

WORKING GROUP ON IOM–UN RELATIONS AND RELATED ISSUES

CHAIRPERSON’S NOTE ON THE MEETING

HELD ON 28 AUGUST 2017

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1. The meeting of the Working Group on IOM–UN Relations and Related Issues held on 28 August 2017 had the following items on the agenda: (a) update on the global compact on migration, including upcoming thematic sessions; (b) IOM's future role; and (c) other business.

2. The background documents for the meeting were a document entitled "IOM-UN Working Group: Chair's brainstorming non-paper", submitted by the Chairperson in his personal capacity, and the Chairperson's note on the meeting held on 3 July 2017 (WG/REL/2017/6).

Update by the Senior Policy Adviser to the Director General on the global compact on migration and exchange of views

3. With regard to the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) workshop held in Geneva on 18 and 19 July 2017, the Senior Policy Adviser to the Director General said that the topic of migrants in vulnerable situations had been chosen as it was one of the core themes of the global compact on migration that required dedicated reflection. She noted the broad attendance, including Member States from all regions, civil society and representatives of migrant groups, adding that a summary of the deliberations and key conclusions were available on the IDM section of the IOM website (www.iom.int/idm).

4. The Senior Policy Adviser further reported on the fourth informal thematic session of the global compact, on the theme of "Contributions of migrants and diasporas to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits", held in New York on 24 and 25 July 2017. She commended the fact that at that meeting, for the first time, African Member States had issued a joint statement, delivered by the representative of the Government of Morocco. She also reflected on the view expressed by the co-facilitators of the global compact that momentum was growing and discussion was becoming richer and more open. She noted also the request by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration to provide input to the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the global compact. She mentioned also that, at that meeting, the co-facilitators had indicated that they would be launching discussions on a second modalities resolution by the end of September to determine certain aspects for the convening of the intergovernmental conference on international migration in 2018, including the format and duration of the conference. In addition, the co-facilitators would shortly be distributing logistical information about the upcoming stocktaking meeting scheduled to take place in Mexico from 4 to 6 December 2017.¹

5. The Senior Policy Adviser reported that the Office of the President of the General Assembly had held the first multi-stakeholder hearing on the global compact on 26 July 2017 in New York, to gather views on the four thematic sessions that had already taken place. IOM had been invited to moderate one of the sessions, on "International cooperation and governance of migration". She noted that, since a wide variety of stakeholders had been in attendance, a wide variety of views had been expressed at the hearing.

¹ Originally planned to take place in Guadalajara, the stocktaking meeting will now be held in Puerto Vallarta.

6. The Senior Policy Adviser to the Director General informed delegates about the next thematic session, to be held in Vienna on 4 and 5 September 2017, on the theme of “Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims”. She noted that the Director General would address delegates at the session. IOM would also co-host two side events, one with the Government of Turkey, on 4 September, on cooperation to counter migrant smuggling, and the second with the Government of the United Kingdom on human trafficking data, on 5 September.

7. Regarding budget requirements, the Senior Policy Adviser expressed IOM’s appreciation to Member States for their in-kind and cash contributions amounting to around USD 5 million and mentioned that IOM had contributed about USD 140,000 from its internal resources to support consultations.

8. The Senior Policy Adviser informed the Working Group that efforts were under way to strengthen civil society engagement in the preparations of the global compact. Three regional civil society consultations had taken place, in Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. The reports of those consultations would be provided directly to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration.

9. Delegates took the floor to thank the Senior Policy Adviser for her informative update, reiterating their support for IOM’s strong role in the global compact process.

10. One delegate requested more information on the contributions received from civil society organizations, and whether Member States would have an opportunity to review and react to them. The Senior Policy Adviser informed delegates that, in conjunction with the sixth and final thematic session, on “Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures”, to be held on 12 and 13 October 2017 in Geneva, the second multi-stakeholder hearing would be convened also in Geneva, which all Member States were invited to attend. The meeting was an opportunity to hear the views of and interact with civil society and other non-State actors. In addition, the reports of the multi-stakeholder meetings would be published on the IOM website (www.iom.int/multi-stakeholder-hearings).

IOM’s future role

11. In introducing his non-paper, the Chairperson pointed out that it was intended to foster discussion among delegates on some longer-term questions about the future of IOM which would be relevant once negotiations on the global compact on migration got under way in New York, such as what role IOM should play in relation to implementation of the global compact. Those questions were also relevant to other sub-items of the Working Group’s mandate, including reviewing how IOM’s relationship with other United Nations agencies was evolving, and IOM’s future strategy. There could also be synergies between the discussion in the present Working Group and the newly revived Working Group on Budget Reform as the latter could look at relevant financial and administrative implications.

12. The Chairperson said that the first cluster of questions related to the possible evolution of IOM over the next few years. Member States had made clear in adopting Council Resolution No. 1309 of 24 November 2015 that IOM should maintain its “essential characteristics”, including its flexibility and responsiveness to Member States’ needs, such as through its projectized business model. At the same time, there were calls for IOM to develop more policy

capability and adopt more strategic approaches. There were tensions between those objectives. The second cluster of questions related to IOM's relationship to the United Nations system, including how best to coordinate the migration-related activities of other United Nations agencies.

13. The Chairperson underlined that that was the start of a dialogue and that he did not expect any early conclusive results. He was also in the hands of the Working Group members as to whether they were comfortable with proceeding with that discussion. He also emphasized the informal character of his brainstorming non-paper.

14. The delegates who took the floor unanimously welcomed the non-paper as a useful means of launching the discussion. One delegate stated that the Working Group should focus mainly on IOM's new role within the United Nations system. Many delegations noted that the challenge was to understand what aspects of IOM would need to be developed and how to do that in a balanced and measured way to preserve IOM's existing strengths. That was a useful beginning to a dialogue that would develop over time.

15. A number of delegates stressed that IOM had proven value outside the United Nations system, and, while some changes could be envisaged, it must stay true to its essential characteristics. Delegates highlighted the Organization's added value as an operational, flexible and responsive actor, with a high level of technical expertise, stressing that operational response capacity should not be limited by an enhanced policy role for IOM. There was strong agreement that IOM's essential characteristics (Resolution No. 1309) and its operational response capacity should remain a key characteristic of the Organization.

16. Several delegates noted the need for IOM to play an enhanced role in providing technical assistance to governments on migration policy, and requested IOM to provide further information on the tools and resources it required to do so, based on how IOM was currently providing support to Member States. Others said that there was a clear need for increased policy advice and flexible, softly earmarked or unearmarked core funding for IOM. That could increase funding for the growing policy functions, as well as administrative and other functions at Headquarters in view of its growth. The Chairperson noted that strengthening IOM's role in providing technical assistance was also relevant in the context of IOM budget reform.

17. Regarding the global compact on migration process, several delegates reiterated that IOM should have a lead coordination role, as the lead organization on migration, collaborating with all other United Nations agencies dealing with migration, avoiding duplication, and seeking out synergies where possible. In that respect, a number of delegations requested IOM to provide information on experience in the field and at Headquarters in coordinating migration issues with other United Nations agencies, and on the type of support IOM would need from Member States to strengthen that coordination, if needed. The Chairperson cited Resolution No. 1309, which had included a similar request for IOM to provide periodic updates on that matter, and suggested that the IOM Administration could be commissioned to provide such an update in the near future. There was support for that proposal.

18. A number of delegates requested the IOM Administration to produce an analysis of the possible roles for IOM in the follow-up to the global compact, including the financial implications thereof. The importance of flexible funding to strengthen IOM's administrative and policy support to the global compact at Headquarters level and the need to look into adapting the structure of IOM in that regard was again noted by some delegations. IOM was also requested to produce a short briefing note on the migration data it currently produced.

19. One delegate pointed out that it was important to streamline international dialogues and processes on migration, for example by initiating a dialogue between IOM and the Global Forum on Migration and Development on how to enhance cooperation and synergies.

20. Several delegates pointed out that, owing to its recognized role as a key stakeholder and its extensive expertise in the field of migration, IOM already had the necessary expertise in place to integrate fully a – yet to be determined – monitoring and reporting mechanism of the global compact into institutional processes in the migration context. IOM could hence also be mandated to coordinate reports on the progress of achieving migration-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals to the appropriate high-level political forum to ensure that the global compact on migration process was closely linked to that of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

21. Upon the request of the Chairperson, the Deputy Director General took the floor to respond to some of the points raised. She thanked the Chairperson for having prepared his non-paper, and delegates for their interest in the non-paper and the rich discussion that had taken place. She also reiterated that IOM was strongly committed to maintaining the essential characteristics (Resolution No. 1309) that had earned IOM the trust of its Member States and made it successful.

22. The Deputy Director General elaborated on IOM's role in providing technical assistance on migration policy to governments, through projects on policy and legislation advice, capacity-building, and many other types of initiatives, which IOM had been carrying out with great success for many years. However, she noted that the capacity to provide technical assistance on migration policy in a more systematic and coherent way should be further strengthened, in structural and financial terms, in order to be able to match IOM's strength in providing operational responses.

23. Referring to the enhanced role of IOM in providing migration data, the Deputy Director General mentioned IOM's initiatives in that area and highlighted that great efforts had been taken to avoid duplication with other agencies or entities providing similar services; on the contrary, IOM's migration data initiatives added value where gaps had been identified.

24. The Deputy Director General reflected on the timing of the entry of IOM into the United Nations system, pointing out that coordination between IOM and the United Nations was as old as the organizations themselves. IOM had entered at a moment when migration was a big item on the international agenda, when all organizations had started to pay more attention to migration, States had agreed to negotiate a global compact on migration, and a new Secretary-General had taken up his functions, with a new United Nations reform agenda. In that sense, the timing of IOM's entry into the United Nations system had coincided with other organizations' greater interest in migration issues, making coordination a more complex task than before.

25. The Deputy Director General concluded by saying that IOM recognized that some agencies might have more expertise than IOM in certain specific migration-related issues; however, IOM should still lead the coordination process on migration issues as the global lead agency on migration, based on its proven technical and operational capacity on migration management and as the best-placed organization to help States implement the migration-related targets within the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. The Chairperson thanked the Deputy Director General and, in closing, summarized the recommendations from the discussion. He noted that the Working Group had requested the IOM Administration to provide three short papers, namely:

- (a) An update on IOM's work in the area of migration data (including information on priorities/focus and the added value of IOM data);
- (b) A brief on IOM's existing policy capability (including information on the staff/resources dedicated to policy, operations and administrative duties);
- (c) A summary of IOM's capacity-building work in terms of the policies adopted by States to manage migration and migration-related challenges.

27. In addition, the IOM Administration, through the Director General, would provide an oral update on the current state of IOM–UN relations, including on the effectiveness of coordination between IOM and other United Nations agencies at field and Headquarters level.

28. The Chairperson reiterated that the non-paper would remain an informal background document for the further deliberations of the Working Group; that said, further comments on the paper provided in writing would be welcome. He proposed that there should be another update on the global compact on migration process by the Director General, the Deputy Director General or the Senior Policy Adviser at the next Working Group meeting.

29. In closing, the Chairperson noted that the issue of the IOM Strategy was still pending. The question of how IOM evolved over time would feed into consideration of that issue, which would be informed by the deliberations of future meetings of the Working Group on IOM–UN Relations and Related Issues.