



GFMD Friends of the Forum

Geneva, 29 May 2019

Civil Society Statement by Stéphane Jaquemet, Director of Policy, ICMC

Let me start by congratulating the United Arab Emirates for being elected the GFMD Chair for next year. This is indeed very good news for us. For a number of years, the UAE has been a driving and very positive force supporting a closer interface between governments and other stakeholders, including civil society. It has also been proactive during the review process, making proposals which will make the GFMD even more relevant, more agile and more interactive in a changed and evolving environment. Also very much appreciated, the UAE has been a regular and generous funder for our civil society activities, including by already committing funds for civil society for 2019.

My gratitude as well to the Ecuadorian Chair and to the members of the Steering Committee for being fully engaged and fully transparent regarding the shaping of the agenda for the Quito Summit. So far, the discussion has been promising, with large convergence over the main thematic priorities and the positive suggestions as to the format of the Summit. In the coming weeks, we will be providing the GFMD Chair and the Support Unit with our detailed comments regarding the initial draft programme. We are also very happy that both the Business Mechanism and the Mayors Mechanism, which we warmly welcome as a full GFMD process as of this year, have shown a true spirit of partnership and transparency with us, civil society. We are definitely operating in a very positive dynamics, with partners that not only trust each other but are also willing to learn from each other. This needs to be acknowledged.

I will not go too much into details but would like to report back on our recent discussions within broader civil society, in particular with the members of our Civil Society International Steering Committee. We believe that these discussions are concrete contributions towards the GFMD Summit in Quito and more generally the adjusted architecture of the GFMD, indeed linked to the review process:

1. The Summit should be a good combination of positive vibes and content. A friendly meeting with little content is not sufficient. At each Summit, we all need to go away with a kind of a road map and with the individual and collective willingness to move on. A positive discussion is not going to improve the lives of migrants, unless we have clear objectives, clear benchmarks and outcomes. We fully realize that the GFMD is both informal and not binding, but it does not prevent member States to agree on concrete recommendations, with a clear call to implement them. This is a system in which member States are voluntarily and transparently engaged in good practice, with the political will to improve their migration policies.
2. Partly in Quito, because of time constraints, and indeed fully starting in 2020, we would like to consider the GFMD Civil Society Days as a culmination of a “year-long global process”, rather

than the current notion of an “annual event”. That is to say, we will develop ongoing processes along thematic priorities throughout the year, with various members taking the lead by thematic area, constituency, geography etc. to have multiple consultations and dialogues. These consultations and this preparatory work will create a boost in terms of content and expertise, but will also increase inputs by grassroots organizations and migrants, as well as ensure more diverse civil society representation.

3. The approach I have just mentioned can be combined with a certain reduction of the number of Civil Society participants, let's say from some 300 in Marrakech to 200-220 in Quito. A further reduction was not considered as acceptable by our Steering Committee. Diversity of representation, diversity of backgrounds, diversity of thematic priorities, as well as ensuring that civil society does not become monolithic, were considered as non-negotiable parameters, that are indeed part of both our DNA and credibility.
4. Civil society insists on diverse participation. We could identify hundreds of NGOs which can pay for their own participation, but most of these NGOs would be relatively big organizations, mainly based in Western countries. Those NGOs are indeed important, but we also need at the table grassroots and advocacy organizations from low-income countries, migrant-led NGOs, women-led NGOs, regional networks, youth representatives, trade unions, just to name a few.
5. There is an agreement that the Civil Society Chair should come from Latin America, taking into account not only the fact that the Summit will take place in that region, but also our own rotation policy, that ensures that all regions are fairly represented. There is also initial consultations at the regional level regarding the nomination of a potential chair.
6. Now a broad comment regarding the format and we will indeed elaborate in writing in the coming weeks. We will support initiatives which can make the Summit as interactive as possible. We would like to see Quito as an additional step towards making the GFMD truly multi-stakeholders. Let's indeed recognize that in the last seven-eight years we have seen the GFMD moving gradually into that direction. Something we must acknowledge. But again, interactivity should not be at the expense of substance and concrete outcomes.
7. Regarding the People's Global Action on Migration (PGA), its committee is currently debating its modalities for 2019.

Finally, and here I need to reiterate the call I made during our February 2019 Friends of the Forum meeting. We submitted to you a Civil Society budget, which is slightly lower than last year, in spite of the fact that flying to Quito is unfortunately and generally more expensive than flying to Marrakech. So, we have made all efforts to streamline our budget and save money. Switzerland, Germany, the UAE and Canada have confirmed that they will contribute. Our deepest gratitude to them. But, we are still a long way from reaching the minimum needed to ensure the participation of a diverse civil society. Civil society representatives from low-income countries must be in the room and we will need your financial support for that, but also for ensuring preparation, organizing and indeed substance in our discussions with governments and other stakeholders.

Thank you.