

**GFMD 2011 CONCLUDING DEBATE**  
**Proposal for Common Space**  
**1 December 2011**

***“Looking at the Big Picture: Demographics, Youth (Un-) Employment, Development and Migration”***

**I. Objectives**

The GFMD meeting in Mexico in 2010 introduced the “Common Space” as an inter-active session that engaged a cross-section of panelists and delegates from governments, civil society organizations and international organizations. The Common space was widely perceived as a positive contribution towards joint engagement, conversation and cooperation among these actors.

Building upon the successful experience in Mexico, the Common Space at the opening session of the GFMD 2011 Concluding Debate on 1 December is proposed to be organized with the same objectives and along similar lines. The proposed theme of the Common Space is “*Looking at the Big Picture: Demographics, Youth (Un-) Employment, Development and Migration*”.

**II. Theme**

The Swiss Chair-in-Office proposes that the Common Space 2011 offer an opportunity for GFMD participants to step out from the specific themes of the individual GFMD sessions to consider one of the phenomena that also intersects significantly with development and migration, today and into the foreseeable future: *demographics and youth (un)employment*. This phenomenon has relevance to wider GFMD deliberations and thematic working sessions, and invites perspectives from governments, civil society and international organizations in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Evidence and forecasting suggest that the world may be on the eve of far greater and more diverse international mobility than in prior decades, resulting from the sum of unprecedented demographic imbalances, widespread (youth) unemployment and a lack of sustainable development opportunities “at home”, together with the growing need for workforces, be they temporary or permanent, in many growing economies (including both developed and developing economies).<sup>1</sup> The GFMD 2011 is being convened in a year when winds of these phenomena are blowing across the planet; epic turmoil in economies and employment worldwide underscores the straight-line link between prospects for sustainable livelihood and employment and the question of choice-or-necessity to migrate.

In this context of demographic change and imbalance, the lack of jobs and human development at home prompt many people to seek life and opportunities abroad, often migrating and working in irregular ways. The global mismatch between labour supply and demand, and the demand for labour of an irregular nature, exacerbate such movement and its effects. While their contribution to development and economic growth is recognized by many, these migrants and their families are

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<sup>1</sup> This notwithstanding, many traditional migration origin countries may in the longer-term also face their own shortage of labour, on account of their evolving demographic situation and related labour market needs.

especially vulnerable to exploitation, and are in need of protection, for as long as they remain in irregular status.

By all accounts, including perspectives widely expressed in prior GFMD meetings, government and civil society actors agree that irregular migration as such and the vulnerable situation of migrants with irregular status are undesirable and must be redressed, reduced and avoided, now and in the future. This is common ground—and offers potential not only for discussion but practical cooperation and action between governments and civil society organizations in countries of origin, transit and destination.

With that in mind, the Common Space proposes to take the theme **“Demographics, Youth (Un-) Employment, Development and Migration”** a logical step further: to reflect upon practical *alternatives to irregular migration*. Participants will be invited for perspectives on concrete measures and partnerships between governments and civil society partners in origin, transit and destination countries to redress, reduce and avoid the situation of migrants and migration in irregular circumstances, and create sustainable alternatives. Partnerships and issues that could be explored by the panelists and “the floor” may range from sustainable development and job creation at home to safe, legal and viable ways to migrate and enjoy decent work standards, and from eradicating the demand for irregular labour to regularization schemes.

### III. Format

Under the guidance of a skilled moderator, the Common Space will be structured around a single plenary, with three elements:

- (1) a brief opening **presentation** offering a data-centered, dynamic snapshot of “the big picture” of *demographics, youth (unemployment), development and migration*.

The Common Space will begin with a thought-provoking introduction of the issue by an expert providing insights into the facts and figures of current demographic and workforce developments, unemployment rates, especially of youth around the world, and how these scenarios affect or are affected by migration and development today and in the future. The introduction will be followed by a panel discussion.

- (2) a “café-style” **panel discussion** on *alternatives to irregular migration*

Panelists will discuss alternatives to irregular migration through sustainable development and job creation at home, the need to eradicate the demand for irregular labour, regularization schemes and legal and viable ways to migrate and enjoy decent work standards. The panel will involve a mix of 6-8 panelists from governments, civil society and international organizations. Panelists will be chosen for their experience in building policies and programmes that promote cooperation on alternatives, including public-private partnerships. After offering their own brief perspectives, the panelists will be engaged by the moderator in an informal back-and-forth exchange on the issue.

- (3) **interaction from the floor**

The moderator will then open the floor with an invitation for perspectives and questions from government delegations, observers and civil society delegates who had participated in the preceding GFMD Civil Society Days (29-30 November).

A record of the presentation and exchange, with a particular emphasis on practical recommendations, will be included in the final report of the 2011 GFMD.