

## GFMD 2020 – United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) contributions to the regional consultations

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- On behalf of CSOs in the GFMD process -

Thank you Your excellencies and fellow speakers. We thank the UAE government in taking the initiative to organise this meeting. Thank you too for the opportunity to speak on behalf of civil society.

In preparation for the GFMD regional meetings, Migrant Forum in asia in partnership with other regional networks like APRRN, Solidarity Centre, Lawyers beyond borders, CCRM and others organised a meeting in Bangkok in Feb 2020 and because lockdowns in several countries prevented face to face meetings, several online meetings were organised in the past few months. The output of the meeting was on the current practices and regulations in countries of origin and destination with regard to the thematic areas, including participation and partnership.

For today's presentation I will be focusing on Participation of stakeholders in international and Regional consultative processes and partnerships amongst governments in countries of origins and destination. These are outputs from the meetings I mentioned earlier.

### Participations

1. CSOs, migrant communities and trade union participation in regional and international processes such as GFMD, Abu Dhabi Dialogue, ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour, Colombo Process amongst others are crucial as we are able to provide an "on the ground perspective" to governments. Its is important ad beneficial for hosting governments to extend the participation of CSOs, migrant communities and trade unions to contribute to the discussion at these processes. Eg Side events may be organized with regional governments and regional CSO's for network building and for a more indepth discussion to take place.
2. Organising Regional meetings amongst stakeholders involving CSOs in various regions running up to main consultation is another way of bringing the different regional perspectives to the table. And this is a process currently being practised by the csos in preparation to the regional consultative processes.
3. **Monitoring systems** for global and regional discussions should be transparent and conducted through non-governmental or similar agencies as compared to 'self-reporting' techniques which are mostly voluntary and general in nature.
4. Civil society have been critical of MOUs – always done without consultations of all stakeholders including employer representatives. It lacks

transparency, implementation and accountability. Governments should prioritize the necessity of including policy-level decisions on conventions, mechanisms and specific migrant worker rights and protections **within bilateral agreements and MoUs**. It will be necessary to include all stakeholders employer groups, trade union, CSO and where there exists National Human Rights Institutions in the discussions of the agreements to be truly effective in addressing and protecting migrants rights.

5. Nationally, In order to **maximize CSO involvement in RCPs**, CSO networks must endeavour to create awareness, networking with government agencies at the country level. For this Governments must pave the way for institutionalising such consultation.

## Partnership

1. Partnerships between countries on data sharing of migration. COOs and CODS Governments must work together to develop and institutionalise nuanced understanding in the identification of irregular migrants including the recruitment/trafficking process of migrants and asylum seekers. Trafficking and irregular migration are highly linked and cannot be separate into watertight compartments. Eg Governments discriminatory policies on age limitations and family background for women to migrate only fuel trafficking and irregular migration. Despite bans and other reactionary measures, irregular migration continue to occur at a large-scale.

Another area where partnership is crucial is Regularisation pathways and addressing challenges of irregular migration.

1. Opening up and investing in regularization programs that focusses on the need for greater mobility and flexibility in the labor market and that offer workers protection is key. This includes safe entry and exit systems, redefining asylum, decriminalizing irregular migrants, and changing public narratives on irregular migrants. Migrants migrating through irregular channels or migrants becoming undocumented points to states failure in implementing and monitoring its migration systems. It cannot be seen as the primary fault of the migrant.
2. During the pandemic we saw many sectors being classified as essential sectors needed for the economy to run which included the informal sector. Here's an opportunity for governments to look at formalizing informal work and allowing people to claim regular status.
3. In respect of the coronavirus pandemic, we observe increased securitization and **militarization of borders**. We have seen countries shutting their borders even to migrants who have valid travel documents. And country of origins requiring its nationals to undergo expensive covid testing in countries of destination before returning, a cost that the migrant has to shoulder. This again will increase the vulnerability of the migrants and irregular migration. As for refugees, States should not close its borders to asylum seekers and

deprive refugees the right to work and live in dignity especially when these States continue to do businesses with the same refugee producing countries.

4. In response to the covid 19 pandemic, Countries of destination have sought to strengthen existing labour force through **localisation/nationalisation** measures as well as cutting down on intake and retention of migrant labour or closing subsectors which were once migrant reliant. Countries that primarily depend on remittances and actively promote migration of their nationals are going to have a tough time negotiating safer recruitment and labour policies with countries of destinations. If employment opportunities are not created in tandem with the needs of returnee migrants, we may well see returnee migrants remigrating, if not regularly then irregularly.
5. Additionally Government of country of origins may look at integration and employment at home for returnee migrants but must also monitor migration through irregular channels.

My final point

6. Country of destinations need to look at reforming its hardline policies. Eg easing restrictions to allow migrants to change employer and employment. Where countries have closed borders and have large number of undocumented workers, this is an opportunity to allow undocumented migrants to return home without imposing penalties and detention or opening up opportunities for regularisation of undocumented workers.

## Technology platform

CSOs welcome technology platforms as it has the capacity to address major challenges such as accountability and increasing costs of migration and access to information. However, a large number of migrants are unable to access these platforms due to poor connectivity, illiteracy etc

Specific suggestions:

1. Ensure access to technology platforms for migrants, especially the most vulnerable regardless of their migrant status.
2. To address the root causes such as illiteracy and outreach, develop voice-based and offline access to the mobile application.
3. Develop technology platforms to promote networking and organisation of collective voices among migrants.
4. Introduce multi-stakeholder partnership in developing digital platform to improve the accountability and transparency involving civils society and migrant communities.
5. The digital platforms should be equipped with facilities to store the important documents on the migrant's job contract, copies of passport, visa, insurance etc.