



NGO Committee on Migration

A committee of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations

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TOWARDS THE HLD 2013 Working Session 5 IOM – CSO Annual Consultation 25th October 2012

Our Role/Activities in Preparations for the HLD 2013

On behalf of the NGO Committee on Migration, I wish to thank IOM for the invitation to participate in this annual IOM- CSO Consultation, in this Workshop Session on *Multilateral Framework for Cooperation on Migration and Development*.

Our Committee is an umbrella organization of more than 40 NGOs whose mission is to advocate for the protection and promotion of the human rights of migrants and their families worldwide, in accordance with the United Nations Charter. Our Committee was born as an outcome of our participation in the preparations for the first High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD) in 2006. Since then, we have actively advocated on behalf of migrants' human rights, at the local, national, regional, and global level. We have participated in all the Global Forums on Migration and Development (GFMDs), from Belgium to Geneva, and will send several delegates to the Forum in Mauritius this November. There, we also expect to make plans, together with other Civil Society representatives, for CS participation in the HLD 2013.

I think it is fair to say that preparations for the HLD by the international community began in earnest with the **Informal Thematic Debate** held at the UN on 19th May 2011. We closely cooperated with the office of the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA/PGA) in preparations for this event, and were one of three NGOs invited to give an intervention at the meeting. We also collaborated with our NGO networks in a side-event on *Migration, Development, and Human Rights: A Civil Society Perspective and View to 2013*.

Perhaps this is a good place for me to reiterate that I speak here on behalf of our NGO Committee on Migration. While we NGOs, like Member States, may have different perspectives and views with respect to various M+D issues, we are firmly united in our basic stance on both process and substance: namely, that CS, as a vital stakeholder, must have a place at the table whenever and wherever policies and practices regarding M+D are involved; and secondly, that a human rights perspective must be mainstreamed into all M+D themes, projects, and outcomes.

As preparations began, late this Spring, by the UN Secretariat to draft HLD modalities for inclusion in the Report of the UN Secretary General (SG) to the 67th UNGA, our Committee circulated, at the beginning of June, a short list of recommendations which expressed our hopes and expectations regarding these modalities. We urged that

- the HLD 2013 must represent a move **forward from 2006**;
- the focus must be on **outcomes** (not just a Chair's Report, as was the case in 2006); and that

- Civil Society must be represented **in all of its diversity, in far greater numbers** than in 2006 and participate in the proceedings as partners at the table with the rest of the international community.

(To our recommendations we attached our Committee's proposals on *Modalities for Effective Civil Society Participation in the UN 2013 High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development* (1st March, 2012).

- Finally, we noted that several **topics** have been repeatedly urged by CS for priority consideration, including labor migration, development, protection, and HLD linkages -- to regional processes and outcomes, and to other global commitments and follow up processes, including the World Conference on Women, the World Conference on Racism, Financing for Development, Rio+20, and the MDGs..

Opportunities and Challenges in Preparations for the 2013 HLD

While recognizing that the GFMD and the HLD are separate entities, and in agreement that GFMD issues should not be the sole focus of the 2013 HLD, we think that the past **GFMDs can serve as an important learning experience** about what is needed for successful collaboration of NGOs like ours and other stakeholders, both on matters of process and substance, as we move forward to 2013 and beyond..

- . From Belgium to Mauritius, there have been welcome strides forward in the collaboration between CS and Member States, in plenaries, working sessions, and most importantly, the **Common Space** instituted by Mexico in 2010. Whereas in 2007, the Civil Society Days (CSDs) and Government Days were

virtually sealed off, today the Common Space is becoming institutionalized and this year broken down into smaller groupings, with **increased opportunities for informal contacts**.

- Also, **individual delegations**, like that of the USA, meet with their CS organizations at Forums and also in between. Just last week, during such an NGO consultation in Washington, the head of the US Delegation to this year's Forum declared that the US is fully committed to Civil Society participation in the HLD.
- Further, a number of States have included CS delegates as part of their own delegations to the GFMDs and are amenable to doing the same at the forthcoming HLD.
- Lastly, in preparation for 2013, IOM, DESA and other UN entities are providing additional opportunities for input by NGOs.

On the other hand, NGOs still have very circumscribed access to States' meetings, and very **limited opportunity to participate in States' programs, whether at the Forums or elsewhere**.

- Many Governments still shy away from the UN as a venue for Forum meetings, precisely because of its human rights framework and the presence of NGOs.
- NGO advocacy opportunities are also curtailed because CS is still prevented from engaging in many regional processes, including those leading up to the Forums and HLDs.

At the same time, in our view, there has been a growing rapprochement on matters of **substance**, both at the GFMDs and in preparation for the HLD 2013.

Roundtable (RT) themes of CS and of Member States now address

- The human rights of migrants, including undocumented ones;
- Concerns with family fragmentation,
- The vulnerability of women migrant workers; and
- The human dimensions of development, including development in the sending country, that would make migration a choice, not a necessity.

However, differences in perspectives between States and CS on other substantive issues remain very challenging to NGOs like ours, including:

- The continuing emphasis of Governments on the utility of migrants for economic development rather than on Governments' responsibilities to fulfill their development obligations;
- The pushback of a number of states on issues like human rights and irregular migration; and
- The lack of will by most Governments, especially of the most industrialized societies, to ratify the Migrant Worker Convention.

All of these challenging issues constitute top priorities in our Committee's advocacy efforts, as do the until very recently neglected issues of refugees, IDPs, mixed populations—especially victims of abuse in crossing borders--, and stranded migrants, in M+D discussions.

Towards the HLD 2013 and Beyond

Looking towards the HLD 2013, our Committee, in concordance with our CS partners and networks, emphasizes that:

- migration governance requires structural continuity, transparency, and commitment to actions which include the monitoring of progress with agreed upon time frames.
- We also consider it essential to incorporate migration explicitly into human rights based post 2015 development policies. There is widespread agreement that these policies be data based, include an emphasis on human development, and an outreach to diasporas as policy contributors.
- At the same time, we underscore the importance of a continuing focus on migration policy and practices worldwide.

In our **NGO Committee's response to the Secretary General's report on Migration and Development, and in particular, his options for HLD modalities** (shortly after its release in mid-September in conjunction with the opening of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly) we applauded the focus on identifying **concrete measures** that enhance the benefits of migration for all.

We look forward to a Dialogue geared toward a commitment to **reachable outcomes**, which reflect **good practices** by Governments and other stakeholders to protect and promote the human rights of migrants.

We also welcome the 4 Roundtables described in the SG Report, namely:

- Leveraging diaspora contributions for development;
- Promoting legal and orderly migration, while protecting migrant rights;
- Mainstreaming migration into the development agenda; and

- Strengthening partnerships and cooperation on international migration.

We share the view of our CS colleagues who are currently organizing the CSD program in Mauritius that concrete outcomes of such Forums and High Level Dialogues depend on the translation of the thematic discussions into concrete, implementable proposals. This calls for “operationalizing” the themes –that is to say, putting forward “mechanisms” or tools, such as good practices, and formulating some “benchmarks” or indicators of success that allow for better impact evaluation and monitoring.

Our Committee has set up working groups to compile and circulate benchmarks and mechanisms for the upcoming Roundtable themes. We have also proposed, in response to the SG’s Report , that in order to further the implementation of specific outcomes of the HLD, a representative working group of all stakeholders who will be participating in it could draw up a list of mechanisms and benchmarks from among the best practices and suggestions in the RT dialogues. These could then be piloted by a number of States, in cooperation with other stakeholders.

Conclusion

As we prepare for the HLD 2013 and beyond, we look forward to cooperation, collaboration, and partnership with the other stakeholders in a Multilateral Framework for Cooperation in Migration and Development, in order to protect the human rights and further the well being of migrants and their families worldwide.

25th October 2012

