**Multistakeholder Hearing UNECE Regional Review**

*11 March 2024*

Let me just start by saying a big good morning to everyone, it’s really encouraging to see so many of you here in the room, despite it being early - being here and ready to listen, ready to engage, and ready to act in cooperation with one another on the conversations that will take place today.

I wanted to open up by reminding ourselves of the strong call that was echoed during the first IMRF and that should be “nothing about migrants without migrants”. As we slowly approach the second IMRF I think it’s important that we turn these words into meaningful action and not let it be another empty rhetoric. Acknowledging that progress has been made, we still have a long-road in front of us as we work towards migration justice and human-rights based migration governance.

What I really want to spend the next 5 minutes focusing on is the need to really center migrants in the respective processes that we take part in and contribute to– from shaping policies to assessing their impact on the ground. We’re here today to talk about the implementation of the GCM but to really ensure its successful and long-lasting implementation we must put migrants lived experiences and expertise at the heart of it. It’s easy to get lost in the numbers and data, and although these are critical in producing accurate and reflective responses, we need to make sure that our discussions and decisions are always rooted and reactive to the human stories behind migration governance.\

So how can the RR be an opportunity for meaningful migrant participation?

1. We need to make sure that we work on meaningful participation in the Reviews as well as through the Reviews, understanding that they are a part of a much larger puzzle when it comes to working towards migration justice.

But how exactly can we do this? Well firstly

1. Through testing progress and driving change
   1. The RR offer a great platform to share good practices and knowledge-building governance for potential replication.
      1. European Commission created the Migrant Expert Group on Asylum, Integration, and Migration – could this be something that we replicate on a regional and national level? Maybe even on an intergovernmental level?
   2. Create opportunities for migrants and migrant-led civil society organizations to evaluate tangible progress in the GCM implementation, on local levels and regional levels. These Reviews are not just about reviewing, but about driving continuous improvement.
2. Through a human-rights based approach
   1. Paving the way for strategic avenues for advancing a human rights-based approach to migration governance – but this means listening to the stories, experiences, and expertise of migrants knowing that they have the leadership and experience necessary to shape fair and effective migration policies.
3. Catalyzing cooperation and engagement
   1. The Regional Reviews are not isolated events, but part of an ongoing process and catalysts for change that can foster meaningful migrant participation at all levels. They create platforms for networking, knowledge-building and sharing of best practices and understanding how and where we can use our strengths to open these spaces up for further engagement from migrants.

We know that migrant engagement is beneficial for the Regional Reviews, but its time to really shift our perspective and ask ourselves if engagement in the Regional Reviews is good for migrants.

As we’re doing this work its also important to understand that the process are not perfect and that conscious effort is required to facilitate inclusivity and transparency, but also that participation remains non-tokenistic:

1. Ensuring timely information sharing in relevant languages and formats so that efforts are accessible globally.
2. Working with migrants and civil society to develop indicators/metrics to measure meaningful participation and use these to assess the Regional Reviews and inform preparations for future processes.
3. Consulting with migrants to identify key topics for discussion, speakers, and formats that will facilitate participation. Migrants are experts by experience, they have lived through the challenges and obstacles of migration firsthand so it really should be them driving these processes.

To wrap up, I want to refer back to the call I opened with on “nothing about migrants without migrants” – in trying to live this call out, the contributions I made here today were formed by inputs taken by a number of migrant advocates QUNO works closely with. This year really provides us with many opportunities like this one to turn our words and promises into purposeful action. We all play a part in making sure these processes adapt, evolve, and succeed and the key to that is centering the voices, experiences, and expertise of the people that these processes are focused on supporting.