

Meeting of the Friends of the Forum
5 February 2015, Geneva
Agenda items 3 and 8

Report of Civil Society Activities

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*As prepared for delivery;
referenced Civil society documents available
at www.gfmdcivilsociety.org*

***Mr. Secretary Haque, Deputy Director Altuğ, Special Representative Sutherland,
partners:***

Together with the International Steering Committee of civil society for the GFMD, ICMC is happy to be working with you towards this “transformative migration agenda” this year. We congratulate the Chair for that approach in the Concept paper that has been drafted for this year, and appreciate once again the invitation both to offer feedback on it, and to construct a civil society programme that interacts with your focus productively.

As many of you know, **the civil society component of the GFMD brings together representatives of NGOs, migrant and diaspora groups, trade unions, academia and a small number of private sector actors** in activities that connect before, during and after the big week of the GFMD summit meetings. Since 2011, ICMC’s small GFMD Coordinating office has worked to organize many of those activities at international, regional and national levels, together with an International Steering Committee of about 30 civil society organizations that are leaders in migration and development policy-making and practice worldwide. Like you in your planning of the government programme, we together identify a thematic focus for civil society during the year, a set of civil society activities, including consultations with a growing number of national governments, our participation with you in the preparatory meetings in your workplan, and our own two days of Civil Society meetings and Common Space with you during the summit meetings. We do that work throughout the year in close partnership with the Chair and troika, other government partners and international organizations.



Agenda Item 3: Snapshot of civil society results from GFMD 2015

A record number of civil society delegates participated at the Global Forum in Istanbul a few months ago: 225, from 80 countries; half representing organizations led by migrants or migrant

diaspora, and 50 each from Africa and Asia. The largest number were human rights NGOs, followed by development NGOs and migrant associations. In addition there were 24 government representatives participating and about 100 observers from regional and international organizations.

Meeting around the theme of *Achieving Migration and Development Goals*, we were happy to once again center the Civil Society Days on the points in the *5 year 8 point plan* that civil society committed to in the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD) at the UN General Assembly in 2013. In our programme in Istanbul, we spent 7 hours each on four tracks of issues: [1] development, including moving the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into indicators and implementation, and pursuing development solutions for forced migrants; [2] protecting migrants on the move in crises and transit [3] protecting the rights of migrant workers, in recruitment and in employment, and [4] migrant and diaspora action for job creation, social inclusion and social entrepreneurship.

The working sessions produced a set of 10 recommendations, with examples of practice and partnership and with benchmarks for action. *A brief report on the civil society programme and these recommendations is on the table at the side of the room and at www.gfmdcivilsociety.org.*

We were happy at a number of “firsts” this year, among them:

- In order to increase discussion and focus, **we expanded from three to four the number of parallel working sessions.**
- We **spent 3 ½ hours on the subject of forced migration**, very glad that the government programme had picked up that theme for the first time in the GFMD last year. Like you in your roundtable 3.1 there, we were clear to focus not on protection and the traditional “durable” solutions for refugees and other forced migrants but on *development* solutions—and development *alternatives*—to forced migration, specifically livelihoods and education. These are development approaches to forced migration that no other international organization or process has yet put much time into but have started to signal is desperately needed.
- We **appointed a Women Rapporteur and a Child rapporteur** to report back from all of the working sessions how issues relevant to women and to children were brought forward, with recommendations.
- We **presented the results of the independent assessment** that we had asked the Maastricht University Graduate School of Governance to conduct of our own progress in civil society on achieving the 8 points in the 5 year plan, as 2015 was “Year 2” of the “5 years” for that plan. Among the key findings:
 - There is general acceptance of the Plan of Action, but a widely identified omission is discrimination and xenophobia. In fact, a number of regional and national civil society consultations last year saw xenophobia and discrimination as problems that actually underlie almost all of the issues before us. So much so that many in civil society say that fighting xenophobia makes our 5 year 8 point plan a “*5 year 8 point-plus*” plan. We are happy to see your Concept Paper pick that theme up in roundtable 2.1.
 - Some of the points in civil society’s “5 year 8 point plan-plus” are progressing more than others.

- The most visible progress has been on Point 1 (migrants and migration in the new SDGs), Point 3 (protecting migrants in crisis and transit) and Point 7 (recruitment).
- Point 2 (diaspora and development) and Point 4 (protection of children and women and children) are moving, but at times more in policy than in practice.
- Points 5 + 6 (on migration governance at national and global levels) have not attracted the same level of engagement from civil society.
- Finally, reflecting our growing sense that civil society and governments are able to work *together* on these matters not only everyday on the ground around the world but also in the GFMD now, we were **happy to invite the governments of Bangladesh, Sweden and Switzerland to join us directly as panelists** in the Civil Society Days working session on the SDGs, and Turkey and Germany in the plenaries. We were also glad to once again host a small number of breakfast tables and national consultations that brought together civil society leaders and some 15 governments in 60-90 minute conversations on the morning just before Common Space.

As always we asked **participants in the Civil Society Days to formally evaluate the programme. Half of the delegates did**—most quite positively, with two exceptions. First, many said that Common Space this past year was much too crowded—both with speakers and at times competing side events. Second, many said that beyond the format of Common Space, civil society interaction directly with governments within the Global Forum was so important—and so productive—that it was time to take the next step and bring into the Global Forum the model of civil society participation in government roundtables that was so successfully used in the High-level Dialogue in 2013. That is, having two civil society representatives bring directly to the government tables the specific recommendations and partnerships that civil society has just discussed on that same roundtable theme in the Civil Society programme the preceding days. *A brief summary of the evaluations is on the side tables and at www.gfmdcivilsociety.org.*

We recognize and **thank the governments and other donors** whose financial contributions helped to secure civil society's place at the GFMD table this past year, with a large percentage going to support the participation of civil society delegates from developing states and small budget organizations: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, the European Union, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and ICMC. Thank you so much.

Agenda Item 8: Civil society process for this year's GFMD

So where are we going with the civil society focus this year?

We have had not one, not three but **seven meetings of the International civil society Steering Committee since the GFMD Civil Society Days in Istanbul**, including four meetings of the new "Core Group" of civil society leaders. This is the first time we have ever continued after a GFMD summit week without any pause at all. Why do I mention that? It indicates a fresh seriousness, a deeper urgency and the value that we see in the GFMD work that we do with you. And honestly this insistence has come not so much from ICMC as from our partners in civil society: the diverse set of us across every region.

As always, civil society usually begins developing **our own Concept paper** and focuses immediately after your Concept paper comes out. But in these recent meetings of ours, **here are the focuses**

that we are already considering for central attention this year. In each, we very much see in the unanimous government adoption of the new SDGs that it is not just civil society but governments that have expressed strong will to move in these directions:

- global governance and local governance
- xenophobia
- protection of migrant workers and migrants on the move
- a more direct, real-world and solution-oriented look at the grim side of so much migration today—that is, not just positive, *transformative* agendas but *deformative* agendas of over-enforcement, development failures and weak governance that feed forced migration, human trafficking and abuse in so many countries

For our workplan this year, there is **undivided consensus among civil society actors on these elements:**

1. more direct engagement with governments
2. before, during and after the GFMD summit meetings
3. linking civil society inside and outside these organized processes
4. in the regions and nationally, not just in international settings
5. with emphatic multi- year planning that takes civil society's "5 year 8 point-plus" plan to achieve real change through these next three GFMD's and the High-level Dialogue in 2019.

In fact, multi-year is now: it's this year, looking—even before the GFMD in December—towards the extraordinary summit on refugees and migrants at the UN General Assembly 19 September, for which ICMC may have a formal role organizing civil society, like for the HLD in 2013.

Within the next two weeks, **we will send to all Friends of the Forum our 12 month budget for the year**, with an appreciation for contributions that the Chair and a number of your governments make to support civil society's role in this GFMD work. We expect this year's budget to be in the area of USD \$ 840,000—all costs reflected, and just a fraction higher than our budgets these past three GFMDs. The largest expense is for supporting delegates from low-income countries and NGOs. We have already raised about 1/3rd of that amount. As you may recall, we have been able to breakeven on our budgets each of the past 5 years, with cost controls important. But sensing that fundraising may be more difficult this year, we have quite some work ahead of us. Thank you for again considering support that may be possible for this.

As always, on behalf of ICMC, I promise you, everyone, honesty, I hope humility, and as our civil society Chair put it in his report to you in Istanbul, "gentle optimism and fierce determination" in all this work with you this year.

/Thank you.