

December 2015

**Consolidated Civil Society Steering Committee feedback on**

*Elements of Concept Note Bangladesh Chairmanship of Ninth GFMD (2016)*

At the invitation of the Chair to provide a civil society perspective on the “Elements of Concept Note” (dated Oct. 2015, Istanbul) ICMC’s GFMD Civil Society Coordination Office circulated for feedback the Elements paper to 33 leaders and networks around the world active in the International Steering Committee (ISC) of civil society for the GFMD.

Feedback was received through the first week of December. This document summarizes the main feedback and further incorporates results of the GFMD Civil Society Days 2015 evaluation survey *(separately attached)*.

A few notes on the feedback to begin.

* many expressed strong appreciation for this (and future such) open consultation by the Chair
* there is great hope and determination to take the 2016 GFMD and cooperation between civil society and governments within (and beyond) GFMD processes to a higher level; in the spirit of Mr. Shahidul Haque’s words to “*operate beyond [our] silos*” and that “*if we are to transform the world of migration, GFMD must contribute to bolster mutual trust and confidence and continue to offer a space for open and frank dialogue among all stakeholders.”*
* feedback was along two lines: refining, clarifying and adding to the thematic priorities (see part A. below), and suggestions for GFMD modalities, preparations and civil society-government cooperation (see part B. below).

**A. Suggestions on themes and roundtables**

1. **Defining what SDG+ means, and making explicit links to the relevant migration-related targets on the Agenda 2030: decent work for all, peaceful societies and safe migration**

The feedback largely welcomed the overall focus on sustainable development and the UN 2030 Agenda. We are intrigued by the proposed “SDG –plus” approach, as we feel that it is critically important to make the connection with existing frameworks and mechanisms, including human right conventions, and the results of the 2013 High-level Dialogue (HLD), and also because the 2030 Agenda does not by itself encompass all relevant areas related migrants and migration. However it not clear for us what this SDG+ approach entails, and how it will be integrated through the various roundtable themes that are proposed; with enthusiasm we would like to discuss this with the Chair.

More generally, we feel that several concepts and thoughts from the Elements paper need to be clarified and made more specific. In particular we suggest that the GFMD 2016 Agenda make explicit mention of the main pillars and related targets of migration in the 2030 Agenda: (1) decent work for all (2) peaceful societies (3) safe migration, and (4) leave no one behind.

1. **Include throughout the concept note and themes a human rights-based approach, and focus on safe and regular human mobility**

We would like to emphasize the importance for each of the roundtables to centre on a human rights-based approach and a starting point that human mobility needs to become much voluntary, safer, more regular and humane. We therefore applaud and encourage signs that the Chair will not ‘shy away’ from including difficult issues on the agenda, which according to civil society should include a focus on access to decent work and labour rights at home and abroad, mechanisms for safe and orderly migration, combatting xenophobia and improving social inclusion of migrants in their new societies.

For example, civil society appreciated that the 2015 Turkish Chair succeeded in introduced the issue of forced migration in the GFMD programme in 2015. As discussed in quite productive working sessions of the civil society as welll as governments in the GFMD in Istanbul, forced migration in its many forms is an issue of both migration and development, and such a challenge globally that the GFMD simply must take it up regularly. Moreover, GFMD attention to the issue takes forward what is the very strongest consensus among all stakeholders in GFMD and HLD processes: that migration should be by choice not necessity.

1. **Cross-cutting themes and thematic priorities**

While awaiting further clarification from the Chair on the themes and concepts proposed in the Elements paper, here are a number of themes that we would urge to be addressed in the processes of the 2016 GFMD, and beyond, as we hope that there will be a possibility to work on these themes long-term and over multiple years and chairmanships.

***Cross-cutting***

As indicated above we urge and would applaud the Chair to *fully* integrate throughout the GFMD work and agenda the following two priorities:

1. **Protection and promotion of the human rights of migrants, regardless of status, including civil and political rights, as well as social, economic and cultural rights.**
2. **The relevant goals and and targets related to migrants and migration in the UN 2030 Agenda**

Furthermore we would suggest that global governance, in addition to being a dedicated theme, would also be addressed in all roundtables

1. **Questions of global governance of migration and development, including changes needed in legal frameworks for the protection and empowerment of migrants and in the global institutional set-up**

***Suggested themes and subthemes***

In further refining the themes and subthemes, we ask the Chair to take into account the following priorities, which top civil society’s list as well as resonate with so many recent GFMD and HLD conclusions of states.

* **On decent labour mobility**

1. Decent labour mobility mechanisms, and access to labour rights and social protection for migrant workers
2. Reforming migrant labour recruitment policies and practices

* **On protection of migrants**

1. Protecting migrants in crisis situation, in transit and at borders
2. Development solutions for forced displacement, including by conflict, disaster and climate change

* **On inclusive societies**

1. Combatting xenophobia and ensuring the social inclusion of diaspora and migrants
2. Migrants and diaspora action for job creation, social entrepeneurship and public policy

* **On governance of migration and development**

1. Implementing and monitoring of migration-related aspects of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the role and future of the GFMD
2. Multilateral cooperation and governance of migration and development: institutions, legal frameworks and the role and future of the GFMD

We would advise the Chair to be as specific as possible on themes suggested, and avoid reference to broad conceptual terms such as sociology.

We would be happy to work humbly with the Chair in providing more detailed input for related sessions and background papers.

1. **Preparatory thematic meetings—and piloting a related joint Working group approach**

It is good to see that the Bangladesh Chair is committed to continuing the practice of organizing preparatory thematic meetings, and that these will be taking part in different locations around the world. We welcome further information and involvement on the themes and objectives of each of the thematic meetings.

More specifically:

* We hope that these thematic meetings, contrary to prior years, **will truly be multi-stakeholder meetings**. The meetings should invite civil society representatives to take part in panels and discussion, as well as representatives from the private sector, cities/local authorities and regional organisations/consultative processes. Among other things, the thematic events should include actors who can present concrete positive experience of partnerships between civil society actors (migrants and diaspora in particular) and authorities on the ground, whether those authorities are national, regional or local.
* We urge the Chair to focus the first preparatory thematic meeting on **implementing and monitoring the migration-related aspects of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the role of the GFMD.**

**B. Suggestions on GFMD modalities and civil society-government cooperation**

In order to translate the Chair’s vision to “move beyond our silos” and “bolster mutual trust and confidence” into practice, and for the civil society and government GFMD events to complement and strengthen each other further, we offer the following suggestions and proposals.

1. **Multi-stakeholder approach**

We were eager be more fully involved in preparing the recent GFMD (2015), and welcome a conversation with the Chair as soon as possible about what modalities for this can be in 2016 and beyond.

On adopting a multi-stakeholder approach:

* The idea of a multi-stakeholder preparatory process ahead of the next GFMD was mentioned by several governments and civil society organisations during the 2015 GFMD. We suggest to the Chair to pilot **a joint Working group approach** of government and civil society connected to the preparatory event described above, specifically to focus on Implementing and monitoring the migration-related aspects of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the role of the GFMD. This would be real preparation, before and after the “preparatory event” itself, and into and beyond the GFMD this year. What a contribution that would be for the Bangladesh GFMD to make, both on substance, achievement and on inclusive process. And how smart to do it *now* with enough time for continuity and progress through the next two GFMDs and towards the third HLD in 2019.

Such a joint Working group approach could also contribute to the pilot projects proposed by the Chair *(see formal proposal # 1 in the last section below)*

* On **private sector** involvement: we agree that new energy and a new format is needed to engage businesses in this work, but at the same time we reiterate serious concern if this new approach would create yet another separate process, and risks pushing back space for civil society – government cooperation. Therefore we urge the Chair to ensure that *from the very start* any new mechanism brings together civil society, private sector and government organizing, perspectives and participants.
* On the role of **cities and local authorities**: In addition to cooperation with civil society, as well as the private sector, civil society wants to emphasize the importance of continuing to engage *cities* and other local authorities in GFMD processes*.* Working on the ground all over the world, civil society sees and regularly partners in the ground-breaking work of cities and regions in concrete, replicable practices, many directly relating to important GFMD discussions and recommendations. One possibility that has been suggested is to structure some kind of full track within the Common Space for this.
* On the role of **regional governmental processes**: civil society would welcome to involve regional governance structures much more in the discussions at the GFMD and in its preparatory discussions, as these will probably play a key ‘guiding’ role in ensuring effective national implementation.

1. **Interacting and collaborating with Civil Society inside and beyond the GFMD**

As noted in the 2015 GFMD Civil Society Chairs’ report by Ignacio Packer, we are gravely concerned that *“the space for civil society is shrinking rapidly worldwide”*. In that light we are glad about the Chair’s commitment to actually strengthening civil society-government cooperation in the GFMD. We have long proposed this, and demonstrated its value for all to see when civil society was included on panels and in discussion *within the formal process and government roundtables* *of the UN HLD* in 2013. We propose and hope that this approach will be institutionalized for the GFMD going forward.

The 2015 GFMD Civil Society evaluation survey showed enormous disappointment over Common Space in Istanbul taking a big step backward, with very little space, time and attention for genuine civil society – government dialogue, an unprecedented imbalance in speaking roles for governments (and agencies) vs. civil society and side events inexplicably overlapping the Common Space breakout sessions. Civil Society urges to limit the time for plenary speeches, and increase the time and space for smaller group interactions.

What has been evaluated positively by governments and civil society alike are formats for smaller group interactions. This includes:

* the 5-10 **breakfast tables** that ICMC’s Coordinating Office has organized these past two GFMDs bringing together a few representatives from government and civil society on specific themes. In fact, civil society and government participants have evaluated the breakfast tables format of interaction as one of the most positive GFMD innovations in recent years.
* inviting **government speakers to the Civil Society Days** Working sessions.
* both of these initiatives involved, and appreciated senior representatives of Bangladesh in the GFMDs in 2014 and 2015.

In this light, *civil society renews and puts forward three formal proposals to the Chair for the GFMD:*

**Formal proposal # 1: Pilot joint Working groups**

As described above, several governments and civil society organizations suggested the establishment of joint working groups to take forward specific themes and recommendations. We would like to suggest to the Chair to pilot this approach by establishing two **joint working group approach** of government, civil society and international organizations for example on the following two themes: (1) i**mplementing and monitoring the migration-related aspects of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the role of the GFMD** (linked to the group of informals); (2) **Migrant labour recruitment.**

**Formal proposal # 2: Create a small, time-limited taskforce on GFMD interactions between civil society and government during and beyond Common Space:**

As in the original 2010 design and most of the GFMDs since, civil society co-owns Common Space with the governments and together with the Chair and governments, must be an equal partner in defining its outline and methodology. We propose to establish a small time-bound taskforce of civil society, the Chair and a few key governments in 2016 to work on this. It is possible that this task force could further discuss how civil society and migrants can be more systematically included in consultations, preparations, and future planning, including for the thematic meetings, RT preparations and multi-annual planning for the GFMD.

**Formal proposal # 3—and most important: Take the step and invite Civil Society Spokespersons and participants in the Government Roundtables**

Civil society proposes to pick up the model of the HLD in 2013, by inviting a select number of civil society spokespersons to participate in the states’ GFMD Roundtables to present related conclusions of the Civil Society Days and participate in the discussion –e.g. at a minimum the Civil Society Chairs and the rapporteurs from the corresponding civil society Working sessions. This worked in the HLD—in fact it worked well. Nine years into the GFMD, it is time to bring it into the GFMD.