

## **GCIM-IOM Workshop on Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs)**

Requested questions to be answered from the perspective of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) or Puebla Process:

1. In cases where different ministries are involved in dealing with issues discussed in one or more RCPs, how is this work coordinated internally?

In the case of the RCM, there are usually two ministries represented: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. The former usually heads the country participating delegation; the latter, is usually represented by the countries' migration service.

The RCM maintains current an "official" list of country "focal points" of government officials at the working level. Usually there are two per country which represent the said ministries. A feature of the RCM "focal points" is that each of them has a sound knowledge of migration and has participated representing his/her country in a number of occasions, including in the drafting of the "official" RCM documents. Thus, the "focal points" are also the main actors of the process as they sort of "own" the process.

By experience, I can point out that internally, countries look at it on issue by issue basis. A country position would depend then on the issue at hand, and which department has the lead. Usually a country position is prompted by the agenda and venue for discussion.

In the case of the RCM, its Plan of Action has three main themes: migration policy and management; human rights; and migration and development. The first item is primarily handled by the ministries of the interior and the migration services; the second one is usually handled by the ministries of foreign affairs; and the third would be a mixed issue, or handled by more than one ministry.

The country position would depend on what are the country's interests on specific issue to be discussed. A country position would include a strategy to pursue its interests in a consistent manner.

- How could it be coordinated? Is coordination considered beneficial and/or necessary?

The first part has been answered above. For the second, I would suggest this is a given. It doesn't look well if a country delegation contradicts itself on the same issue at the same meeting. Also, a coordinated approach will present the issue better and attract interest from all other delegations

2. To what extent are the RCPs achieving the goals they have set? Is there concrete follow up – and of what kind – to the consultations and any recommendations they adopt?

The RCM Plan of Action is the standard by which success is measured. It is a simple document, which has 5 columns: (1) the main subject or theme – see answer to question one; (2) the objective to be achieved; (3) the action to be implemented; (4) the activity to be performed and by whom; and (5) the calendar to be complied with.

The RCM meeting of Deputy Ministers issues two “non-binding” documents (a) a “political” declaration; and (b) a document of decisions. All decisions expressing a commitments by countries and participating international organizations are entered into the Plan of Action. Given that all RCM decisions are “non-binding”, monitoring of moral compliance is carried out by the country acting as the Presidency Pro-tempore through the Technical Secretariat. More formally though, it takes place every six months by a meeting of working level officials.

In its nine years of existence, the RCM has carried out many activities, such as, setting up of a technical secretariat and websites, many workshops and seminars, guidelines for the voluntary return of irregular migrants, projects to welcome deportees, a data base to track migration flows in the region, information campaign aimed at combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons, etc.

3. Migration has, to an increasing extent, been put on the agendas of regional intergovernmental organizations, such as the EU, AU, ASEAN and Mercosur. Will RCPs continue to be important *fora* for informal discussions or will RCPs be subsumed by the work of these organizations?

Given that migration deals with human beings, it is a difficult and complex subject with many variables. Migration has “negative” and “positive” aspects. Reconciling these aspects is the job of the RCPs. The value of RCPs is that they gather “experts” on migration. It is unlikely that, in the short term, the mentioned intergovernmental organizations will adopt migration as a subject of discussion, unless, there is first a recognition of the economic and social value of migration for all countries’ societies. The latter is a difficult task.

- If RCPs continue to have a role, can and should their work link up directly with the work of these more formal regional and political frameworks or organizations?

One would be tempted to respond affirmatively to this question, however, a link (formal or informal) would increase the level of resources required to maintain it. Additionally, in my experience, the more formal the venue the more difficult it is to arrive to meaningful decisions. To be taken seriously, the RCPs should first demonstrate a solid framework of success, which starts by participating countries supporting commitments to carry out regional initiatives.

4. To what extent is there an interchange of ideas and information between different RCPs? What has been the nature and outcome of that interchange? If no or inadequate interchange exists, would more cross-regional dialogue be beneficial? If so, what purpose would it serve?

The RCM has three levels of interchange: (a) working group level; (b) “experts” or working level; and (c) Deputy Ministers’ level – at plenary and closed-door session. At the three levels there is a least one session with representatives of the civil society organizations. These levels of interaction provide a sound framework to nurture inter-personal relationships, ideas and positions which are then translated into commitments.

As indicated, for the meeting of Deputy Ministers the RCM has one special feature: a “closed-door” session. At this session, only DMs and one assistant are allowed in. This session is the one that addresses, through frank and informal discussions, issues facing the participating countries, the region and the RCM. The main points or emerging trends discussed are made part of the declaration.

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Date: 21 February 2005