



Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Friends of the Forum

22 July 2020

Civil Society Statement

Let me start by expressing our gratitude to the United Arab Emirates and congratulate them for their strong leadership at an extremely difficult time - and when I say leadership, I mean true leadership. Converting, almost at the last minute, in person regional consultations into online events was an incredible challenge, technically, substantively, dynamic wise and in trying to accommodate everyone's wish list.

And this challenge has been met, which is – you will agree with me – a very, very notable achievement. Thank you to the UAE team; to the thematic leads – with their extraordinary patience, knowledge and capacity to mobilize energies; to the efficient and hardworking Support Unit; and to the innovative partnership-matching team. Between now and the next Friends of the Forum at the end of September, we will provide substantive comments regarding the regional consultations, with the many pluses and a few areas for improvement and to build on, that civil society has identified.

The regional consultations, which witnessed a collective and coherent engagement from the three mechanisms and international organizations, and perhaps a more cautious one from some governments, have reconfirmed that the success of the GFMD, among other things, lies in the level of preparation of the stakeholders, and in joint ownership and shared responsibility. The GFMD can only make a real contribution to global migration governance if we all do our homework and come up with innovative solutions, non-pre-cooked good practices, and concrete proposals to move forward. Precisely because the GFMD is an informal process taking place in a non-intimidating environment, we must take calculated risks. Without a bit of risk taking, the informality becomes a liability, rather than a big plus.

For the regional consultations, civil society had systematic, well-planned and inclusive preparatory sessions for each region (with at least two meetings per regional consultation, with dozens, sometimes hundreds, of participants, and representative steering groups in all regions, meeting several times). This collective, bottom-up process will continue until the Summit, where we hope to have around 250 well-prepared participants from a range of civil society organizations, selected through a democratic, inclusive and transparent process. Most, if not all, of the key civil society participants in the regional consultations processes will also carry our collective civil society process into the Summit.

Throughout the rest of the year, Civil Society will be supporting the thematic leads and the Government Co-Chairs to ensure that the thematic discussions are informed by the situation on the ground - made much worse by the pandemic; include the voices of migrants; are concrete and solution oriented; and help build trust between all stakeholders and migrants. The pandemic has put a disproportionate emphasis, for mainly good but also for very bad reasons, on border control and closure, lockdowns and collective security. An approach which predates the COVID-19 crisis, but which was amplified and somehow distorted by the pandemic. This security focus combined with the millions of jobs destroyed, and the lives lost, are a terrible legacy. The only way out is trust, working together and partnership.

Partnership is the keystone of this year's GFMD, rendered even more important by the ravages of the COVID-19 crisis. Our collective responsibility is today an absolute necessity. And a possible failure would be totally unacceptable, and morally and institutionally wrong. We have already had a good discussion about partnership, with concrete examples, good practice and a strong call for robust financing. This is positive, but not sufficient. Partnership is much more than good joint projects or programmes. It is more than working together. It is about joint responsibility and transparency. It is about broad and inclusive stakeholder consultations, focusing on rights-based policies.

Partnership is, above all, about starting to address difficult issues, issues where there may not be initial consensus. Today a lack of true dialogue and joint engagement would be profoundly damaging for all, indeed for migrants and host communities, but also for all of us. Our credibility is at stake and being inclusive at all stages of the crisis will be the real test. Millions of migrants have lost and are losing their jobs, and many of them are not even receiving their salaries and benefits; millions are not having access to basic services, including free Covid-19 tests and treatments; violence against women migrant workers and women in general has increased exponentially, and youth, already discriminated on the labor market, will be three times more at risk of not finding a job than people over 25. Those are the real issues, and the GFMD cannot ignore them if it wants to remain relevant.

I would also like to draw your attention to the People's Global Action on Migration and Human Rights (PGA), a self-organized and self-convened civil society space that has accompanied the GFMD from the beginning. The PGA has been a crucial platform for global civil society to come together every year before the GFMD to prepare and exchange ideas, strategies and learnings. With the GFMD becoming truly multi-stakeholder, it has become more important than ever to facilitate and support the coming together of civil society under the banner of the PGA. This year, the PGA has started an online process to prepare for the January 2021 Summit, and updates will be available before the next meeting of the Friends of the Forum. In this regard, the civil society mechanism hopes for your continued support for a PGA 2020.

Finally, I would like to briefly present our Civil Society budget. Like in previous years it is around 685'000 US\$ and it is very similar to last year's. It includes financially supporting the participation of about 90+ Civil Society delegates from developing countries, women and migrant leaders, as well as all the staff and administrative costs to coordinate Civil Society activities during the year, including the transparent and inclusive selection of our

participants (we can expect, like last year, more than 1500 applications, meeting all the selection criteria). Our budget, you will see, is a rather conservative and cautious one.

As I speak, and if we include the existing contributions or pledges from Germany, the UAE, Switzerland and Canada, we do have around 78 % of our budget covered. It is very good and I indeed would like to express my deepest gratitude to the four governments just mentioned. But not being able to raise the additional 140'000 US\$ would have two major consequences. Firstly, we would have to significantly reduce the number of sponsored participants, also impacting at the same time diversity and inclusiveness. Secondly, the Coordinating Office, ICMC, would have an operating deficit for the third consecutive year, something which we absolutely cannot afford, and which could put at risk our long-term ability to mobilize and coordinate Civil Society. Any contribution in any form (earmarked or not earmarked) and at any level would be appreciated.

Thank you