

Strengthening Partnerships: Human Mobility for Sustainable Development

GFMD 2014-2015 Third Meeting of the Steering Group

Wednesday, 4 February 2014
La Salle XI, R2 Level, ILO Building

Summary Report

Welcoming Remarks

1. Ambassador Mehmet Samsar, Director General for Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, welcomed 66 delegates, representing 27 GFMD Steering Group (SG) members, to the third meeting of the GFMD 2014-2015 Steering Group held in Geneva on 4 February 2015. Lending him support at the podium were Mr. Peter Sutherland, UN Secretary General's Special Representative for International Migration (SRSG), Mrs. Esen Altuğ, Deputy Director General for Migration, Asylum and Visa of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, co-Troika representatives, Ambassador Eva Åkerman Börje (GFMD 2013-2014 Chair Sweden) and Mr. Riaz Hamidullah, MFA Director General (GFMD 2016 Chair Bangladesh) and Ms. Estrella Lajom, Head of the GFMD Support Unit.
2. At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Sutherland delivered some remarks. The SRSG enjoined SG members to support the Turkish GFMD concept note, praising Turkey for leading a global conversation on pressing issues, including displacement and forced migrants, reducing the costs of migration and promoting the inclusion of migration in post-2015 development agenda. He was hopeful that the first thematic meeting on "Migration in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda" will explore how the GFMD can become a platform for monitoring progress in the implementation of migration-related targets and indicators in the post-2015 development era.
3. The SRSG looked forward to Turkey further improving the structures of the GFMD by implementing the Terms of Reference (TORs) of the central mechanisms – including the Troika, the SG and the Friends of the Forum, strengthening the Support Unit, working more closely with key stakeholders such as the GMG, civil society and the private sector, promoting a more robust participation in GFMD Roundtables and other activities, and by offering financial support to the process. He underlined the important role that GFMD focal points play in the governance of the GFMD and in promoting the dynamism and sustainability of the process. According to him, the ideal national focal point is a senior official with the authority to bring together all other relevant departments and coordinate their inputs and participation in the GFMD. He thus encouraged a review of the current focal point system at the national level.

Adoption of the Agenda

4. The Provisional Agenda of the meeting was adopted by all participating delegations.

GFMD 2014-2015 Concept Note and Work Plan

Final GFMD 2014-2015 Concept Note

5. The Chair presented the highlights of the changes on what was intended to be the final draft of the GFMD 2014-2015 concept note which was circulated on 2 February. All in all, there were 29 governments and 10 observers that offered their written and oral comments and suggestions. The Chair tried to integrate these inputs as much as possible. Where suggestions contradicted each other, the concept paper was adjusted in line with the more dominant views.

6. The comments showed universal support for GFMD's established concern for protecting the human rights of migrants and promoting their well-being. There was a particular focus on labor rights, as well as on enabling migrants to keep more of the benefits of migration, by lowering the costs associated with moving—especially with money transfer and recruitment. Some reservations were expressed about GFMD taking “positions” on current debates—for example on the implementation of migration goals within the post-2015 development agenda—emphasizing GFMD's role as a non-binding, informal process. Thus, text was rephrased to clarify the Chair's determination to preserve the character of GFMD as a state-led process, while trying to make it even more inclusive of significant actors. Efforts were also made to express the value of the GFMD as a platform for building consensus among states, even though it is informal and non-binding, and it is up to individual states to decide to act on the recommendations that emerge from GFMD debates.
7. Two points raised some controversy in the comments received. One was the use of the term “mobility.” One or two comments urged the Chair to stay with the more usual term “migration,” while others welcomed the shift, and several asked for clarification of what was meant by “international mobility.” The Chair thus added a brief indication that international migration is embedded in a broader context of international mobility, in which people cross borders for shorter, longer, temporary and, often, repeated periods for many overlapping reasons. Furthermore, the Chair clarified that the UN definition of migration refers to movements of people outside the country of their birth for a period of one year or longer. The broader context of mobility, which includes for example seasonal workers or people who travel from one country of destination to another, captures movements that are intrinsically related to conventional migration flows, and have deep implications for development.
8. The second point was the inclusion of enhanced mobility for forced migrants as a channel for development. Several commenters felt that topics related to refugees and other forced migrants should not have a place at the GFMD, while others applauded the initiative, including the UNHCR, which welcomed a discussion of labor mobility for refugees and other forced migrants as a way of enhancing their human development and security. Drawing from its own experience, the Chair explained that these people today are in protracted situations of displacement, and indefinite support from host states and the international community is not feasible or humane. Many other states as well as international organizations are pursuing development solutions for forced migrants that involve various forms of mobility, and the GFMD can be a platform for discussing these possibilities. The Chair further clarified that the term “forced migrants” refers to people who are compelled to cross borders to escape the effects of natural or man-made disasters, which range from armed conflict and political persecution to natural disasters and environmental degradation.
9. Several comments requested more explanation on the structure of the GFMD 2015 and its relation to both the multi-annual work plan established at GFMD 2014 and the declaration adopted at the High Level Dialogue at the United Nations in 2013, and the Chair tried to address these. Some suggested citing concrete examples—programs or policies—in the concept note. The Chair however saw the concept note as providing the theoretical framework of the issues to be further elaborated in the roundtable sessions by the Government RT teams. In conformity with the Terms of Reference (TORs) of the GFMD 2014-2015 Government RT teams, programs and that are relevant to the topic practices will be collected, to be cited in the background paper and posted on the GFMD Policy and Practice Database.
10. When the Chair opened the discussion, over twenty SG members offered more comments and suggestions. One SG member (Belgium) indicated their RT sessions of interest, while another (Morocco) offered to co-chair again the special session on the GFMD Platform for Partnerships in Istanbul.
11. There was general appreciation for the revisions that have been made, both in terms of format and substance. Some appreciated the concept note's inclusiveness and forward-looking approach that strengthens the work program of GFMD 2014-2015, as it tries to promote continuity from the past. Several speakers commended the three key objectives outlined in the paper, namely: a) Enhancing migrant-focused migration management; b) Recognising the development impact of migration in public policies, and c) Engaging relevant stakeholders in strengthening the linkages between migration and development. Others positively welcomed the reminder of the SRSR regarding the role of focal points. One delegate suggested improving the conclusion at the end of the concept note.

12. The use of the term “mobility” over “migration” generated mixed views. A couple of delegates agreed that mobility was broader in scope than migration. Another held the view that mobility is a more contemporary term, relating more to other ongoing processes and discussions particularly in the development field. In this regard, a suggestion was made to use “migration and mobility” together. One delegate cautioned against overstressing the bounds of GFMD discussions to include such other persons in mobility as students and tourists. The SRSG cautioned against becoming legalistic and over-defining certain important issues (such as forced migrants) in a way that reduces or removes the flexibility of dealing with them. He stressed that the GFMD is not a normative body but is simply a platform for dialogue and development of positions on common challenges.
13. Many delegates commented on the proposed Roundtable 1. One delegate suggested looking at both the human rights and skills of migrants. Others underlined the importance of discussing other costs associated with migration aside from remittance costs. Other suggestions were made to include the issue of human smuggling and trafficking-in-persons and to address the criminalization of migration and human rights abuses that happen across borders. One delegate saw the need to promote the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and their Families. Another delegate lamented the weak focus on the human rights of migrants and on human mobility as a fundamental right with huge impacts on the sustainable development of countries around the world.
14. On Roundtable 2, delegates welcomed the Chair’s intent to look at the implementation of migration-related goals and indicators in the post-2015 UN development agenda. They supported the possible role of the GFMD in the thematic review and follow up of migration in the post-2015 era.
15. On Roundtable 3, one delegate would like to see a discussion on the broader issue of human development, also to promote continuity with the past GFMD. Several delegates echoed earlier reservations about the focus on forced migrants, pointing out that there are separate processes already dealing with refugees and IDPs, and a discussion within the GFMD risks not only duplicating other existing fora, but also dilutes the importance attached to these issues. Others, however, welcomed the opportunity for the GFMD, working with the UNHCR, to explore ways to find durable solutions for forced migrants thru labour mobility channels, so that they can empower themselves and also contribute to the development of their host countries. Another proposal was to look at the situation in the country of origin in order to prevent forced migration in the first place and/or encourage return migration.
16. Many delegates asked for more details about the Chair’s plans to engage the private sector, pointing out previous GFMD efforts in this regard. One delegate mentioned the contribution made by the World Economic Forum and The Hague Process while another offered to help the Chair to bring business leaders to the GFMD tables. Stressing the important convergence of government, business and the civil society, the latter believed that the GFMD should continue to find innovative and sustainable ways to engage with the private sector continuously.
17. The past GFMD Chair Sweden noted that the proposed thematic meetings are no longer directly linked with particular roundtables—i.e., the methodology introduced last GFMD in order to promote more substantive and evidence-based discussions in the roundtables. A concern was expressed that this may require more efforts by the Government Team in organizing the RT sessions.
18. On the 1st thematic meeting, a few delegates were happy to see the highlight on the link between migration and the sustainable development agenda (SDG) process, particularly the migration references in goals 8, 10 and 17 of the Open Working Group report, as well as in the UNSG synthesis report. It was emphasized that Governments now need to reflect on the evolving architecture and possible shape of the migration-relevant indicators, taking into account national and regional specificities.
19. Concerning the 2nd thematic meeting on the role of communication, some delegates encouraged the Chair to promote a balanced narrative by also tackling the risks and other migration-related challenges for the migrants and their countries of origin, destination and transit.
20. As regards the structure of the GFMD, one delegate would like to see the operational mechanisms of the Forum further strengthened to enhance the delivery power of the GFMD at the national, regional and international levels on matters relating to migration and development. Another delegate urged the Chair to

develop some assessment mechanism—similar to what happened in 2011—in order to measure the impact of GFMD discussions and migration governance. The latter speaker cited as an example that sometime ago, the GFMD agreed against the use of the term “illegal migrants,” yet several interveners used this term instead of “irregular migrants.”

21. One delegate urged the Chair to also look at how to help governments that lack resources and/or political will to implement GFMD recommendations. He believed this could be discussed at the Future of the Forum session in Istanbul. The SRSG supported his view. At the end of the rich debates, Amb. Samsar thanked all the interveners and indicated that efforts will be made to try to consider their comments in preparing the final concept note.

Updated Calendar of Activities of GFMD 2014 -2015

22. The Chair announced that the GFMD Summit Meeting will take place in Istanbul on 14-16 October 2015. The Government meeting will be preceded by the Civil Society Days on 12-13 October 2015. The Chair also informed the SG that consultations re the ad hoc Business Meeting and the G-20 joint event are still going on. The schedules of these activities will be announced later.

Overview of Government Roundtable Teams

23. The Chair presented the latest overview of Government RT teams¹, comprised of 27 Governments and 11 Observers to date. The Chair was happy to note that all regions of the world were represented in the current Government Teams composition. Supporting these RT teams are about 11 Observers, including member agencies of the Global Migration Group. Participation remains open and the Chair looked forward to welcoming another country to help Eritrea in co-leading RT 3.1. He encouraged all SG members, especially those that were still undecided, to attend the first preparatory meetings scheduled on Friday, 6 February 2015 to help clarify Government team member expectations and see how country experiences in migration and development issues can feed into the RT preparations.
24. During the open discussion, a question was asked if the Chair had already assigned a RT Coordinator for each session, as indicated in the Government RT Teams TORs. The Chair answered in the negative. Another delegate suggested leaving the matter of assigning the RT Coordinator to the team itself, to which the Chair agreed.

GFMD 2014-2015 Thematic Meetings

25. The Chair thanked Bangladesh, the incoming GFMD 2016 Chair, and Germany for agreeing to co-convene the first thematic meeting on Migration in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda to be held the following day. 23 capital-based experts from developing countries were funded by the Chair to participate in the meeting and share their perspectives on the issue.
26. The Chair underscored the added value of thematic meetings in the GFMD preparatory work, inasmuch as they allow for more in-depth discussion of the focal issues of the RT sessions. These meetings also promote the sharing of concrete policy examples, which then become inputs into the RT background papers and provide inspiration for policy recommendations. The Swedish GFMD thematic meetings alone generated 130 M&D practices and programs that are now available on the GFMD Policy and Practice Database.
27. The 2nd and 3rd GFMD thematic meetings under the Turkish Chair will be held on April 29 and September 3, respectively. The Philippines offered to co-convene the September 3 meeting on “Recognizing the contributions of women migrants to economic and social development in countries of origin and destination band addressing their specific needs.” But there was yet no co-convenor for this meeting, nor for the April 29 thematic meeting on “The Role of Communications in promoting widespread recognition of the benefits of migration, improving public perceptions of migrants and combating xenophobic reactions.” The Chair invited interested governments to step forward as co-convenors.

¹ See <http://www.gfmd.org/docs/turkey-2014-2015> for the latest overview of Government RT teams.

GFMD 2013- 2014 Follow-up

GFMD 2013-2014 Participants' Survey

28. The Chair invited Amb. Åkerman Börje to present the results of the online GFMD 2014 Participants' survey that was launched by the Swedish GFMD Chair from mid-December to 10 January 2015. Amb. Åkerman Börje informed the SG that the results were divergent in terms of highlight. There were requests for more support in terms of travel and participation costs. Others wanted the GFMD to focus on other topics for the future.
29. Ms. Estrella Lajom, Head of the GFMD Support Unit, added that the Swedish GFMD Chair received responses from 19 governments and 5 observers after a period of five weeks. The Support Unit collated these responses and sent the excel overview to Stockholm in January, inasmuch as the questionnaire was prepared by the Swedish GFMD Secretariat. Ms. Lajom shared that some respondents made specific comments about what they would like to see in the Platform for Partnerships or suggestions for the next Forum meeting. A more detailed report can be prepared for the next SG meeting and the online survey could be re-launched again in order to get more ideas from participants.

Composition of the GFMD 2014-2015 Steering Group

30. The Chair referred to the official request of Guatemala to join the Steering Group. As discussed at the last SG meeting in November, it would be ideal to maintain the maximum number of SG members to 30 as agreed in Stockholm. The ideal solution is for one current member to make way for Guatemala. In this regard, the GFMD 2014-2015 Troika agreed at its last meeting that the Chair will approach certain SG members that have been relatively inactive and urge them to reconsider their membership. The Chair reiterated to the SG members the need to demonstrate active and sustained involvement in the GFMD process, through financial, substantive or other in-kind contribution.
31. The Support Unit maintains SG members' country fact sheets which detail their participation and contribution, financial and/or in-kind, to the GFMD process since 2007. The Support Unit will send a hidden link to all SG members so they can download and review their respective GFMD factsheets. The Chair invited the SG members to review and update these factsheets as soon as the link becomes available.

Reinforcing the GFMD Support Unit

32. The Chair informed the SG that the recruitment process is not yet completed for the new Programme Officer and the Admin and Finance Assistant in the GFMD Support Unit. The delay was inevitable given the number of applications that were received by the IOM. The Support Unit's role has evolved over the years to accommodate the growing requirements of the GFMD process. The strengthening of the GFMD Support Unit is a priority for the Turkish GFMD Chair, especially in view of the plan to enhance the GFMD communications.
33. Belgium announced a contribution of EUR 50,000 towards the GFMD Support Unit.

Elaborating a GFMD Communication Plan

34. The GFMD assessment in 2012 identified the need to enhance the delivery power of the GFMD process. One key follow up action point after the Stockholm GFMD was the enhancement of the GFMD communications system. During the second SG meeting in November, the Turkish Chair invited interested countries to form a small ad hoc group that will look at the communication requirements and try to elaborate an enhanced communications plan for the GFMD process, in consultation with the Steering Group and the larger Friends of the Forum. The ad hoc team will work with the Chair and the GFMD Support Unit in defining the communication needs of the GFMD, identifying the target audience of the GFMD, deciding on the key messages and information to be conveyed by the GFMD, and the mode of delivery of these messages. This communication plan has to be multi-annual, to be updated and implemented by future Chairs in accordance with their thematic priorities and work program.

35. Since then, 8 governments representing different regional perspectives have become members of this ad hoc team, namely, Australia, Bangladesh, Mexico, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia and Turkey. Australia agreed to lead this team and gave affirmation that this is an important institutional issue coming out of the GFMD assessment exercise. The team will meet soon and submit to the SG its recommendations. The Chair welcomed the leadership of Australia and looked forward to having a good communications strategy for the GFMD by the time of the Summit meeting in Istanbul.

GFMD Platform for Partnerships

The PfP and the Policy and Practice Database

36. Encouraged by many governments to continue the use and, if possible, further enhance the GFMD Platform for Partnerships and the Policy and Practice Database (PPD), the Chair underlined some issues² that need to be reviewed, going forward. First it is vital that governments actually visit and use the PfP/PPD. The practices–programs and policies–and partnerships that governments are doing should be fed systematically into the PfP by the governments. GFMD focal points will play an important role in achieving this objective by gathering inputs from relevant ministries/agencies/offices of the government.
37. Promoting the PfP in general and the PPD in particular is the next big challenge. It will require distilling the wealth of information now contained in the GFMD website and presenting it to all stakeholders in an exciting and insightful form. Given the existence of many other online platforms on migration and/or development, underlining and communicating the added value of the PfP and the PPD to GFMD audience will require a dedicated focus and entail resources.
38. Strengthening partnerships and synergies with relevant processes, such as the GMG, KNOMAD, JMIDI and others is also a key next step. Communicating and coordinating the progress and outcomes of the PfP with these processes will benefit the broader global community in terms of having clear, concise, concrete and readily available knowledge base on migration and development.
39. Furthermore, the main focus of the PfP enhancement so far has been on the Policy and Practice Database (PPD). While continuing earlier efforts to systematically feed into the PPD new M&D policies and programs, the Chair would like to look at other components of the PfP where there may be room for expanding the work – namely, the M&D Policy Tools, M&D Calls for action and M&D networking.
40. For a start, the Chair would like to follow the practice that was started by the Swedish Chair to have a PfP segment during FOF meetings. The Chair would thus like to invite interested governments and organizations to announce new programs/initiatives/calls for action at the next FOF meeting on April 29 in Geneva. The Chair was also hopeful that the ad hoc team on GFMD Communications will be able to offer concrete suggestions and ways forward, given that the PfP and the PPD are important tools and mechanisms of the GFMD communication system.
41. Morocco expressed appreciation for the work of the GFMD Support Unit in terms of developing and enhancing the GFMD Platform for Partnerships (PfP), which is an important tool for the GFMD communication strategy. As announced earlier, Morocco would like to remain as a co-chair of the PfP. The Chair invited interested countries to join Morocco as co-chair of the PfP.

GFMD 2014-2015 Civil Society Process

GFMD cooperation with the Civil Society

42. The Chair invited Mrs. Altuğ to inform the SG about the state of cooperation with the civil society. According to Mrs. Altuğ, Mr. Bingham, ICMC Head of Policy, visited Istanbul and Ankara last December to establish contacts with relevant offices and organizations, in order to plan for the GFMD Civil Society

² These are contained in the project report on the PfP enhancement submitted by the Support Unit to the Government of Switzerland, which has funded the project.

Days (CSD) to be held in Istanbul on 12-13 October 2015. The Chair facilitated the meetings between the relevant Turkish institutions and the ICMC. The format of the Istanbul CSD will be similar to the Stockholm CSD. The official opening of the Government meeting will also be followed by the GFMD common space, bringing governments, civil society, international organizations and other stakeholders together.

43. A few delegates requested for the floor to share some good practices in regard to civil society engagement. One mentioned that at the last GFMD meeting in Stockholm, their official delegation included two civil society representatives. Another delegate suggested organizing a briefing session between the government and the civil society to help decide which sectors of the civil society could come to Istanbul. A third delegate agreed that both practices are useful based on their own experiences. Another delegate agreed that the success of civil society engagement lies at the national level, while recognizing the improvement in the constructiveness and depth of conversation between governments and the civil society in the GFMD over the years. This delegate reminded the SG about civil society's pending suggestion for an improved model of interaction, and encouraged SG member states to reflect on possible arrangement. In addition, this delegate advocated for more financial contribution towards the civil society process.

Any Other Business

44. The Chair thanked the SG members for their active participation and adjourned the meeting at 12h30.