



**League of Arab States**



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



**ESCWA**

## **Regional Consultative Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region**

*In preparation of the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and  
Development*

### **Final Declaration**

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**League of Arab States Headquarters,  
Cairo, 4-5 June 2013**

## Final Declaration

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The official representatives of authorities in charge of migration, expatriates affairs and communities living abroad and authorities in charge of labour in Arab countries as well as representatives of regional, international and Arab organizations, civil society organizations and experts participating in the "Regional Consultative meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region", organized by: the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (Migration and Arab Expatriates Department), the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo on 4-5/6/2013, within the framework of preparations for the Second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development which will be held at the United Nations General Assembly in October 2013:

- **Recalling** the outcome of the First High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in 2006, the meetings of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the International Conference on Population and Development, the Arab Declaration on International Labour Migration issued in 2006, the Recommendations of the first and second Arab Ministerial meetings on Migration and Expatriates Affairs held in 2008 and 2009 respectively and the Declaration of the First Arab Expatriates meeting held in 2010,
- **Recognizing** the importance of Arab coordination in relevant international forums on Migration and Development, foremost among which are the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forum on Migration and Development,
- **Affirming** that issues of migration as well as the status and rights of migrants are not only important social, economic and humanitarian matters of concern to Arab countries but they also have political implications at the regional and international levels,
- **Recognizing** the regular increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons in some countries in the Arab region,
- **Aiming** to reinforce the positive aspects of Arab migration and to reduce its negative impacts on the process of development in the Arab countries including scientific and technological development,
- **Recognizing** the negative impacts of Arab brain drain on development efforts in Arab countries, including achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and post-2015 Development Agenda,
- **Affirming** the important role of Arab civil society organizations in the countries of destination in improving the general status of Arab communities including cultural, social, political and economic aspects,
- **Having considered** 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:**

### **I. International Migration and Development Challenges in the Arab Region**

- 1- **Affirming** the importance of the phenomenon of migration in the Arab Region with regard to its magnitude and various forms including temporary and long-term migration, forced migration as a result of political conflicts and Israeli occupation of Arab territories. International migration in the Arab world includes both male and female migrants as well as members of their families whom are affected by their migration.
- 2- **Affirming** that international migration from, to and within the Arab region constitute one of the prime factors driving social and economic development in the regions.
- 3- **Affirming** that migration from, to and within the Arab region, in addition to return migration is one of the important factors of sustainable development in the countries of origin and countries of destination.
- 4- **Affirming** that migrants from, to and within the Arab region contribute to socio-economic development efforts in the Arab region through:
  - A- Their skills and efficiency;
  - B- Their work, which provides labour needed in the labour markets of countries of destination;
  - C- Their remittances, which help in raising the standard of living of migrant's families in their countries of origin and in creating job opportunities therein;
  - D- Strengthening the bonds of friendship between countries of origin and countries of destination through migrant communities.
- 5- **Affirming** that the increasing numbers of forced migrants from some Arab countries is a burden on development plans, which requires concerted international efforts to address the strain on host countries.
- 6- **Affirming** that international migration is an important factor towards regional cooperation and integration and a means for the Arab world to integrate into the global economic system.
- 7- **Valuing** the progress achieved by Arab countries as a result of their participation in bilateral, regional and international dialogues as well as through Arab and international cooperation in the field of international migration in addition to the formulation of policies and programmes to strengthen the relationship between migration and development. This is also achieved through the introduction of a number of reforms into the labour market and regulations related to migration systems at the country level.
- 8- Meanwhile the participants recognize the challenges that face the Arab world in the field of migration, foremost among which are:
  - A- Structural imbalances in labour market systems in some of the labour receiving countries which lead to intensive dependence on low skilled labour of low productivity in some economic sectors;
  - B- Weak relations between some countries of origin and their migrant communities;

- C- Insufficient participation of civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs related to migration and development;
- D- The growing phenomenon of irregular migration to and from the Arab region which exposes migrants to risks, exploitation and abuse and in some cases to human trafficking;
- E- The growing number of refugees and displaced persons due to the circumstances that some Arab countries are experiencing;
- F- The unavailability of comparative studies and accurate data and information on international migration and its impact on development;
- G- Weak integrated policies to mainstream migration into development policies with a view to maximizing the benefits of international migration and reducing its negative impacts, specially directing the mobility of human resources;

## **II. Protection of Human Rights and the Improvement of living conditions of migrant workers:**

- 9- **Emphasizing** the principle of joint responsibility between countries of origin and countries of destination and the adoption of comprehensive and balanced approaches for the protection of the rights of migrants and members of their families as well as the assimilation of return migrants.
- 10- **Recognizing** the growing phenomenon of xenophobia, the participants emphasize the need to protect migrants' rights according to regional and international conventions and to avert them from political agendas and racist practices.
- 11- **Shedding** light on the vulnerable and marginalized migrant groups and to raise awareness with regard to women and children through launching rights-awareness programs.
- 12- **Calling on** countries of destination to facilitate the process of family reunification and to grant them their legal protection.
- 13- **Urging** countries of destination to formulate and develop appropriate policies for the integration of migrants with a view to achieving social harmony and safeguarding their linguistic, cultural and religious rights as well as ensuring their right to practice them.
- 14- **Taking** necessary measures to ensure the protection of the rights of migrant workers by introducing legislative reforms that comply with international conventions and treaties.
- 15- **Supporting** combating irregular migration, smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and preventing criminal networks through raising awareness of the dangers of these phenomena in addition to enacting and enforcing necessary laws.
- 16- **Emphasizing** the need to protect migrants and their rights during crises.
- 17- **Calling on** Arab countries to take into consideration the rights of migrants to and from these countries when drafting legislation.
- 18- **Emphasizing** the importance of coordination at the regional and international levels when offering assistance to refugees, particularly Palestinian refugees whose affliction is exacerbated under Israeli occupation, and emphasizing their right to repatriation according to UN Resolution No. 194 because there could be no development in Palestine without the repatriation of its citizens.

### **III- Promoting the Role of Migrant Communities in Development Planning and Practice:**

- 19- **Reaffirming** that qualified Arabs abroad are a national and international resource which should be given attention, support and a distinct status among the strategic development alternatives of Arab countries.
- 20- **Emphasizing** the need to integrate migration into national development plans in countries of origin and countries of destination; in addition to drawing up programmes to involve qualified Arab migrants in the development process of the Arab world through the transfer of their expertise, development of partnerships and communication networks between them and their counterparts in the Arab region; help them in accessing better information on job opportunities and investment in the region by making good use of modern means of communication and technology.
- 21- **Encouraging** initiatives launched by countries and regional and international organizations to communicate with expatriate communities with a view to promote development efforts in countries of origin.
- 22- **Encouraging** individual initiatives launched by some Arab migrants to benefit their countries of origin and to help them to achieve development and progress in different fields, whether through their remittances, investing in their countries of origin, or by transferring the knowledge they acquired in different fields.
- 23- **Emphasizing** the need to facilitate the transfer of remittances, reduce the cost of these transfers, and provide appropriate conditions to maximize the benefits of these remittances to accelerate socio-economic development efforts in the countries of origin and protect them from political pressures.
- 24- **Emphasizing** the need to involve key figures of migrant Arab communities and Arab migrant youth in activities related to the dialogue of cultures and religions which promote their role as a bridge for cultural and economic interaction between Arab countries and countries of destination.
- 25- **Launching** a serious dialogue on migration and development between communities, countries of origin and countries of destination.

### **IV- Supporting Development Goals through Regional and International Labour Mobility:**

- 26- **Emphasizing** that migration from Arab countries is often motivated by economic reasons, with poverty and unemployment ranking high on the list. Therefore, achieving the Millennium Development Goals will affect migration from Arab countries, particularly with regard to skilled migrants. This will, in turn, reduce the brain drain from which the Arab region suffers.
- 27- **Recognizing that**, on the other hand, remittances of migrants will contribute positively to the development process through improving the living conditions of migrants' families, their health conditions, education and empowerment of women. Hence, an integrated system should be developed to direct remittances and invest them in social and economic development and to measure their impact on the development process.

- 28- **Integrating** migration into development strategies at the national, regional and international levels. This includes strategies to alleviate poverty, provide universal education, public service sectors and social justice measures.
- 29- **Emphasizing** the important role of migrant workers in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
- 30- **Taking** necessary measures to guarantee regular and safe migration while giving priority to the training and rehabilitation of migrant workers through cooperation between the governments of countries of origin and countries of destination and civil society organizations.
- 31- **Emphasizing** the importance of including migration in the UN post-2015 development agenda, as well as in the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 since it is closely related to the three pillars (economic, social and development), of sustainable development and is one of the factors that affect population dynamics.

**V- Partnership and Cooperation in International Migration at the Regional and Global levels:**

- 32- **Emphasizing** the importance of the role of cooperation and partnership between international and regional organizations and authorities in charge of international migration in the Arab region in the field of migration and development.
- 33- **Valuing** the establishment of a "Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region" by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, ESCWA and the International Organization for Migration under their joint Chairmanship and with the membership of concerned organizations, with the aim of promoting coordination mechanisms, exchanging information on migration in addition to developing programmes, projects, activities and ideas related to international migration and development in the Arab region.
- 34- **Recognizing** the importance of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) in circulating information, best practices and lessons learned on migration, and given that they have proved their value in promoting collective responses and experience-sharing to confront migration challenges.
- 35- **Taking** into consideration the regional specificities of each geographic area with regard to needs, requirements and migration related challenges.
- 36- **Emphasizing** the role of countries of destination in supporting development programs in countries of origin through their communities and through direct contributions in the re-integration and settlement of return migrants in their countries.
- 37- **Encouraging** countries of origin and destination to sign joint agreements.
- 38- **Promoting** joint international cooperation to establish a system for recruiting workers within the framework of migration.
- 39- **Emphasizing** the importance of conducting research that aims to provide accessible accurate and up-to-date data on the reasons, motives, determinants and implications of international migration in the Arab region. These studies should cover the current, returning, forced and potential migration and its impacts on development, as well as strengthening the role of research centres on migration, improving them and establishing a network across the Arab region.

- 40- **Emphasizing** the importance of establishing a Regional Consultative Process on Migration in the Arab region within the framework of the League of Arab States.
- 41- **Welcoming** holding the Second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and confirming the participation of the Arab countries in the dialogue and its proceedings in order to reach a consensus to promote the contribution of migration to development and reduce its negative impacts on countries of origin and countries of destination, as well as the migrants themselves. And affirming the importance of continuing to prepare for the High-level Dialogue by establishing a follow-up and coordination committee within the framework of the League of Arab States.
- 42- **Emphasizing** the need to incorporate the Arabic language as one of the accredited languages in the Global Forum on Migration and Development.
- 43- **Emphasizing** the keenness of Arab countries to participate in the regional and international events related to international migration and development as well as international cooperation at all levels.