



League of Arab States
General Secretariat
Social Sector
Population Policies,
Expatriates & Migration Dept.

**Extraordinary Meeting of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration
(ARCP)**

*In preparation of the High Level Plenary Meeting on Addressing Large Movements
of Refugees and Migrants*

General Secretariat of the League of Arab States

2-3 August 2016

Final Declaration

The participants¹ in the Extraordinary Meeting of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration (list of participants is annexed), which is organized by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (Population Policies, Expatriates, and Migration Department) at its headquarters in Cairo on 2-3 August 2016, in cooperation with United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), in preparation of the UNGA High Level Plenary Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants scheduled to be held in New York on September 19 on the sidelines of the General Assembly's 71st session:

- Believing in the importance of cooperation at the regional and international levels to address the large movements of refugees and migrants, and identifying solutions to the root causes that led to increased movements;
- Keening to strengthen Arab coordination in international forums addressing the issues of migration and asylum, especially during this time of unprecedented flows of migrants and refugees in the Arab world;
- Being aware of the increasing irregular migration as well as the migrant and refugee flows in the Arab world across land and maritime routes, despite the efforts undertaken to stop these flows; and being aware of the increasingly dangerous migration routes through which migrants and refugees flee conflicts by resorting to

* The Arab States were represented by: the focal points of the ARCP at senior level and the assigned parties by the member States to participate in the high-level meeting in New York.

smuggling rings— an option that could possibly result in them falling victims to traffickers, and subsequently to grave violations of their rights and human dignity;

- Recognizing the impact of conflicts on international migrants who live and work in countries in crisis;

- Emphasizing that the issues of migration and asylum and the situations and rights of migrants and refugees have economic, social, and humanitarian repercussions, but also political and security consequences, especially for neighboring countries hosting large numbers of displaced persons and refugees, as well as at the regional and international levels;

- Keening to strengthen the positive aspects of Arab migration and limiting its negative impact on the development process and scientific and technological advancement in the Arab States, and its potential to drain the resources of some countries, increase unemployment rates, and lead to new waves of migration;

- Affirming that the specificities of each region and country in the world should have special consideration when developing the global compacts, as the latter must be designed in a way that respects these circumstances, especially by means of preventing settlement of refugees, in accordance with the applicable national laws and legislations of the States;

- Having perused the presentations made and listened to the ideas and proposals of the participants, and to interventions and discussions that took place over the two-day meeting,

Recommend the following:

First: Addressing the root causes of large movements of refugees:

1. Finding immediate political solutions to the ongoing conflicts that have resulted in an increased number of refugees.
2. Emphasize the need to design a comprehensive plan to deal with the refugee crisis— a plan that tackles the root causes, helps people fleeing the crises, and ensures a life in safety and dignity for them and their families in preparation for their return, in a way that protects the security and sovereignty of States.
3. Concerning the Palestinian refugees, the participants reaffirm their condemnation of the occupying state of Israel that is causing the refugees' ongoing suffering, and hold Israel responsible for this long-standing distress and especially for the crime it is committing by uprooting the Palestinians from their homeland. The participants call upon the international community

and UNRWA to assume their full responsibilities toward the Palestinian refugees in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions. The participants reaffirm the right of return based on the UN General Assembly resolution No. 194, and call upon the General Assembly to provide more support to the countries that host Palestinian refugees, especially amid new movements of Palestinian refugees from Syria.

Second: Addressing drivers of migration, particularly large movements, and highlighting the positive contributions of migrants:

1. Emphasize that the large movements of migrants are mainly migration flows which take place in an irregular way, and include migrants and refugees.
2. Affirm that the drivers of regular migration from the Arab States are largely economic and social, with poverty and unemployment being key factors. Therefore, the implementation of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will affect the migration from the Arab region, notably brain drain.
3. On the other hand, the participants acknowledge the positive contributions migrants make to countries of origin or destination. Remittances, investments, and skill transfer and knowledge exchange play a role in developing the countries of origin. Migrants also play a major role in the development of countries of destination. The participants demand the right of countries to benefit from the remittances of their citizens, without the latter being instrumentalized to apply political pressure.
4. Affirm that strengthening regular migration pathways and facilitating opportunities for safe, orderly, and regular migration limit the drivers of irregular migration.
5. Emphasize the need to benefit from the skills of Arab expatriates, which are valued nationally and internationally and must be nurtured, supported, and taken into consideration when making strategic developmental choices in the Arab countries.
6. Encourage the regional and international initiatives of States and organizations aimed at communicating with expatriate communities to leverage development efforts in the countries of origin, as well as encourage individual initiatives led by Arab expatriates to benefit their home countries at different levels.
7. Value the events that the League of Arab States and its member States organize annually celebrating the Arab Expatriates Day on 4 December, during which prominent figures from the Arab communities abroad and the heads of the civil society organizations they lead are recognized and honored.

Third: International action and cooperation on refugees and migrants and issues related to displacement:

1. Acknowledge the principle of international solidarity with host countries and the importance of joint efforts across the international community to deal with the large movements of refugees and the increased irregular migration, in such a way that protects the security, stability, and vital interests of States and at the same time protects the human dignity of refugees and migrants. National policies and international cooperation on migration shall be based on dialogue, and information sharing on the issues of migration and refugees, the advantages of migration, and the contributions of migrants, as well as on promoting opportunities for regular migration.
2. Affirm that the presence of refugees has repercussions on different aspects of life in host countries. This presence entails political, security, economic, social, and developmental burdens, which imposes responsibilities of protection that some States cannot take alone. Therefore, it is important to maintain coordination at the regional and international levels— based on the principle of responsibility sharing by the different actors in the international community—to deal with the consequences that large movements of migrants and refugees have on countries of origin, transit, and destination, as well as on migrants and refugees themselves.
3. Affirm the importance of strengthening cooperation and bolstering international solidarity with and support to the countries and communities most affected by large movements of refugees and migrants, while looking into the problems faced by these States and helping them bear the burdens and contain the humanitarian situation that outweighs their capacities. This shall be done through: increasing international aid, not only humanitarian but also directed to development and economic support; improving the response capacity to crises and developing a return plan in cooperation with relevant actors; investing in the countries of origin to facilitate the return of refugees; and receiving more refugees based on the international agreements and commitments to support the countries of first asylum; and establishing regular migration pathways.
4. Cooperate with relevant international and civil society organizations to deliver humanitarian aid to refugees, displaced, and stranded migrants, and provide the needed support to these organizations to fulfill their mandate in accordance with the national laws and legislations of the States.
5. In this context, the participants value the efforts made by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and notably the Population Policies, Expatriates, and Migration Department to find new cooperation and coordination mechanisms between the relevant operating organizations as well as the Arab States (example: establishing a Working Group on International

Migration in the Arab Region, the Africa Arab Technical Coordination Committee on Migration (TCCM), and the ARCP.) The participants also commend the efforts of the UN and relevant organizations.

6. Acknowledge the importance of the different actors—States, international and civil society organizations, the private sector—working together to condemn and fight xenophobia, discrimination, and racism. In this context, the participants call upon protecting the rights of Arab expatriates and support the proposal of the UN Secretary General to launch a UN-led global campaign to counter xenophobia, which encourages direct contact between host communities and refugees and migrants. The participants also support the efforts, initiatives, and institutions that aim to promote cultural understanding.

Fourth: Global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees and respect for international law:

1. Emphasize the importance of the involvement of all Arab States in receiving refugees from countries that suffer from armed conflicts, each according to its own capacity, and the importance of providing all types of support based on the principles of Arab brotherhood and as required by political and moral duties and responsibilities toward migrants and refugees. Reaffirm the need to take measures and procedures to protect the security of the States and their citizens, in accordance with the applicable national laws and legislations of each State.
2. Commend the efforts and contributions made by Arab States, whether by hosting the biggest number of refugees (52.2% of the total global number of refugees, including Palestinian refugees, are in the Arab region) or by providing the needed humanitarian aid through donor conferences, and mainly the international conferences to support the humanitarian situation in Syria, which were held in Kuwait in 2013, 2014, and 2015, and the London conference of 2016, which Kuwait co-chaired.
3. Pay attention to the situation of refugee-hosting Arab States, and provide the needed help to allow host countries to deal with the big numbers of refugees, by: designing capacity building programs for actors dealing with refugees; helping host countries improve the living conditions of refugees as well as host communities and provide them with the necessary assistance, and establishing development projects that generate job opportunities for refugees and host communities.
4. Call upon the States to share responsibilities, fulfill their commitments, and bolster support to the Arab States by strengthening bi-lateral support.
5. Adopt a comprehensive, development approach that advances the situation of refugees and host communities and helps realize the goals of the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development, not only through the immediate response to the refugees' needs, but also by calling upon international donors to support national development plans.

6. Support procedures that promote social harmony between refugees and host communities.
7. Support and achieve development and reconstruction efforts in the areas of return whenever the situation allows.

Fifth: Global compact on safe, regular, and orderly migration: Towards realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving full respect for the human rights of Migrants:

1. Affirm that international migration is a key driver of social and economic development. Therefore, international migration shall be integrated in national, regional, and international development policies in accordance with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national development plans.
2. The global compact on safe, regular, and orderly migration shall be based on good governance of migration.
3. Affirm that migration, including large movements, is best governed through: adopting a human rights-based approach, adopting evidence and data-based policies, and building partnerships between the different actors.
4. The global compact should be in line with target 10.7 (Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Applying this will contribute to the social and economic advancement and the well-being of migrants and societies, address the mobility dimensions of crises; and seek to promote orderly, safe, regular, and dignified migration.
5. It is important to regard migration as equally beneficial for countries of origin and destination. Migration could serve as a solution to limited employment opportunities in local labor markets, and at the same time provide solutions to demographic imbalances in countries of destination.

Based on this, the participants reiterate the importance of:

- a. Establishing opportunities for safe and legal mobility in accordance with regulations that uphold human rights and protect human dignity, by facilitating visa and residence procedures for different purposes.

- b. Taking migration into account when designing national development plans in the countries of origin and destination, and developing programs to integrate Arab expatriates in the development process in the Arab world.
- c. Developing national migration policies and laws.
- d. Countries of destination shall develop effective policies in accordance with their applicable laws to achieve social cohesion and protect rights.

Sixth: Addressing the vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants on their journeys from their countries of origin to their countries of arrival:

1. Emphasize the importance of respecting the human rights of all those who leave their countries irrespective of their migration status. Respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights and human dignity for all is of paramount importance, and shall be taken into account during the high-level meeting and in the two global compacts.
2. Affirm the non-criminalization of irregular migrants crossing the borders due to force majeure, and take action against smuggling rings, in accordance with applicable national laws and legislations.
3. Encourage the different actors to continue with the provision of needed support to rescue missions of irregular migrants across the Mediterranean and to provide adequate shelters, in accordance with the universal declaration of human rights and international humanitarian law, especially amid the ongoing boat tragedies.
4. Provide women, children, elderly, individuals with disabilities, and victims of trafficking and those who were subjected to gender based violence with treatment that takes account of their vulnerabilities, and provide protection and assistance based on the applicable national laws and legislations. This requires further efforts on the part of States and international and civil society organizations and other actors.
5. Affirm that even if people do not meet the legal definition of a refugee, it does not mean that they are not facing risks in the countries of origin, transit, and destination. Therefore, it is important to adopt a needs-first rights-based approach that permits legal assistance to these people.
6. Gender should be taken into consideration in the plans, policies, and work programs that target the protection and support of refugees and displaced people. Policies should take account of the situations, needs, and problems of women.

Seventh: Follow up:

At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants expressed appreciation for the role that ARCP and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (Population Policies, Expatriates and Migration Department), which serves as the secretariat of this consultative process. It was agreed upon:

1. Presenting the Final Declaration to the diplomatic delegations in New York, and using it as reference to prepare the statement of the Arab group, which will be delivered during the high-level meeting on September 19, 2016 in New York, and which will serve as a reference document for the Arab States during preparing for their participation in the high-level meeting and the Global Forum on Migration and Development.
2. Actively participating in the ongoing discussions for the global compact on responsibility sharing for refugees, and the global compact for orderly, safe, and regular migration, and encouraging the diplomatic delegations of member States in New York to coordinate with each other in this regard.
3. The ARCP will regularly follow up on the outcomes of the high-level meeting at the Arab regional level, as well as the adopted measures and the ongoing discussions of the global compact on responsibility sharing for refugees, and the global compact for orderly, safe, and regular migration. The findings of this follow up process will be shared with the committees the UN General Assembly assigns for this purpose.