



General Secretariat
Social Affairs Sector
Refugees, Expatriates
and Migration Affairs
Department

Unofficial Translation

The Twelfth Global Forum on Migration and Development 2019 Contribution of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs (ARCP)

In preparation for the Twelfth Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) to be held in Ecuador in 2019, under the theme "Sustainable approaches to human mobility: upholding rights, strengthening state agency and advancing development through partnerships and collective action";

On the occasion of convening the Fifth Meeting of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs (ARCP) at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, which was held during the period from 15 to 16 April 2019, the Arab position towards the themes of the Twelfth GFMD was discussed during the second day of the meeting, and it was agreed that the States will adopt this document during their participation in the proceedings of the Twelfth GFMD (Ecuador, November 2019).

Regarding the GFMD's three themes, which were divided into two round tables for each theme, the topics to be addressed in the round tables were discussed and the participants agreed on the following:

I. Joint responses to mixed migration flows: Partnerships and collective action to protect rights

Roundtable 1.1: Providing legal pathways from crisis to safety

1. Enhance cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination to manage migration and asylum in a concerted manner, and develop effective plans and policies to face the challenges linked to the increasing flows of migrants and refugees, particularly those occurring irregularly.

2. Support combating irregular migration, migrant smuggling, human trafficking and prevention of criminal networks by raising awareness of its dangers, enacting and implementing the necessary laws, and urge countries to accede to relevant conventions.
3. Facilitate regular mobility by simplifying the procedures of obtaining entry and residence visas for various purposes (education, scientific research, culture, training, etc.), in accordance with relevant international conventions and treaties.
4. Call upon destination countries to facilitate family reunification to enhance the protection of migrants against all forms of violence, trafficking and exploitation, and ensure their access to the necessary legal protection.
5. Develop supporting policies for regulating migration that ensure benefit for all its parties.
6. The need to provide protection for migrants and refugees and their rights, especially in times of crises, taking the necessary measures of ensuring temporary protection, and underline the importance of providing refugees with assistance and humanitarian admission programmes.
7. Increasing opportunities of receiving refugees in third countries in accordance with the relevant international conventions and pledges to alleviate the burdens of countries of first asylum.
8. Highlight the situation of Arab States that host refugees and displaced persons shouldering the current heavy burden of the displacement and migration crisis, with the existing economic challenges, social tensions, demographic changes, as well as security and political unrest in some countries resulting from the events occurred in the region since 2011 and their repercussions, in addition to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories that continue preventing the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes, making it difficult for refugees and displaced persons to contribute positively in these host societies.
9. Emphasize the importance of providing services and multi-sectoral response to the most vulnerable groups; and making the appropriate response to combat violence against women, girls and children.

10. Develop a system for registering births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and issue the necessary documents for refugees and displaced persons, in conformity with the national legislation of each country.

Roundtable 1.2: Facilitating social and economic inclusion Emphasize the need to address all forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia and Islamophobia, and develop the appropriate mechanisms to highlight the positive image of migrants and refugees in general, and the Arabs and Muslims in particular by:

- A. Support the States' endeavours, initiatives and institutions aiming to promote understanding among different cultures (e.g. the Arab World Institute in Paris and Museum With No Frontiers (MWNF));
 - B. Promote policies and programmes leading to the preservation of diversity, cultural inclusion and broaden the participation of all, in conformity with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.
 - C. Develop programmes for introducing different civilizations and cultures, and launch community-based awareness campaigns through traditional media and social media, educational and religious institutions and others.
 - D. Strengthen dialogue and establish strong links between migrants and refugees on the one hand and their host communities on the other, and enable migrants and refugees to disseminate their own experiences.
 - E. Promote the role of civil society organizations, private sector, employers' organizations, labour organizations and other relevant parties.
2. Value the Campaign "TOGETHER: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All" that was launched during the high-level Plenary Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants held on 19th September 2016, which enters into partnership with the United Nations and its Member States, civil society, private sector and academic institutions. Value, in this regard, the efforts of Arab States that have carried out several activities within the framework of this campaign, namely: Jordan, Tunisia, Djibouti, Sudan, Lebanon, Libya and Egypt.

3. Emphasize the importance of respect for Human Rights and human dignity of migrants when developing policies, which is necessary for achieving social cohesion and fostering migrants' contributions to the countries of origin and destination, in accordance with national legislations and international obligations of each country.
4. Highlight the importance of strengthening the efforts of civil society organizations of the expatriate communities for supporting and assisting refugees to integrate into host communities, through providing the necessary professional language training and the information needed for their rights and duties, and to identify and respect laws and regulations of the host country.
5. The importance of coordination among different agencies and government institutions working in the field of migration at national level to develop policies and strategies aimed at providing different types of support to the migrants in vulnerable situations (such as: women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, victims of human trafficking and violence against women and girls).

II. Migration narratives and communication: What role, responsibility and resources do governments have?

Roundtable 2.1: Shaping public narratives on migration and migrants

- Regarding the means of shaping public narratives on migration and migrants, it was agreed to the following remarks:
 1. The political and ideological hostile discourse towards Arabs and Muslims contributes to the increase of this stereotyping. Nonetheless, that does not deny the existence of some positive attempts to correct misconceptions.
 2. Some media discourse on migration provokes feelings of discrimination and hatred.
 3. Some media sources have contributed to shaping a repellent stereotype image of Islam, which had a great impact on the rise of Islamophobia, and a significant influence on shaping public awareness of the audience.
 4. Some media suffers from lack of available resources, precarious field work conditions and lack of adequate training for journalists, which resulted in journalists insufficient knowledge concerning the complex phenomenon of migration.

5. The social media facilitates the spread of rumors, which increasingly nurture the fears among large segment of the public, which requires better means to counter hate speech against migrants, and the importance of controlling the hostile publications via those sites, which often include racist messages and incorrect and distorting information about migrants.

➤ This, in turn, calls for:

1. Developing and promoting effective policies and mechanisms to improve public awareness on migrants and their positive and fundamental role in destination countries thus achieving development in various areas.
2. Developing anti-rumour programmes on the national level in order to assist in the elimination of prejudice, misconceptions and stereotyping of migrants.
3. Developing programmes to support media institutions and to enhance and capacity building on migration issues through: Appointment of specialized correspondents; improvement of the working conditions for journalists and media workers; provision of the necessary funds for research and reportages in the area of migration; preparation of brochures and publications on migration press coverage; and establishment of monitoring mechanisms.
4. Provide training programmes to raise awareness of journalists and media workers on migration issues, related terms, information on the principles of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, as well as refugees legal rights, means of hate speech prevention and political bias and providing balanced coverage on migration issues, data collection in this regard, ensuring the variety of views in media coverage and diverse information resources.
5. Supporting and promoting good journalism models in addressing migration issues of thus creating more objective, accurate, fair and efficient journalism this could be achieved through granting prizes and certificates of recognition for the models that proved their highly professional media coverage on migration issues.
6. Enacting appropriate laws to penalize social media users spread hate speech and Islamophobia,

7. Sharing best media practices on migration in different countries,
8. Promoting the role of the academic research on media and migration to identify trends and highlight the developments at various levels and stages of migration,
9. Strengthening cooperation among religious authorities in the Arab world and the West, training of imams and preachers to ensure presentation of a genuine religious discourse that reflects the true image of Islam.

Roundtable 2.2: Communicating effectively with migrants

In most cases, Media do not often allow migrants to express themselves, relying on a single source of information that disregards migrants views. Accordingly, it was agreed to emphasize the following:

1. The importance of promoting media action to engage migrants through supporting migrant-oriented media campaigns, including radio programmes, opinion articles, etc.
2. The need to allow migrants to express themselves and highlight their developmental role by enabling them to join trade unions and professional associations and establish communication platforms contributing to put an end to hate speech while providing them with greater opportunity to express their positions.
3. The importance of organizing dialogue events engaging all stakeholders, including migrants, media workers, decision makers, academics and civil society, aiming at a comprehensive approach that: Combat hate speech, correcting stereotyping and misconceptions on migrants, raising awareness on migrations, ensuring independent and comprehensive media coverage on migrant issues that contribute to peace and stability, integration of migration issues in media training programmes, as well as public education programmes, and developing media monitoring programmes to ensure the provision of true and reliable information on migrants.