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Quaker United Nations Office



Briefing Paper — June 2021

Using the Regional Migration Reviews for Human Rights Protection: Migrants, NGOs and Other Stakeholders

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QUNO's belief in the inherent worth of every individual leads us to work for the promotion and protection of human rights for all. This includes a current focus on the human rights of migrants regardless of status. Our Human Rights & Refugees programme raises up the concerns of marginalized groups, so they are better understood by international policy makers, which leads to stronger international standards. Frontline organizations can use these strengthened international standards as a tool to limit suffering, improve lives and challenge the root causes of injustice.

Having worked towards the achievement of an ambitious, effective and human rights based Global Compact for Migration, our work with States, the UN and civil society continues with the aim of supporting ambitious, effective and human rights based implementation of the Compact.

Updates since the February 2021 version of this paper are highlighted.

The [Global Compact for Migration](#) (GCM), adopted in 2018, is a significant commitment from governments to take a people centred and human rights based approach to migration policy and to work together towards this. The GCM invites regions to undertake reviews of the implementation of the compact every four years starting in 2020. These processes will feed into the International Migration Review Forum, also due to take place every four years, starting in 2022. These Regional Migration Reviews are the first opportunity for States and others to reflect together on the initial steps taken and on how to make further progress to implement the GCM. They are also the first opportunity for detailed multilateral discussion on migration governance following the Covid-19 pandemic and identify ways to adapt with the GCM as a [guiding framework](#).

The Regional Migration Reviews and processes for voluntary national review and reporting can and should be used to further the promotion and protection of human rights of migrants by:

- reaffirming the significance of the GCM as a framework for more people centred and human rights based migration governance
- showcasing, celebrating and supporting replication of policy and practice in the framework of the GCM that improves the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants
- drawing attention to continuing rights violations, contributing to understanding why they persist and determining national and regional roadmaps to end these violations

This paper is intended to help migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders to engage with the Regional Migration Reviews in 2020 and 2021 as part of their work to improve the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants.

Why does the Global Compact for Migration matter for the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants?

The GCM's guiding principles, starting with a commitment to people centred global migration governance, embed a human rights based approach to the shared commitments States have made in the Compact. The GCM brings together practical migration governance actions with a strong foundation in binding human rights law. As the most comprehensive multilaterally agreed framework for national, regional and international governance of migration it is a key tool for engaging with governments on their policies and practices and how these impact on the human rights of migrants.

In the GCM States encourage the development of national implementation plans and regular inclusive reviews of progress at a national level. Processes to create and review these plans and other national responses are opportunities to develop or strengthen human rights based approaches including ensuring participatory processes that draw on the expertise and experience of migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders. In the GCM States commit to review of implementation at national, regional and international level. Review is therefore a process not a single event but there are key events that are part of the review process including the Regional Migration Reviews.

Why do the Regional Migration Reviews matter for the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants?

The Regional Migration Reviews are part of the implementation, follow up and review framework agreed in the GCM. They are an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of the GCM, to emphasize the centrality of human rights to its implementation and a means to engage with governments separately and together on your priority issues within the Global Compact. The Regional Migration Reviews are part of how migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders can remind States that the adoption of the GCM was a beginning not an end. Part of the purpose of the Regional Migration Reviews is to incentivize implementation of the GCM both by highlighting good practice and by identifying persisting rights violations which could be addressed through adherence to the Global Compact.

In line with the whole of society approach in the GCM, Regional Migration Reviews should be a platform for dialogue between States (who have the primary responsibility to implement the Global Compact) and migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders. The reviews should help identify good practice for human rights based implementation and common challenges within a region and provide a space for discussion of how to address them.

What do we know about the Regional Migration Reviews?

The GCM invites relevant regional processes to review implementation every four years starting in 2020 but does not prescribe what the Regional Migration Reviews look like nor who should run them. It may be helpful to think of the review in any region not as one single event but as several events or processes, including potentially migrant, NGO and other stakeholder-led processes.

The resolution on the International Migration Review Forum asks the UN Network on Migration to support the regional review process at the request of Member States. In the interests of coherence and consistency and reach the UN Network on Migration's support will be channeled mainly through events in each region facilitated with the relevant UN Regional Economic Commission. The [supporting material on regional reviews from the UN Network on Migration](#) are intended to guide these events. These events are likely to have a mix of plenary sessions and thematic roundtable sessions. Due to Covid-19 control measures, these events have all taken place in a largely virtual format. Based on this supporting material regional reviews are encouraged to include these elements:

- Evidence based and action-oriented discussion on implementation of the Global Compact
- Coverage of the whole of the Global Compact (i.e. the guiding principles and all the objectives)
- Multi-stakeholder consultation immediately prior to the Regional Migration Review Forum with the support of the UN Network on Migration
- Space for States to share voluntary national GCM reviews
- Policy debate on regional challenges in GCM implementation
Background papers circulated in advance
- Opportunities for migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders to speak as panelists and participants
- Written inputs from migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders reviewing the status of implementation of the GCM in the region

After the meeting concludes a report should be prepared with:

- any outcome documents
- a summary of the meeting
- lessons learned
- recommendations
- roadmaps for regional collaboration and action on GCM implementation

These reports will feed into the International Migration Review Forum scheduled for the second quarter in 2022.

Upcoming Regional Reviews

Africa

Regional Review Meeting, scheduled 12-13 July 2021

[Concept note in English](#)

[Submitted National Reviews](#)

Timeline:

28 June:

IMRF Thematic Area 4 Roundtable Stakeholder Consultation (Objectives 1,3,7,17 and 23 of the GCM)

29 June:

IMRF Thematic Area 1 Roundtable Stakeholder Consultation (Objectives 2,5,6,12 and 18)

30 June:

IMRF Thematic Area 2 Roundtable Stakeholder Consultation (Objectives 4,8,9,10,11,13 and 21)

1 July:

IMRF Thematic Area 3 Roundtable Stakeholder Consultation (Objectives 14, 15,16,19,20 and 22)

7 July:

Regional Review Meeting Side Events

12-13 July:

Africa Regional Review consisting of:

- General Plenary Debate
- Thematic roundtables (with the 23 objectives of the GCM split across 4 roundtables)

How can migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders engage with the Regional Migration Reviews to uphold the human rights of migrants?

Now is a good time for migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders to begin work to use the last of the Regional Migration Reviews.

Identifying Aims and Strategy

Identify the links between your priorities and the Global Compact for Migration (for example, which guiding principles, objectives, and actions relate to your priorities) and consider what you want to achieve from engagement with the Regional Migration Reviews. This will help you decide if any of the suggestions for engagement listed below are useful to you. Aims of engaging could include:

- drawing attention to specific issues across the region
- sharing good practice from a project that you are involved with or would like to see scaled up
- highlighting continuing rights violations in a country or countries in the region
- opening dialogue with government(s) for advocacy or partnership
- securing commitment from the government to develop a

national implementation plan

- learning from what is happening in other countries or regions
- learning from migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders in other countries or regions
- incorporating key actions in any roadmap for collaboration and action in the region
- ensuring migrant representation
- defining nationally determined indicators for guiding principles, actions, or objectives

Engagement with Voluntary Stocktaking and Voluntary National Review

The GCM encourages voluntary national review of implementation both to inform further planning and action at a national level and to be shared through the Regional Migration Reviews and the International Migration Review Forum. Voluntary reporting is a useful way for governments and others to assess progress and identify areas for further action.

The GCM calls for participatory review of national implementation so governments should be consulting with migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders as they review and report on progress and challenges. How much progress States have made on plans for GCM implementation varies widely from State to State and some will still be in the very early stages of determining how to act on the commitments in the GCM. This and the differing relationships between migrants, NGOs and stakeholders within and between countries mean there is no one fixed way to engage with this process.

However, the following actions may be useful:

Find out:

- is there a national focal point for implementation and review?
- is a voluntary national report planned?
- has a voluntary national review already been written?
- are consultations being organized to help develop national plans or review progress?
- are other migrants, NGOs or other stakeholders working on this?

Depending on the answers to these questions and the safety of your engagement with government(s), useful actions could include:

- advocacy on the value of preparing a voluntary national report
- participating in consultation events
- providing written input to consultations (for example highlighting your priorities or assessing implementation)
- partnering with local or national authorities to organize consultations
- reading, assessing and responding to the government's voluntary national review (for example, does it cover your priorities, do you share their analysis of progress and challenges)

Whilst the national reviews are voluntary and there is no fixed way for them to be reported on, there are guidance documents to assist States in preparing their reviews. These are useful for anyone engaging with States on national reviews or planning their own written inputs to the regional reviews:

- UN Network on Migration: [Indicative outline for Member States to review the status of implementation of the GCM at national level, in preparing for regional reviews](#)
- Arab region: [Guiding template for the review of the implementation of the GCM](#)
- Asia Pacific: [Voluntary GCM Review](#)
- Europe and North America: [Indicative outline for Member States to review the status of implementation of the GCM at national level, in preparing for regional reviews](#)
- Latin America and the Caribbean: [Indicative outline for questionnaire to Member States](#)
- Africa: [Guiding template for the review of the implementation of the GCM](#)

Whilst there are differences between them, they all cover:

- progress assessment (with encouragement to cover the whole of the GCM: guiding principles and all 23 objectives)
- methodology review (how is GCM implementation managed at national level, how are other stakeholders engaged)

Preparing a Written Input on the Status of National or Regional Implementation

All regional review processes should allow for written inputs from migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders. These should be shared on a relevant website and should be included as part of what informs any report or outcome document from the regional review. In some regions these may also inform background papers ahead of the review conference. The GCM does not include specific indicators and there is no fixed format that written inputs must take. For example, this could be a report on a single action or objective or could examine how any of the guiding principles are met or could be a mapping of the relevant policies. This means that you can use the guidance provided for Member States (above) or choose how to structure and focus your inputs. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- keep your input brief or include an executive summary
- tie your priority issues to the GCM's guiding principles, objectives and actions
- include reference to other relevant international law, including treaty obligations
- reflect the whole of government approach by identifying which parts of local or national government are or should be involved
- reflect the whole of society approach by highlighting which other stakeholders are or should be involved
- reflect the emphasis on international cooperation by referring

to any relevant UN agencies or other States

- include recommendations for action (this can be at a local, national or regional level)

Other considerations include:

- do you have existing research and reports which you can submit or adapt
- are other migrants, NGOs or other stakeholders working on written inputs, is there a value in collaborating
- whose voices are usually left out and how can they be brought in
- are there migrants, NGOs or other stakeholders in other countries that you can collaborate with to show connections in migration dynamics and regional trends

The UN Network on Migration has shared guidance for other stakeholders providing written input to the regional reviews on region-wide assessment of implementation: [Indicative outline for relevant sub-regional, regional and cross-regional processes, platforms and organizations and stakeholders](#). In assessing implementation, it may be useful to draw on GCM implementation guidance and other relevant documents, including:

UNWOMEN:

- [Policies and practice: A guide for gender-responsive implementation of the Global Compact for Migration](#)

UN Network for Migration Policy Briefs:

- [The Global Compact for Migration \(GCM\): Well Governed Migration as an Essential Element of Effective COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Enhancing Access to Services for Migrants in the Context of COVID-19 Preparedness, Prevention, and Response and Beyond](#)
- [COVID-19 & Immigration Detention: What Can Governments and Other Stakeholders Do?](#)

UN Secretary General:

- [Policy Brief COVID 19 and People on the Move](#)

Quaker UN Office:

- [Foundations for Implementation](#)

The UN Network on Migration is finalizing implementation guidance for Member States, this may also be useful to draw on the current draft which is on the when it is published on the [Migration Network Hub](#).

Participating in Shaping the Regional Migration Reviews

The UN Network on Migration's suggested framework includes a multi-stakeholder participatory approach to developing the format and content of the Regional Migration Reviews. Regions are at different stages of preparation but there should be opportunities to:

- share ideas for the focus and content of each conference (for example, what are the priority regional issues and how can these be meaningfully discussed)
- input to background documents that inform the discussions (for example, with existing research on relevant topics)
- volunteer to speak and suggest other speakers

The UN Network on Migration, including the regional networks, have facilitated preparatory consultations with migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders in the coming months. If you are interested in finding out more, contact the [UN Network's Civil Society Liaison, Monami Maulik](#).

Planning for engagement in the meeting, preparatory meetings and multi-stakeholder sessions

All regional review meetings should have opportunities for migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders to speak. Further details of the agenda for each meeting and how to register should be shared later in the year. Regional meetings are encouraged to have a multi-stakeholder session in advance, this should provide more opportunities for migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders to share their perspectives, hear from others and identify common themes.

Depending on the format of the regional review meetings (including whether they are held virtually, in person or hybrid) there may be space for side events. As details of the agenda and format become clearer it is worth considering side events or virtual briefings to provide additional space for presentation and discussion on specific priority issues.

Lessons learned from the Regional Migration Reviews to date

From the end of 2020, we have seen regional reviews from most regions which have taken various forms. The preparatory documentation, statements and recordings are now available to view on the Migration Network website for [Europe and North America](#), [Arab States](#), [Asia-Pacific](#) and [Latin-America](#).

Despite the conclusion of these events, further inputs are welcome from all stakeholders as these are intended to be ongoing to contribute to the upcoming IRMF. Each region will provide official meeting summaries to highlight key takeaways from the review. Migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders could usefully prepare a document of their own takeaways and reflections on the process to assess implementation on the basis of information shared, to highlight key challenges for prioritization and intensified attention and to make suggestions for follow actions as part of the ongoing review process. Takeaways and reflections on the processes themselves and migrants, NGO and other stakeholder participation could be useful to inform the shape of future regional reviews scheduled to begin

in 2024. Any events or reports covering this could help inform the upcoming IMRF in 2022.

In previous regional reviews, civil society played a significant role throughout the review process as moderators, panelists and as participants. The breadth of civil society engagement meant that there have been useful additions and alternative perspectives to those of States represented in reviews. We have found the multi-stakeholder consultations held prior to the reviews to be of value as they provide spaces for stakeholders to give their insights into the progress and challenges to the implementation of the GCM in different regions. In other regions, we have seen rapporteurs being selected to feed into the regional reviews by providing a summary and highlighting comment threads.

In most of the reviews we have seen migrants and migrant-led networks being represented and providing their insight on the review process in their region. These have been powerful and underlines the importance of people affected by migration being able to provide their perspectives and shape the review process.

Staying informed: Further developments and details are expected in the coming months, in order to keep up to date with this process as it develops you can check regularly on the [UN Network for Migration Website](#) and make sure you are on their mailing list ([you can subscribe on their website](#)). Focal points for stakeholder engagement have been identified in each region.

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If you would like to be added to our monthly mailing list with information on the human rights of migrants including the GCM follow-up and implementation process, please [subscribe here](#).