



Participants at the *Third Global Meeting of RCP Chairs and Secretariats*, 25-26 October 2011, Gaborone, Botswana.

Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental body, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration, advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration, and work towards effective respect of the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

What is an RCP?

A Regional Consultative Process on Migration (RCP) is a restricted information-sharing and discussion forum for states with an interest in promoting cooperation in the field of migration.

Characteristics of RCPs*

1. They are *repeated* regional meetings dedicated to discussing (a) specific migration issue(s). They are processes, not one-off events;
2. They are *informal*, meaning that participants are not put in a negotiating position to defend national interests or positions;
3. They are *non-binding*, meaning that states do not negotiate binding rules and are not obligated to implement any changes following meetings;
4. They are purposefully *created to deal with migration issues only*;
5. RCPs bring together countries from a 'region', depending on the scope of the migration issue to be addressed. The term 'regional' is mostly used geographically, but sometimes also figuratively, to describe the common location of like-minded states on the 'migration map';
6. Most RCPs are *not officially associated with formal regional institutions*. However, they are often embedded in their regional context and interact with regional bodies, associations and integration processes in complex ways.

* For more detailed information, see IOM (2010), *An Assessment of Principal Regional Consultative Processes on Migration*, MRS No. 38, available online at: <http://publications.iom.int/bookstore>



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
 Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)
 Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)

Effects of RCPs on the Migration Governance Process

- **Agenda Setting and Issue Definition**

By identifying shared interests of their members and enabling states to better understand each others' perspectives, RCPs promote inter-state dialogue, information-sharing and collaborative migration approaches. Information exchange and improved understanding of migration issues are the stated objectives of most RCPs. This is also an area in which RCPs have produced one of the clearest impacts on the migration governance process.

- **Consensus Building and Position Convergence**

Well-established and functioning RCPs have the potential to enhance networks among officials from different ministries of the same government who may not otherwise meet, thereby laying the foundation for better cooperation, coordination and coherence at the national level. RCPs can also lead to *de facto* policy harmonisation within regions even where this is not a stated objective.

- **Changes in Migration Law, Policy and Practice**

While RCPs may not aim to create new policies, there is evidence that as a result of RCP membership, states have: 1) reviewed, created and/or amended migration-related legislation. In several cases, participation in RCPs has also led to the improved implementation of existing policies; 2) enhanced capacity of migration officials through regular participation in workshops and seminars at technical level. These workshops provide training and information to individuals involved in day-to-day migration management operations.

When do RCPs work best?

- **State Ownership**

The robust commitment of states is an essential element for an effective RCP. Particularly key is the question of *funding*, although manifestations of commitment include setting meeting agendas and taking full account of the implications of RCP discussions for national migration policy and practice. Also, the nature and effect of RCP discussions will inevitably be heavily determined by the quality of participation. Additionally, *regular attendance of meetings* at the appropriate level and with the required technical expertise is critical to

the success of an RCP and will likely ensure the accrual of benefits to its members.

- **Careful Choice of Issues**

Particularly at the outset, before trust is built, RCPs will *debate more manageable issues and practical activities*. Taking up too many issues at once risks losing focus, unless this is well-managed, for example through *a system of working groups*. Migration is a dynamic area, subject to frequent change and the viability of RCPs can also be measured in terms of their ability to adjust to changing realities. Through regular consultations, RCPs are able to *evolve in line with new priorities and challenges*.

- **Informality and Formality**

Many RCPs insist on informality (meaning non-political rather than an absence of procedures) as a crucial 'added value' in how they function, experimenting with gradations of 'formality/informality'. RCPs implement certain procedures to ensure that 'informality' does not reduce them to mere 'talking shops'. For example, plans of action serve as statements of intent, thus enabling RCPs to institute mechanisms that encourage action. Any resulting agreements do not need to be heavy-headed or intrusive but should rather serve to gently to push the process forward.

- **Operating Modalities**

Operating modalities detail the working arrangements and organizational structure of an RCP, and are crucial to ensuring functionality of an RCP and continuity in its work. Good operating modalities are exhaustive and will be tailored to the specificities of the concerned RCP. Among other things, operating modalities will outline the *leadership mode* to be followed, for example, temporary or permanent chairs. In some cases, there will be a steering group to support the chair in setting the agenda, reporting on specific activities or running thematic sessions. It may maintain a *functional secretariat* to assist the chair in the convening of meetings, in the preparation and dispatching of communication to participating states, and in the implementation of follow-up activities.

A *two-level structure for regular meetings* has proven most effective in furthering the objectives of RCPs: Working groups and seminars, attended by experts at the technical level, are better venues for the exchange of information, capacity building and for gathering and comparing of data. Ministerial plenary

sessions, by contrast, are most appropriate for making strategic decisions, coordinating common positions, and translating the substance of the discussions.

- **Concluding a Process**

RCPs exist to serve the interests of states and to fulfil functions that cannot be fulfilled by international institutions or through multilateral treaties. When they no longer serve state interests, or when those interests are picked up by other regional bodies, there is nothing wrong with bringing a process to a close.

RCPs: Global meetings and interaction with other forums and partners

- **Global Meetings of Chairs and Secretariats of RCPs**

The exchange of information and good practices between RCPs has greatly increased over the past several years. In 2005, IOM and the former Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) hosted the *First Global RCP Meeting* bringing together the chairing governments and secretariats of nine RCPs. Participants at this consultation agreed on the value of such interactions and emphasized the importance of holding more meetings of this nature in future, while favouring a flexible rather than institutionalized approach.

The *Second Global RCP Meeting* was hosted by the Royal Thai Government in collaboration with IOM in 2009. The meeting brought together more than 60 participants, primarily representatives of chairing governments and secretariats of 13 RCPs. In follow up to one of the key recommendations of the meeting, IOM launched a comprehensive section dedicated to RCPs on its website. This space acts as a platform to voluntarily share and access information on each others' activities and workplans, thereby facilitating cross-fertilisation across regions.¹ A second recommendation of this 2009 meeting was that global RCP meetings be held on a biennial basis.

The *Third Global RCP Meeting* was hosted by the Government of Botswana in collaboration with IOM in 2011 under the broad theme of *Enhancing Cooperation on Migration through Dialogue and Capacity Building*. The meeting was attended by some 75 representatives of chairing governments and secretariats of RCPs. The current, former and incoming Chairs of the

Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) were also in attendance. Participants suggested concrete tools for capacity-enhancement and exchanged views on the interaction of RCPs with complementary mechanisms for international cooperation on migration at regional level, as well as the relationship with the GFMD and expectations for the upcoming 2013 United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD). Participants also discussed the potential of RCPs to contribute to evidence-based policymaking on contemporary migration challenges.²

- **Interaction with Other Forums**

Following the United Nations High Level Dialogue (UN/HLD) of 2006 and the subsequent establishment of the GFMD in 2007, the topic of RCPs has been discussed at all annual meetings of the GFMD. A key aspect of this focus by the GFMD has been the impact that RCPs have had/could have on advancing cooperation between states on migration governance, and on migration and development issues in particular. Recognizing that the GFMD is the only forum for states to deliberate on migration and development at the global level, many RCPs have sought to both influence the GFMD through their inputs, as well as been influenced by outcomes of GFMD deliberations, as evidenced in some instances by their choice of themes.

- **Other Partners**

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are included by some RCPs either consistently or on an ad hoc basis, to provide inputs to specific thematic discussions as observers.

International organizations have played a critical role in supporting RCPs, not only as secretariats (see overview matrix on overleaf), but also as partners. IOM, for example, participates in several RCPs in various capacities, most frequently as secretariat, but often also as technical expert at the request of participating states – undertaking research studies, implementing agreed project activities, providing policy advice and carrying out capacity building activities. UNHCR and ICMPD also provide support to RCPs either through institutionalized relationships or on an ad hoc basis.

¹ See <http://www.iom.int/regional-consultative-processes>.

² For detailed information and documentation on all three Global RCP Meetings see <http://www.iom.int/regional-consultative-processes>.

Overview of the Principal RCPs³

RCP	Members	Secretariat	Main areas of Discussion/ Current priorities
Region: Europe and the Former Soviet Union			
Budapest Process	49 Member Countries	International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive and sustainable systems for orderly migration in the South-East European Region, the Black Sea Region and the Silk Routes Region
Region: Americas and the Caribbean			
Puebla Process	11 Member Countries	Technical Secretariat, with support from IOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration policy and management Human rights of migrants Migration and development
SACM	12 Member Countries	Technical Secretariat, with support from IOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration and development Diasporas Rights of migrants Integration and information exchange Migration statistics Human trafficking and smuggling
Region: Western Mediterranean			
5+5 Dialogue	10 Member Countries	No official secretariat (In the past, IOM has provided technical and logistical support upon request)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration trends Irregular migration Migration and development Integration Migration and health Migrants' rights and obligations
MTM	45 Partner States	International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building Operational projects with a dialogue component Dissemination of results of projects and dialogue Elaboration of recommendations and definition of future plans
Region: Africa⁴			
MIDWA	15 Member Countries	No official secretariat, IOM provides support to activities targeting both ECOWAS institutions and Members States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of peace and stability in West Africa and protection of migrants' rights Contribution of migrants to development Alleviating poverty in emigration areas Information and sensitization campaign Intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation
MIDSA	15 Member Countries	No official secretariat, IOM provides technical and administrative support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irregular migration Migration and development Migration and health Capacity building in migration management Forced migration Labour migration Migration policies, legislation and data collection
IGAD-RCP	6 Member Countries	IGAD-Secretariat in collaboration with the AU Commission and IOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy coherence on migration Strengthening regional institutional capacities to implement the Migration Policy Framework for Africa Improving cooperation on migration management
Region: Asia, Oceania and the Middle East			
Colombo Process (CP)	11 Member Countries	IOM serves as the Secretariat since the inception of the CP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection and provision of services to overseas temporary contractual workers Optimizing benefits of organized labour migration Capacity building, data collection and interstate cooperation
Abu Dhabi Dialogue	20 Member Countries (11 CP Members + 9 Asian destination countries)	A support structure in Abu Dhabi (under deliberation). IOs and CSOs are invited to participate in ADD meetings as observers and thematic experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of the roles and responsibilities of all actors at each stage of the contractual work cycle Elaboration of concrete project activities Elaboration of a regional multilateral framework on temporary contractual labour mobility
APC	32 Member Countries	APC Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues relating to population movements, including refugees, displaced or trafficked persons and migrants
Others: Thematically-organized			
Bali Process	44 Member Countries	Monitoring and implementation of activities is guided by a IOM and UNHCR steering group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional cooperation in addressing the transnational crimes of human trafficking and smuggling
IGC	17 Member Countries	IGC Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylum and refugees Admission, control and enforcement Immigration and integration

³ The present matrix is a condensed version of a more comprehensive overview matrix of principal RCPs that can be found at: <http://www.iom.int/regional-consultative-processes>.

⁴ Note that 10 Member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) recommended the establishment of a Migration Dialogue for Central African States (DIMAC – Dialogue sur la migration pour les Etats de l'Afrique Centrale) during a meeting in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. The future of this process will be discussed at further meetings of the ECCAS Council of Ministers.