Regional Consultative Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region

In preparation for the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

Cairo, 4-5 June 2013

1. Background

The contributions that international migration can make to development are being increasingly recognized around the world. International migration is a major factor in regional economic and social development throughout the Arab region. The rapid development of countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) would not have been possible without the continued contributions of labour power and skills of large numbers of expatriate workers from Arab and Asian countries. At the same time, the middle-income and least-developed Arab countries see large numbers of their citizens live and work abroad both within and beyond the region; a phenomenon that has resulted in increasingly-large remittances being sent to support family members in countries of origin, as well as increasing transnational linkages between origin and destination countries, and opportunities for skills acquisition and skills transfer for migrant and domestic workers.

In recognition of the important contributions made by migration and migrants to development, as well as the existing risks and obstacles that may limit migrants’ contributions to development, the General Assembly of the United Nations held its first-ever High-Level Dialogue on the topic of international migration in September 2006. This two-day meeting enabled Member States of the United Nations to engage in a global dialogue to exchange their views on this evolving topic. A major outcome of this Dialogue was the recognition of an emerging consensus that while it was not in itself a development strategy, "international migration could be a positive force for development in both countries of origin and countries of destination, provided that it was supported by the right set of policies". Additionally, participating states voiced a strong commitment to continue their discussions on the topic through the creation of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Arab countries were active participants in this first process, delivering statements and contributing to the roundtable discussions.

Since the first High-Level Dialogue in 2006, the GFMD has met on an annual basis since 2007 to push forward the migration and development agenda, while countries, international organizations and civil society have cooperated to translate commitments into concrete initiatives by developing research to increase understanding on migration and development linkages, producing tools to support evidence-based policy development on migration and development, and providing direct support through capacity building initiatives. In order to take stock of progress since this first landmark event, and to chart ways forward, a second High-Level Dialogue will be held in the General Assembly of the United Nations in October 2013, under the theme of "Identifying concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation at all levels, with a view to enhancing the benefits of international migration for migrants and countries alike and its important links to development, while reducing its negative implications".1 This second High-Level Dialogue will provide Member States with an opportunity to move forward on

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“identifying concrete measures that enhance the benefits of international migration, while reducing its costs for countries of origin and destination and migrants alike.”

In particular, the second High-Level Dialogue will “focus on identifying good practices and lessons learned since the 2006 High-Level Dialogue, with a particular focus on national, regional and global policies and programmes that have leveraged the development benefits of international migration.”

The High-Level Dialogue is expected to take the form of a two-day plenary meeting and three interactive round-tables discussing:

1. Assessing the effects of international migration on sustainable development and identifying relevant priorities in view of the preparation of the post-2015 development framework;
2. Measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants, with particular reference to women and children, as well as to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons and to ensure orderly, regular and safe migration;
3. Strengthening partnerships and cooperation on international migration, mechanisms to effectively integrate migration into development policies and promoting coherence at all levels;
4. international and regional labour mobility and its impact on development

Given the diversity of regional experiences in relation to migration and development, the General Assembly invited regional commissions "in collaboration with other relevant entities of the United Nations system as well as the International Organization for Migration, to organize discussions to examine regional aspects of international migration and development".

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the League of Arab States (LAS), recognizing the importance and specific contribution of international migration for development in the Arab region, the potential benefits that Arab experiences can bring to the High-Level Dialogue’s deliberations and the consequent importance of ensuring Arab countries are able to make their voices heard at this important event, have decided to seize this opportunity to organize a two-day Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) on International Migration and Development in June 2013.

2. Objective

The RCM will aim to prepare Arab countries to maximize the benefits of their participation in the Second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development by taking stock of progress in relation to migration and development in the Arab region since 2006, with particular focus on the High-Level Dialogue roundtable themes, and by assisting representatives in the development of a common understanding of the next steps to be taken to maximize the contributions of migration to development in the Arab region and to minimize the potential negative impacts for destination and origin countries, as well as for migrants and their families themselves.

3. Expected Outputs

A statement on “International Migration and Development in the Arab Region”: This statement will serve as a background document to the High-Level Dialogue, in order to brief participants from the Arab countries on the key international migration and development issues in the region, and will be presented during the plenary session of the second High-Level Dialogue. The

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statement will be structured around the roundtable themes, and will aim to include the following elements:

• Key findings on the impacts of migration and development in the Arab region and progress on maximizing the benefits of international migration and minimizing its negative impacts;
• Identification of areas for future action by Governments, civil society organizations and international organizations to maximize the benefits of international migration for development in the Arab region; and
• Commitments from Arab Governments to assist in the implementation of the recommendations of the High-Level Dialogue.

4. Modalities

The RCM will aim to be a two day-long participatory, consultative process, engaging Government officials from Arab countries to come to common understandings on current and future migration and development challenges and opportunities, and the actions required at the national, regional and global levels to maximize the benefits and minimize the potential negative impacts of migratory trends. Civil society actors, academics, and international organizations will provide expert support and help guide the discussions.

The RCM will therefore be structured as a series of focused roundtable sessions built around themes identified as being of particular importance to the Arab region. Discussions within these themes will be directed towards the elements relevant to the High-Level Dialogue round table themes. Each session will be led by a facilitator who will ensure the discussion remains focused on High-Level Dialogue themes, while a rapporteur for each session will identify the key issues and directions for action emerging from the discussions. These recommendations and key themes will be agreed by the participants at the end of each session, and will be incorporated into the final statement to be presented at the High-Level Dialogue plenary session.

5. Participants

The RCM will target 45 participants, with representation expected from the following constituencies:

• Government officials from the countries covered by the League of Arab States, ESCWA and IOM’s Regional Office for North Africa and the Middle East;\(^5\)
• Academic experts on migration and development in the Arab countries;
• Selected civil society representatives; and
• Other international organizations inside and beyond the United Nations system including the International Labour Organization and the Arab Labour Organization.

6. Proposed Thematic Focus

The following issues are proposed as themes for the RCM:

1. Setting the Scene: the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.
   - **Objective:** to clarify the role of the regional consultation within the broader HLD framework and as part of Post-2015 Development Agenda consultations.

2. Overview of migration and development issues in the Arab region.

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\(^5\) ESCWA covers 17 Arab countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. IOM’s regional office for North Africa and the Middle East covers the same 17 countries as well as Algeria. The League of Arab States also covers the Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania and Somalia.
Objective: to provide participants with an overview of the key migration and development-related issues facing the Arab region, with a particular focus on developments since the first HLD on Migration and Development in 2006, and to look forward to the role of migration in the post-2015 agenda.

Output: agreed key findings on migration and development issues impacting the Arab region.

3. Protecting human rights of migrants and improving conditions for migrant workers

Objective: to consider the current situation of migrants’ rights in the Arab region, with particular reference to the challenges and opportunities created by the latest political developments.

Output: agreed findings on the situation of migrants in the Arab region, and identification of measures that can be taken to improve these conditions.

4. The potential roles for expatriate communities in development planning and practice

Objective: to discuss the roles played by Arab expatriates in promoting the development of their countries of origin and the policies and programmes countries of origin and destination can put in place to maximize the potential benefits of expatriates’ contributions.

Output: agreed findings on the key actions to facilitate expatriate communities’ contributions to development in the country of origin.

5. Supporting mutual development goals through international & regional labour mobility

Objective: to explore what frameworks can be put in place to maximize the mutual benefits of labour migration to countries of origin and destination in the Arab region.

Output: agreed findings on directions for action at a regional level to ensure that labour migration supports development goals of countries of origin and destination in the Arab region.

6. Partnerships & cooperation on international migration at the regional & global levels

Objective: to explore how all actors, including Governments, civil society and United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations, involved in migration and development-related activities in the Arab region and beyond can strengthen their dialogue, partnerships and cooperation to ensure the best possible outcomes of migration for development.

Output: agreed findings on appropriate potential structures for dialogue, cooperation and partnerships in the Arab region.

7. Outcome document drafting

Objective: to provide participants with an opportunity to synthesize their findings and conclusions into a final outcome document to be presented at the second High-Level Dialogue, as well as to define next steps to transmit the conclusions of this meeting to participants at the Dialogue.

Output: agreed upon statement on “International Migration and Development in the Arab Region”, to be delivered at the HLD.