I want to focus my intervention on three points:
1. the concept of RCPs as it has evolved over the past years and where to situate the EU in this context
2. the EU’s cooperation policy framework, the Global Approach to Migration and Development, which forms the basis for the EU and its Member States to engage with national, regional and global actors in the field of migration, and
3. the current engagement of the EU and its Member States with regional inter-state consultation mechanisms and inter-regional fora, and the perspective towards further enhancing cooperation at this level

1. The concept of RCPs and the role of the EU

After having studied the excellent research paper of Charles Harns which the IOM submitted in preparation of this 4th Global Meeting of RCPs, it is obvious that the concept of RCPs has developed further, in particular with regards to the concepts of informality (page 19) and non-bindingness (page 17, 19)
- as concerns the informality concept, we welcome that there is a more in-depth understanding of the role of RCPs which can also be conceived as "pillars" within existing formal regional processes
- when it comes to the non-bindingness of RCPs, we see that RCPs go increasingly beyond consultations, trust building and networking; it is encouraging that informal consultations in informal and formal regional processes lead increasingly to concrete outcomes

Evidently, the European Union does not constitute a regional consultative process such as those you all represent. The European Union is unique in its political, judicial and economic structure. Much beyond international cooperation, it is about States limiting their sovereignty in specific fields, and exercising them at regional level.

We particularly welcome this conceptual opening, because it is very compatible with the lessons we are drawing from the history of migration policy within the EU. Let me underline that informal gatherings at inter-governmental level have always been very important in driving policy developments, throughout the history of the EU, including in the area of migration policy.

In the area of migration, it was only in the early 90s that the EU made a qualitative step towards formalising its cooperation by pooling and delegating specific sovereignty rights to the EU.

What I want to say is that the EU as such always enshrined and still enshrines regional informal and non-binding consultations. It has the history of an RCP. Informal consultations have helped the EU to become a Regional Economic Community in a first step, and a Regional Integration Organisation in a second step. This includes the freedom of movement inside the EU, an integrated common migration policy, and also the delegation of important national sovereignty rights, from the EU Member States to the EU.

There are two messages here: First, informality and non-bindingness are important characteristics of RCPs, but one should not promote concepts or definitions which hinder their formalisation in a given regional context. Second, it is important to consider how the EU can continue to work closely together with RCPs in their interaction. Whereas the EU goes clearly
beyond informal processes, this should not lead to excluding it as an equal level actor from the policy coordination process between RCPs as it evolves.

2. The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility

The European Commission’s commitment to is fully aware of and belief in the value of regional dialogues on migration is based in the EU’s external migration policy – the so-called Global Approach to Migration and Mobility – as well as in the EU's development policy.

The EU’s Global Approach to Migration and Mobility is an example of international cooperation at its best, taking account of the interests and objectives of all involved: EU, partner countries and migrants themselves. The agenda is balanced and comprehensive, aimed at **four equally important objectives**:

(i) strengthening well-managed legal migration,
(ii) preventing and curbing irregular migration, and eradicating trafficking in human beings,
(iii) maximising the development impact of migration and mobility,
(iv) promoting international protection and enhancing the external dimension of asylum.

Based on its explicit **migrant-perspective**, the protection and respect of the **human rights of migrants**, and especially the vulnerable groups amongst them, forms an integrated part of all aspects of the Global Approach.

The EU's Global Approach forms the framework for cooperation with third countries and regions. The **intensity** of the dialogue still differs; certain instruments are available to some, but not (yet) to others.

The GAMM is an evolving policy concept of the EU. At the moment the EU is engaged in structured **bilateral dialogues** and cooperation on migration and mobility with more than **25 countries**, notably in our direct 'neighbourhood', but also involving strategic and priority partners further away.

On top of that the EU and its Member States also engages in **7 regional migration dialogue** processes, involving more than 130 countries, in Africa (through the Rabat Process and the Africa-EU Partnership), in Asia (Prague Process, Eastern Partnership, and the upcoming Silk Routes Partnership), in Central and South America (EU-CELAC Migration Dialogue), as well as with the ACP group.

3. Engagement of the European Commission with regional policy actors

The European Commission stands at the forefront when it comes to supporting Regional Economic Communities, Regional Consultative Processes and cooperation with other regional bodies such as UN Regional Commissions, where this is in line with the development objectives of our partner countries.

In the context, the European Commission is committed to further strengthening regional organisations and regional dialogues. In this context, we believe that RCPs have an important potential role, for example with regards to:

- promotion of more sharing of information
- evaluating RCP achievements in migration and development, and involving development ministries of both developed and developing countries in RCPs
- better linking donor support to migration and development activities of RCPs
Fourth Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretariats of Regional Consultative Process on Migration; Lima, 22 – 23 May 2013; EUDEL presentation

- strengthening of the intra-regional dialogue, and
- promoting more formal links between RCPs and other regional fora,

The EU and its Member States benefit from increased migration management capacities of our partner countries and regions. To ensure sustainability, we seek constructive and fair cooperation at the benefit of all: countries of origin and destination, and the migrants themselves. Strong partners provided the basis for solid partnership.

In particular, we are committed to facilitating regional labour mobility, notably through providing support to regional economic communities with a migration mandate. For example, the EU will shortly launch a 26 million EUR initiative to support the implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement of Person's Protocol and the ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration, which currently suffer from insufficient and unequal implementation. The project will aim to strengthen the capacities of the ECOWAS Commission in this area, strengthen the migration management capacities of national institutions of the region, and promote the protection of migrants' and cross-border populations' rights.

We all need to think beyond national policy approaches, without of course neglecting their importance, but this is not the subject of today. RCPs have a clear role in better organising migration and mobility, at the service of global development, in a world where borders are getting thinner by the day, in times where more people are on the move than ever, either by choice or necessity.

As you know, the EU promotes a series of policy instruments such as migration profiles or mobility partnerships. Let me just mention one of them here which may be particularly useful. The EU's so called MIEUX facility is at your disposal to provide EU Member State expertise, including at short term, which can help regional initiatives, both formal and informal, to advance their policy ambitions. I am happy to provide contact details and further background upon request. We encourage states interested in receiving this type of short-term support to contact the European Commission for further information.

It is, however, important that its established policy cooperation is not duplicated or even undermined by the setting up of new parallel and informal processes which lack the desirable and possible degree of commitment of the parties concerned.

Conclusion

By conclusion, let me underline that we expect RCPs to gain further in importance. As in the past, the European Commission stands ready to support these policy development processes, as participant and partner, as well as through financial and technical assistance. As a regional integration organisation, the EU should play an appropriate role in the evolving cooperation between RCPs.

Whereas we see a clear role and need for RCPs to be further strengthened, we don't see them as the panacea to address all upcoming challenges of migration and mobility at regional levels. Therefore, EU looks also beyond RCPs, towards deepened regional and inter-regional cooperation, as for instance exemplified by our bilateral cooperation with ECOWAS.

Thank you for the attention.