

IOM vision on the global compact on migration

1. On 19 September 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, through which its Member States committed themselves to developing a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. The development of the global compact on migration presents the international community with a watershed opportunity to make a crucial contribution to global migration governance. It is expected to provide a unifying framework of common principles, commitments and understandings amongst Member States on all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, development and human rights-related dimensions. While States retain the sovereign discretion to determine which non-nationals may enter and stay in their territories, consistent with the requirements of international law, there is great scope for improving international cooperation on migration.

2. The Global Compact presents an historical opportunity for achieving a world in which migrants move as a matter of choice rather than necessity, through safe, orderly and regular channels, and in which migration is well governed and able to act as a positive force for individuals, societies and States. IOM envisions a global compact that will place the rights, needs, capacities and contributions of migrants at its core, with a view to ensuring their safety, dignity and human rights.

3. Central to this vision are four core elements: (1) protecting the rights of migrants; (2) facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration; (3) reducing the incidence and impacts of forced and irregular migration; and (4) addressing mobility consequences of natural and human-induced disasters.

4. In addition, in seeking to realize the development potential of migrants and the consequential benefits of migration to home and host societies, the global compact is expected to put at the disposal of States a set of guiding principles and related tools to govern migration effectively and humanely. The global compact is further also expected to enhance coordination in the multidimensional field of international migration and serve as a framework for comprehensive international cooperation to address migrants, human mobility and all aspects of international migration.

How can the global compact on migration realize this vision?

5. The global compact can realize this vision by:

- (a) Recognizing safe, orderly and regular international migration as being beneficial for States and migrants;
- (b) Recognizing the principles underpinning safe, orderly and regular international migration as being based on relevant international norms, principles and standards;¹

¹ These include international migration law, which consists of the applicable norms contained in, inter alia, international human rights law, international refugee law, labour law, international humanitarian law, maritime law, law of the sea, transnational criminal law and general principles of international law applicable to States and their sovereignty, as well as principles and standards contained in international processes such as the International Agenda for Migration

- (c) Being comprehensive in its recognition of all aspects of international migration that require cooperation among States as well as with other actors;
- (d) Recognizing the responsibilities of all stakeholders and the commitments and understandings required from them in the field of international migration;
- (e) Setting out ways and means of translating principles, commitments and understandings into practical and actionable objectives, laying out options and offering innovative and practical solutions that can be applied widely;
- (f) Systematically taking stock of and analysing effective policies and practices regarding all migration-related issues at the local, national, regional and global levels;
- (g) Being practicable, pointing to remaining gaps in commitments and understandings and identifying barriers and challenges both causing those gaps and resulting from them, as well as identifying pathways towards solutions to fill those gaps;
- (h) Providing a forum to track and review progress.

The Migration Governance Framework: a useful tool to realize this vision

6. In order to realize this vision, stakeholders could draw on the three principles of the Migration Governance Framework, adopted by IOM Member States as a comprehensive framework for migration governance, outlined below.

Adherence to international standards and the fulfilment of migrants' rights

7. The global compact on migration should be based on international standards, including those related to the rights of migrants. An important element of the development of the global compact on migration could be to gain, through consultation with stakeholders, a comprehensive understanding of effective and ineffective migration management policies. This would enable the global compact to offer innovative, practical solutions to common challenges which could be widely applied. These solutions could focus on, but would not be limited to, adopting more flexible labour migration policies and providing additional support for integration efforts, including combating discrimination and xenophobia.

Evidence-based and whole-of-government approaches

8. Given the complexity of migration, the global compact should stress the importance of adopting a comprehensive whole-of-government approach when setting migration policy; one that takes into account how migration relates to other critical policy areas, such as development, climate change, and peace and security. This would require not only the participation of all government agencies with a role in migration management, but also contributions from key community-based stakeholders.

Management, Sustainable Development Goals and their review mechanisms, the follow-up to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, the MICIC Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster, and the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change and the Platform on Disaster Displacement resulting from the Nansen Initiative.

9. Migration is a significant socioeconomic issue that will only grow in importance. Regrettably, debates on migration are often heavily politicized and increasingly pervaded by xenophobia. One of the greatest challenges for those who seek to foster rational debate and the formulation of balanced policy on migration is to construct an evidence-based platform from which to work.

10. The global compact should be seen as an opportunity to reframe the discourse on migration, to move away from misleading or distorted perceptions and towards an accurate picture of the importance of migration and the positive role it can play in the contemporary world. To do this, the global compact could help to clarify essential concepts and terminology relating to migration, and propose ways of improving data collection and analysis. The IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre in Berlin would be well placed to contribute in this regard, as would civil society and academia through the global compact consultation process. The recommendations of the global compact will themselves be based on data analysis and research.

Fostering and relying on strong partnerships

11. A key challenge for the global compact on migration will be to balance the migration policy and governance interests of both origin and destination countries. To this end, the global compact should seek to foster stronger partnerships on migration between States through its recognition of the premise that migration should be seen as potentially mutually beneficial to all parties involved. The global compact will need to reflect diverse regional perspectives and various realities through an inclusive and transparent consultation process. The contribution and participation of all relevant actors from the global migration landscape in developing the global compact and forging a strong consensus would ensure that the outcome is owned by all stakeholders. Through its review process, the global compact could also assist States in improving international cooperation on migration governance and could build on existing cooperation mechanisms.

Conclusion

12. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration has the potential to provide the international community with a fresh approach to governing migration. While the global compact is an ambitious undertaking, the agreed outcome should be grounded in reality. It must stress the importance of adopting a holistic approach to addressing the challenges and reaping the benefits of migration; an approach that combines the pursuit of tangible outcomes based on robust evidence with the need to maintain strong partnerships between States, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders. In this regard, the global compact on migration presents a valuable opportunity for the international community to move away from reactive approaches, to look forward to a common future in which migration is safe, orderly and regular, and to determine the steps to be taken to realize this vision.²

² This document will be updated regularly as the consultation process for the global compact on migration evolves.