrant and refugee assistance and integration

We are confused about the actual title of this roundtable. On page 3 of the draft, the title does not include the words “assistance and” which we see on page 9. If indeed both are intended, the scope of discussion will be quite broad. At the same time, it is interesting to see the reference to refugees as well as migrants. In many ways, integration challenges and efforts are often similar for refugees and migrants.

We appreciate that civil society is recognised here as an agent and partner in assistance and integration. In a spirit of shared interest for the common good, we are happy to offer our lived experience as well as working experience towards constructive conversation and concrete result in this roundtable.

In the first guiding question, rather than states *encouraging* integration by civil society, we ask that this be phrased as how states can *support, or work together in partnership with* civil society to ensure the integration of migrants.

In addition to states providing comprehensive frameworks of measures in view of the specific needs of migrants, we ask that the responsibility of states to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their borders is also expressed here as equally necessary to ensure successful integration.

We strongly encourage including migrants, refugees, members of the diaspora, local authorities and city leaders in this discussion—as they/we are the front-line subject and object and actors and agents of change in integration in particular.

Finally, the last guiding question is unclear in its reference to “civil engagement of locals with immigrant background”—i.e., who is that?

B. On format

- As a concrete suggestion, we suggest the Chair to include a **Global Compact– tracker** in all of the roundtables, which will guarantee the strong link to both the preparatory work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the role of the GFMD in Agenda 2030. Adding Global Compact related guiding questions would also allow for more targeted discussions throughout the two days.
- Linked to this, **Preparatory or Background Documents** that clearly link to the Agenda and overall theme will be a strong advantage. As in prior years, we look forward to civil society experts—practitioners as well as academics—being invited to offer suggestions in the drafting of the roundtable background papers.

C. On structure and cooperation with civil society

To foster mutual and constructive interaction, and expand trust, collaboration and results amongst the different GFMD stakeholders, we offer the following suggestions and proposals.

1. Multi-stakeholder approach

We are again happy to be working so closely with the Chair in preparing a GFMD that expands interaction. Concretely, we propose:

- Civil society participation in the **Ad Hoc Working group on the SDGs and Global Compact**, recognizing that the Ad Hoc groups are not as formal as the full GFMD, and recalling the long precedent of civil society participating constructively in at least two earlier Ad Hoc Working groups of the GFMD, including ICMC.
- On **private sector involvement**: we applaud the smart inclusion and the solid work of the Business Mechanism in the GFMD activities and Summit last year. The small number of us in civil society that participated in the Business Mechanism workshop during the Summit thought that it was excellent and look forward to a similar structure this year.
- On the role of **cities and local authorities**: it is important to continuing to engage cities and other local authorities in GFMD processes. Given the precedent of local authorities participating in roundtables of previous GFMD's, and strong, repeated recommendations that were made in Common Space and other GFMD sessions last year, we encourage continuation—and indeed, expansion of their involvement this year.

2. Interacting and collaborating with Civil Society inside and beyond the GFMD

In the evaluation survey completed by 108 (over half) of the civil society delegates in the GFMD in Bangladesh, the two strongest criticisms were:

- insufficient opportunities for interaction between civil society and states—in both the civil society days and the government programme!
- disappointment over the way **Common Space** was organized last year, with little space, time and attention for genuine civil society – government dialogue as well as an imbalance in speaking roles for governments (and agencies) vs. civil society, especially in the opening plenary. Civil Society urges to limit the time for plenary speeches, and increase the time and space for smaller group interactions, also encouraging more time for floor discussion in these smaller groups as opposed to many panel presentations.

One remedy within our reach together is to expand and formalize the small interactive **Tea-tables** with governments. This is a format that civil society has successfully organized in the GFMDs in Sweden, Turkey and Bangladesh, with a simple formula of 5-7 civil society leaders from around the world discussing a single issue with 5-7 governments, informally and without record for 90 minutes. Governments that have participated as well as those from civil society have consistently said that such tables are one of the most productive features of the entire GFMD, and we agree.

Finally, we would like to look again at the proposal that the ISC made in writing last year to the Chair and troika for **two representatives of the civil society programme to participate in each of the government roundtables**, reflecting both the maturity of the GFMD process, civil society's record of constructive participation in the full range of GFMD activities over the years, and the inestimable value of recognizing and building together on common ground and shared interest.

/Thank you!

The ICMC Coordinating Office,
on behalf of the International Steering Committee for the GFMD Civil Society Days