

INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION (IDM) 2016

Follow-Up and Review of Migration in the SDGs

Session 3 – Panel 1 – Structure of thematic and regional review

Panelist: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Firstly, I would like to thank His Excellency William Swing, the Director General of IOM, and the organizers for inviting the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to participate in this event which, we believe, is a critical part of an important ongoing dialogue on follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This dialogue is not only of high relevance to the Arab region but to the international community as a whole.

Our presence here today builds on a long-standing collaborative relationship between our organizations, most recently demonstrated in the preparation of the 2015 Situation Report on International Migration in the Arab region which was co-produced and co-led by ESCWA and IOM, but also the mandate of the regional commissions vis-à-vis regional and thematic reviews of the SDGs.

To start with, I will talk about regional follow-up and review process both in general and also with regards to the goals and targets pertaining to migration; especially from the perspective of the Arab region. Then I will talk about regional thematic reviews on migration in which ESCWA will play an important role going forward.

General

Achieving effective implementation of Agenda 2030 will depend on the creation of a strong follow-up and review framework to ensure that SDG commitments are met. Regional and thematic follow-up and review processes will have an important role in fostering knowledge sharing and reciprocal learning. They will also promote shared accountability for regional and sub-regional challenges and opportunities, such as shared watersheds, regional infrastructure or population movements. Regional follow-up and review processes can also broker a link between the national and global levels, in particular in preparing inputs to the HLPF and other global reporting platforms.

Having been engaged with other regional commissions in discussions on our shared mandates, it is clear that follow-up and review will only be useful when Member States see a clear benefit for themselves. It will not work if it is imposed top-down or punitive in nature, but will get buy-in if it is an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and exchange of best practices. The purpose of a review should be to allow consideration of whether national laws, policies or implementation strategies are consistent with the State's aspirations for achieving the SDGs. As such, reviews should contribute to an understanding by governments of how well they are doing, and how best to access opportunities to improve achievements and garner greater partnership and support.

With regards to migration, they should allow us to deliver results and assess progress in the context of increasingly diversified national sustainable development needs and the complex developmental and humanitarian circumstances of the region.

Regional follow-up and review process

Our approach for regional reviews will be underlined by the following **principles**:

1. Firstly, **forging understanding** within the system and amongst member States of the new Agenda. This includes capacity building, information dissemination and technical advisory services rolled out to Member States in Arabic in 2016-2017, also covering migration.
2. Secondly, **building a momentum**. This can be achieved by highlighting migration in a number of activities, promoting migration related targets and goals in all our work and through the activities of inter-agency mechanisms, such as the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region.
3. The review process needs to be **inclusive** like the rest of the Agenda. The multi-stakeholder approach should result in the inclusion and participation of civil society organizations, the private sector, parliamentarians and academic institutions.
4. The approach will be **needs-driven and country-driven**. Considering the high levels of displacement in our region, the sponsorship (kafala) system operated in many Arab countries, remittances playing a huge part in economies as well as existing policy gaps, we expect migration to be high on the priority list of many countries.
5. We also need to ensure that we organize our working methods to address **inter-linkages** among the SDGs. This can be achieved through providing unified substantive support, with special attention to migration as a key issue which cuts across the three dimensions of sustainable development.

So what is ESCWA going to do?

ESCWA will identify for itself a number of activities and outputs, some requiring further consultation and debate, while others can be undertaken within its existing mandates.

The regional review mechanism could consist of a follow-up and review framework that is based on regionally owned entry points that become the basis for the region to assess its own progress, identify lessons learned, highlight common challenges and joint solutions, and promote peer learning.

Following endorsement by both member State governments and multi-stakeholder groups, these regional targets could form a basis for a regular regional review, convened as a Arab Sustainable Development Forum that should assess member States' individual achievements against the regional targets as well as collective achievements on a regional level. Such a review, which would also allow for the identification of lessons and the exchange of experiences, can be documented in a regional report submitted to key intergovernmental such as the League of Arab States, and taken up by the regular Arab Economic and Social Development Summit as well as presented to the HLPF.

Thematic reviews at regional level

Why thematic reviews at regional level?

Countries can also benefit from in-depth technical examination of specific concerns. Thematic reviews will play an important role: countries will be starting work on SDGs from different baselines and therefore, lessons learnt on migration in one country can inform progress in other countries.

Similarly, implementation challenges, data and technology gaps, level of development, cultural issues and thematic networks are often common across countries within a region. Consequently, acknowledging that migration is a regional priority enhances its relevance both at the national and global levels, even if, in a given reporting period, it may not be the focus of a global review.

So how we are going to approach thematic reviews?

We want to ensure that where possible, the process of follow-up and review will build on existing regional mechanisms and past successes of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, the Arab Ministerial Review of the MDGs, and collaboration with the League of Arab States and the newly launched Regional Coordination Process and the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region. These bodies have a strong potential for follow-up and review as they are well connected, well informed, well established, and well recognized for their value. In fact, many of the SDGs and targets have, in some way or another, been reviewed through already existing mechanisms.

Thematic review of migration in the Arab region will build on the work of the RCM and its thematic Working Group on International Migration. This group will play a key role in the implementation, follow-up and review of the sustainable development goals relating to migration by raising awareness, improving knowledge base on migration and displacement, providing policy guidance and training and fostering regional dialogue.

The first edition of the 2015 Situation Report maps migration policies in Arab countries and future editions could be a useful tool for qualitative reviews consolidating and synthesising progress on migration related SDGs, particularly Target 10.7.

Final remarks

I would like to add one point, which is the impact of follow up and review on implementation. There needs to be a feedback loop. Specialized bodies' reviews need to take into account the crosscutting nature of the agenda and ensure efficiency and relevance and that duplication is avoided. So going forward, we will be mindful of linking regional and thematic reviews with SDG global review mechanisms. At ESCWA, we are also keen to ensure interaction between the thematic layer and the regular state-led reviews. Most importantly, we need to ensure that the paradigm shift which places people at the centre of the Agenda is taken seriously and that accountability is entrusted to the people, making it possible to achieve the ultimate goal of leaving no one behind.

Thank you.