

Civil Society Proposals for the International Migration Review Forum

The following inputs have been prepared in consultation with a large number of civil society organizations operating at different levels and representing different sectors who have been closely involved in the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) Process and facilitated through the Civil Society Action Committee. Those inputs are shared with the co-facilitators for the intergovernmental consultations and negotiations to determine modalities and organizational aspects of the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) ahead of the release of the zero draft, to highlight our collective thinking around the purpose and value added of the review process, and to offer some tangible recommendations and examples of how IMRF can best fulfill the aims for which it was created.

Our Understanding of the Review Process

As the first global agenda to espouse a “collective commitment to improving cooperation on international migration”¹ through 23 objectives and 187 actions to fulfill those commitments, the Global Compact for Migration will require diligent, multi-stakeholder, in-depth global review.

The International Migration Review Forum, which will be the primary intergovernmental platform “to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact on Migration”² is unequivocally the opportunity to analyze the big picture of migration, measure progress, identify solutions and motivate and inspire collective action, in order to ensure global convergence towards our commonly-agreed goals.

In order for this to happen, however, the IMRF must be forward-looking and go beyond a mere technical review of the different objectives and actions. The review process will need to be deeply rooted in the same common vision and guiding principles as the Global Compact. To that end, it should examine to what extent the implementation of the Global Compact is people-centered, migrant centered, and respects, protects and fulfills the rights of migrants under international human rights standards and the other frameworks upon which the Compact rests. Doing so will require finding innovative practices, developing tools and multi-stakeholder partnerships which could feed into the review forum in order to measure the direct impacts of migration policies on the lives of migrants and their families.

Being the only forum at the global level to examine GCM implementation, we encourage that the IMRF ensures that implementation is coherent, comprehensive, and that progress is achieved equally on all objectives. As the non-binding nature of the GCM suggests, Member States may prioritize the implementation of some objectives over others. On a macro-level this could lead to a situation where the more difficult issues are dropped from the agenda and/ or entire objectives are left unfulfilled. To avoid this outcome, we recommend that the IMRF work closely with the

¹ Global Compact for Migration, para 8.

² Idem, para 49 b.

UN Network on Migration as a whole and with regional and national processes to collect feedback on progress from different stakeholders and to connect the global review to the regional and national review; and review the whole cycle of implementation including the development of national action plans (and their monitoring and evaluation/ reporting frameworks if they exist). We encourage guidance on assessment that goes beyond the self-analysis by States and beyond what States achieved on objectives to describing how they achieved this. Focusing on a number of objectives for review during each cycle of IMRF will also help to promote a more thorough review process.

Finally, it is highly likely that our common understanding of migration and our interpretation of the GCM will evolve over the next few decades of implementation. The Progress Declaration could be the vehicle through which to highlight common aspirations and important issues and trends that require international cooperation and concrete action at the global level. It is important, therefore, to acknowledge the possibility of linking the Progress Declaration and the IMRF to existing processes such as the HLPF and GFMD, or to new processes as they emerge, where these issues could be taken forward. This could also be used as a strategy to re-engage Member States who have not adopted the Global Compact for Migration. Beyond a mere summary of the IMRF and a re-commitment to existing obligations, the Progress Declaration should be flexible, forward-looking, and action-oriented. We recommend that the declaration assess progress and how it was achieved, reflect on gaps and challenges and offer concrete recommendations as well as ‘pledges’ by member states as in the GCR.

The modalities resolution, while technical in nature, deal with important questions which will very much influence how inclusive, and forward-looking, the review process is. Below we offer some concrete recommendations on content and structure, reporting and participation, which would make the IMRF a more effective and inclusive forum.

The Content and Structure of the IMRF

The review process should be broad enough to be able to review progress globally but narrow enough to allow for a substantive discussion around the most pertinent issues. This inevitably necessitates a level of prioritization. Outcomes of the different regional review processes and the Secretary-General’s biennial report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Global Compact, could form the basis upon which priorities are selected and the content of the discussion is structured. A standardized global and regional assessment guidance would serve as a sound basis for discussion, would include impact indicators and could be designed by the UN Network on Migration. Civil society, particularly migrant networks themselves, UN special procedures and other stakeholders should have the opportunity to submit inputs and make recommendations. Based on all inputs, relevant objectives for review would then be selected and form the basis of the IMRF. Focusing on a number of objectives could help with a more focused and in-depth review, while ensuring a longer-term rotation of objectives/ actions under review from one cycle to another to ensure a full 360° approach.

In terms of format, a combination of plenary and round table discussions should be considered. Plenary sessions should be thematically organized, embracing the interconnectivity and intersectionality of the Global Compact. These sessions should allow for dialogue, interaction, and

full stakeholder participation, both in terms of speaking roles and response from the floor (more on stakeholder participation below). A set of pre-prepared questions should be used to help frame the discussion and allow for a uniform review. We recommend that the UN Migration Network as a whole, should be tasked with drafting those guiding questions in consultation with civil society, including migrants themselves.

Round table discussions on the other hand could focus on particular objectives, specific regions/corridors, progress, challenges and solutions. Specific round tables on outcomes of regional review should also be organized to allow for better linking with the IMRF. Additionally, Member States, UN agencies, and civil society should have the opportunity to organize side events highlighting specific aspects and partnerships of implementation.

Targets and indicators should also be developed for each objective, this will allow for better measurement of progress at national, regional and global levels. The UN Network on Migration, especially UN DESA's Statistical Division, should be invited to form a specific working group which would be tasked with developing measurable and time-bound targets and indicators. The process of developing those targets and indicators could be done through regional consultations that include Member States, civil society and other stakeholders.

Voluntary National Reviews

We emphasize that States are invited and encouraged to present Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) during the IMRF to assess progress on the GCM's 23 objectives. Voluntary National Reviews could take place in parallel to round table discussions. Member states undergoing a VNR should submit a report ahead of time that is made publicly available on the IMRF and/ or UN Network's website. Member States should be encouraged to develop such a report in broad consultation with different stakeholders at the national level, including inputs from civil society organizations. Civil society and other stakeholders should have the opportunity to submit alternative reports which would also be made publicly available, and to present during the official review process. VNRs should be highly interactive, allowing for a presentation from the states under review followed by questions and recommendations from the other member states, civil society and other stakeholders. The outcomes of the VNRs should be recorded in an outcomes report that highlights progress made, and details recommendations for areas of future work.

There are established guidelines to the VNRs comprising the mechanisms through which progress against the SDGs is being measured at both national and international level. The 2019 edition of the "Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews" (VNRs) provides basic, practical information on steps that countries may take in preparing a review. Those components of delivery could be adapted and modified for IMRF purposes:

1- Before the VNR:

- Facilitating national workshops for Member States, civil society, private sector, and other significant stakeholder in respective regions to participate in a review of their country and duly prepare their Country Report. This will provide an opportunity for all states to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in

their countries and overcome challenges. We suggest that meetings be live streamed or recorded to encourage remote civil society and migrant participation.

- Facilitating a number of regional/ national level workshops for civil society to be trained in the key components of participating in a VNR. At least, 7 regional workshops should take place in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, MENA, North Americas, Pacific, (and/or as negotiated by regional caucuses) to introduce the VNR and regional review processes, and ways to meaningfully engage with them. Such workshops would enhance the transparency and inclusiveness of national, regional and international reviews.

2- Delivering the VNR:

- Member States should be encouraged to include a civil society component in their review and allow civil society the time to present their own review
- Member states should be encouraged to include and sponsor civil society representatives as a member of their delegations.

3- Post-VNR:

- Member States will be encouraged to follow-up and provide feedback to their respective stakeholders about the outcomes of the VNR, and it is possible for them to discuss steps envisaged going forward until their next VNR.

- 4- Existing good practices would suggest that regular interactive follow-up/update meetings would advantage Member States, as together they could adopt a whole-country approach to meet their desired goals when they next report back at their next scheduled/agreed VNR.

The Role of Civil Society and Other Stakeholders in Review

There has been significant progress in the volume and level of civil society participation in global spaces/ processes on migration. This evolution has been the result of learning that has happened through experimentation with a number of models with lessons drawn on the best approaches and principles. It is established however, that when civil society is present, is diverse in breadth, and is able to participate freely, this improves outcomes for everyone involved.

There are a number of models that states are comfortable with, and which avoid the cumbersome process for non-ECOSOC accredited organizations to have to go through often resulting in them being short of compliance, even when they are legitimate and actively engaged organizations. Those models include the Major Groups model for the HLPF, or the Civil Society Days model of the GFMD (which was also adopted for the 2013 UN HLD on International Migration and Development). We suggest that the UN Network's Civil Society Liaison assume a facilitative role in developing, implementing, and overseeing all activities in relation to civil society participation in the IMRF.

In terms of participation in the review meetings themselves, stakeholders should be able to participate fully in all aspects of the forum, not just as tokens at the end of each session. Stakeholders should be reflected in the plenaries as experts and advocates, and through interventions interspersed with those from Member States.

Dedicated sessions for civil society and other stakeholders are welcomed as long as they are held in conjunction with the Forum, not detached months before. Inputs from those sessions should directly feed into the agenda of the IMRF. Focal points of each stakeholder group should lead the organizing of those meetings, similar to the GFMD and HLD 2013 models, including setting the agenda of the meeting and defining the selection of participants. There is a lot to be learned from the GFMD, which is a long-standing model, and which is continuously improving. We should be cautious not to regress below such standards and expectations which are held by Member States and stakeholders alike. We encourage and support building a culture of genuine dialogue and transparency through the IMRF process and one that is innovative, comprehensive and inclusive.