



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



Meeting Report of Ambassadors and Representatives of African Embassies in Addis Ababa and the Co-Facilitators of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Introduction

A consultative meeting on migration was held in Addis Ababa on 22 June 2018, ahead of the final round of negotiations for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular on Migration, to be held from 9 to 13 July 2018. The meeting brought together the two co-facilitators of the Global Compact, namely, the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, Jürg Lauber, and the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Gómez Camacho; the Special Representative for International Migration, Louise Arbour; ambassadors and representatives of African States; and representatives of the High-level Panel on Migration for Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The main objectives of the consultative meeting, which was held in a plenary format, were the following:

- (a) To provide an opportunity for the co-facilitators to brief the ambassadors and representatives of African States on the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations on the Global Compact;
- (b) To provide a platform for the co-facilitators and the ambassadors and representatives to exchange information on the perspectives and realities regarding migration in Africa;
- (c) To provide a forum for participants to discuss and provide input to relevant areas of the Global Compact.

Session 1: opening remarks

The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA for Knowledge Delivery, Giovannie Biha pointed out that Africa's narrative and priorities should be adequately reflected in the Global Compact on the basis of evidence that, contrary to other narratives, intra-African migration dominated African migrant flows. She was proud to report that the African Union Commission, ECA and IOM had collaborated on the previous phases of development of the Global Compact and would continue to do so until its adoption. She added that Africa's continued input had been anchored to the African Common Position and the outcome document of the regional consultations.

The African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs, Amira Elfadil, stated that she wished to align the Commission with the position taken by the African group of negotiators led by Comoros during the intergovernmental negotiations in New York. She thanked the African Union member States for speaking with one voice at the global discussions and in the spirit of the African Common Position. She also emphasized the need for the international community to continue to demonstrate its commitment to the shared obligation to address the immediate safety and human rights of all migrants within their borders.

The Chief of Mission in Ethiopia for IOM and representative to the African Union Commission, ECA and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Maureen Achieng, indicated that, while there was convergence around the vision and guiding principles of the Global

Compact, there remained a lack of consensus on a number of important areas such as the issuance of identification cards, access to services regardless of status and regularization.

Two members of the High-level Panel on Migration, Almaz Negash and Danisa Baloyi, briefed participants on the work done by the Panel in its mandate to come up with recommendations on how African Governments could build and sustain broad political consensus on an implementable international migration agenda.

For his part, Mr. Gómez informed participants that the biggest challenge when the process had begun was how to demystify migration and move the discussions and negotiations from prejudices to evidence and from perception to figures. One of the expected outcomes of the consultations and negotiations, he said, was a new narrative about migration, one not based on fear, poor politics, demagoguery or prejudices, but rather on evidence.

Mr. Lauber commended Africa for its united approach to the negotiations. The role that Africa had played in the process and how important it was to have a close link between the African group in New York and the teams in Africa (i.e., the African Union Commission, ECA and IOM) could not be stressed enough. He said that it would not be possible to be at the current stage in the process had it not been for the contributions of the regions, especially Africa.

Ms. Arbour reminded stakeholders that the Global Compact was framed in line with target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and that it was something that the Secretary-General supported enthusiastically, especially given that it was a members State-driven process.

Commenting on related developments on the continent, the Executive Secretary of ECA, Vera Songwe, observed that the concreteness of the discussions at the consultative meeting were already being taken forward in Africa with the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the African Union Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons. She noted that there was real action on the continent, adding that more than the current 26 African countries would soon sign the Protocol and that there would be clarity on how to integrate the African perspective into the overall implementation of the Global Compact. She said that, for Africa, the meeting served as a migratory aspiration at a global level to secure implementation and to promote effective mechanisms that could support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and become tools of empowerment to comply with Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

Session 2: briefing on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Mr. Gómez shared his experience of facilitating the intergovernmental consultations and negotiations leading to the adoption of the Global Compact. First, he highlighted a key concept behind the Global Compact: non-biased objective analysis, namely, moving the discussions from prejudice to evidence and from perception to figures. Second, he emphasized the importance of seeing the big picture and viewing the 23 objectives contained in the Global Compact as an undivided whole. Lastly, when speaking of the follow-up to the negotiations, he pointed to the fact that international migration issues should not be viewed as a zero-sum game. Instead, cooperation was the only way to achieve an effective and successful outcome.

Echoing his colleague, Mr. Lauber emphasized that it was a historic moment to engage with all the stakeholders to tackle the global challenges of international migration. He added that the African countries had played a profound and constructive role in the adoption of Global Compact and that the current iteration of the Global Compact document would not be where it was without the contributions of the African group.

Ms. Arbour mentioned that the Secretary-General, along with the 20 United Nations agencies in the Global Migration Group, were enthusiastic in their support for the Global Compact. In addition, she argued that the term “economic migrants” did not capture the complexity of the challenges that the world was facing. Instead of oversimplifying the migration issues, the world should explore ways of defining and fully understanding the new concepts and perspectives of development and human security.

The representative of the African group and Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations, Yanit Abera Habtemariam, spoke highly of the adoption of the Global Compact. She also mentioned, however, the challenges that African countries were facing, such as weak links to the global compact on refugees, climate-induced migration in Africa, a clear definition of regular or irregular migration and the vague distinction between refugees and migrants.

Session 3: perspectives on migration in Africa

Another member of the High-level Panel on Migration, Danisa Eileen Baloyi, began by extending warm greetings from the Chair of the Panel, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who could not attend. She said that migration had been a topical issue in the past decade and occupied a strategic place in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which presented a great opportunity for global migration governance. It was also a big responsibility, given that stakeholders aimed to be “influencers” at the national, regional and global levels. She added that the Panel was grateful to ECA, IOM and the African Union Commission, which had been strongly supportive of Africa in adopting a holistic migration policy approach. The Panel was established in April 2016 at the ninth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in Addis Ababa. In respect of that mandate, Ms. Sirleaf constituted the Panel in Monrovia on 6 June 2017.

Ms. Baloyi said that human mobility and migration could be a catalyst for positive change and development. Accordingly, the role and responsibility of the High-level Panel on Migration was to enhance the production of migration-related knowledge to support the formulation of evidence-based policies; raise the awareness of policymakers to integrate migration into national plans and strategies; and propose and advocate policies and mobilize support for practices that promoted international migration for the development of Africa. Among other things, and in line with the aforementioned thematic areas, the Panel was also specifically focused on addressing how migration, specifically intraregional migration in Africa, considering that intra-Africa migration was the dominant feature of the African migration experience, could reduce unemployment and underemployment, contribute to poverty reduction and, with the appropriate supportive policies, foster broader economic and social development.

Ms. Baloyi added that the High-level Panel on Migration recognized that migration could result in the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology and have a considerable positive impact on productivity and economic growth. Henceforth, the Panel intended to mobilize the political will of African Governments at the highest level to realize the potential that migrants could have in contributing to development, while safeguarding their rights. The Panel therefore represented a significant step in the right direction, given that it would help to define a realistic and accurate understanding of migration and that it would require action on the part of Heads of State to handle the issue responsibly and effectively.

Ms. Baloyi concluded her remarks by thanking the meeting participants for dedicating themselves to the common commitment to make migration work for all. She said that it was a political necessity, an economic imperative and a matter of human rights.

In her presentation, another member of the High-level Panel on Migration, Almaz Negash, highlighted substantive issues that had emanated from the previous meeting of the Panel, in Geneva in May 2018. She said that, although African migration was portrayed as an uncontrollable crisis, it was not substantially different from other regions in terms of causes, levels and trends. She added that African migrants attracted disproportionate media attention because of the risky nature of migration and the tragic outcomes, with the loss of lives, adding that maritime journeys such as those across the Mediterranean represented only a minority of migration. The long-term trend showed that the majority of Africans migrated within the continent. In 2015, most African migrants originated from countries within the same subregion, with the proportion migrating within West Africa approaching 70 per cent. Furthermore, most Africans living outside the continent were not from the poorest sections of their societies of origin. Countries with relatively higher levels of economic and human development, such as Algeria, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia, tended to have comparatively higher emigration rates outside the continent than poorer countries. Migrants tended to be young (mostly between 15 and 40 years of age), men and with some education beyond primary school.

Given that Africa was the youngest continent in the world, with half the population under 18 years of age, while Europe was ageing, there would be a natural flow of population as young, educated people from Africa reaching Europe in search of employment. The Global Compact was aimed at ensuring that such migration was safe, regular and orderly. African member States, with the technical support of the High-level Panel on Migration, had spoken with one voice during the

various rounds of deliberations on the Global Compact. With its negotiations reaching a conclusion, the current need was to support the implementation of the key elements of the Global Compact in African member States. In that regard, the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons were key for regional integration and labour mobility on the continent.

The deliberations of the High-level Panel on Migration had also underscored the need for robust, reliable and regular data to strengthen the evidence base to support effective policy formulation and implementation and to develop a positive narrative on migration. The Panel was committed to mobilizing a broad range of stakeholders, including Heads of State, in support of policies to make migration safe, orderly, and regular and based on the core principle that migration should be out of choice rather than because of need or force.

Session 4: African ambassadors and representatives

Questions and remarks by African ambassadors and representatives

The representative of Zimbabwe thanked ECA for organizing the forum. The representative stated that a strong review and follow-up mechanism was key for the effective implementation of the Global Compact and requested the co-facilitators to advise on innovative ways of funding to implement it. In addition, the representative stated that political will was very important to effectively implement the Global Compact.

The Togolese delegate mentioned that the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants represented the political will of world leaders to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale. In that regard, he noted that the Global Compact was expected to clearly outline how each country would implement the commitments contained therein. He also stated that is the Global Compact was a non-legally binding, cooperative framework that built on previous commitments of member States. He added, however, that its effective implementation was crucial for member States. There should therefore be an instrument or a guideline to ensure effective implementation.

Member State also said that, through the African Common Position, Africa had expressed concern on ways to support refugee-hosting countries, given that the continent had some 6 million refugees. In that regard, a member State representative highlighted that that had to be taken into account in the Global Compact because that required immense support to countries that hosted refugees. The representative also stated that Africa had 12 million internally displaced persons, and the Global Compact must therefore take them into account. The representative requested that the co-facilitators deliberate on that issue further.

The representative of Ethiopia highlighted that, to ensure the effective implementation of the Global Compact, an intergovernmental follow-up mechanism was mandatory, and requested that the co-facilitators focus on raising the awareness of the Global Compact in order to ensure political buy-in by Governments, given that it was a non-legally binding instrument. She also requested that the co-facilitators elaborate on how the impact of natural disasters, such as climate change, on human movements would be reinforced in the Global Compact's commitments.

A representative from Nigeria noted that migration had the potential to make a significant contribution to economic growth and human development in Africa and that States should work to ensure that Africa's narratives and priorities were adequately reflected in the Global Compact and to dispel any myths. The representative added, along with the one from Burundi, that migration was inevitable and that the Global Compact should be used to address the root causes of migration such as political stability and illicit financial flows to tackle economic deprivation and related social ills. The representative from Nigeria asked what the concerns of the European Union had been regarding the Global Compact.

The representative of Liberia said that no State could effectively address migration on its own, owing to the inherently transnational nature of the phenomenon, adding that the Global Compact in that regard should facilitate international, regional and bilateral cooperation and dialogue, given that it could work only if there was ownership and joint implementation.

The representative of Namibia noted that the Global Compact should address raising the awareness among young people as a key commitment to enable them to take informed decisions about migration and to empower young migrants to better protect their rights.

Remarks and responses of the co-facilitators

Mr. Gómez stated that the Global Compact would be invaluable, in that it would promote the positive effects of migration and manage its negative repercussions. He mentioned that its outcome would depend on the relevance of data and the individual subregional cases, which could make a significant contribution to a better understanding of the migration process and its associated problems.

He said that the Global Compact would be used to address the root cause of migration through an exploration of context-specific causes in order to be able to offer assistance and create effective policies for mitigating the negative impact that migration had on those migrants whose rights had been violated. He also emphasized that the barriers that restricted the freedoms of irregular migrants, such as those who were denied the most basic services or even feared the justice system because of their migratory status, would be lifted through the Global Compact. A human rights approach would be given a central place in the Global Compact, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable people. He said that the Global Compact would also be used to address situations of vulnerability by calling upon States to lift barriers to access to health, justice, education and information.

He stated that countries had agreed that irregular migrants should be accorded basic human rights, especially the right to health care. He also emphasized that that commitment was meant not only for rich, developed countries, but also for all countries to fulfil, including middle-income and low-income ones.

He underscored that the Global Compact would provide all migrant workers engaged in remunerated labour with the same rights and protections that were extended to all workers, in particular by ensuring that migrants could exercise their rights to just and favourable conditions of work, to be free from servitude or forced or compulsory labour and to have the highest attainable standard of health, including establishing firewalls with labour inspections in cases of exploitation.

With regard to follow-up and review, Mr. Lauber said that the Global Compact recognized a large number of platforms at the regional and global levels. The Global Compact would therefore utilize the international migration review forum as a global forum, in which States and stakeholders convened once every four years to report on progress made, share good practices and set more goals for themselves. The forum would periodically receive an independent global progress report, prepared by the United Nations on the basis of an agreed set of indicators.

He added that a regional forum would be organized in which States and stakeholders would regularly assemble to discuss progress on region-specific priorities and commitments, informed by regional progress reports prepared by the relevant regional body, such as ECA in Africa. He mentioned that follow-up and review would include assessments to comprehend specificities, which would be a whole-of-government and whole-of-society assessment of country capacities and gaps and help authorities to incorporate their findings into national strategies, which would also assist in leveraging/unlocking international financial assistance.

He underscored the importance of the flexibility of the follow-up and review system of the Global Compact, in that it would utilize an already existing platform that had been tested for effectiveness and did not contain bureaucracies and long reporting periods (i.e., the international migration review forum). He emphasized that the platform would allow seed financing and that there would not be new funding systems. Instead, voluntary funding instruments would be organized on a non-legally binding basis.

He noted that, given the relevance and urgency of the Global Compact, it would be better if it were a non-legally binding instrument, considering the nature of the migration crisis. He added that the Global Compact required political will. It was therefore all the more important to view it as the beginning of a longer-term process towards a progressive international migration agenda. He said that part of the solution should be to equip the Global Compact with a dedicated follow-up and review mechanism that could keep States engaged and potentially generate increasingly commitments over time.

He said that, while the term “internally displaced persons” was not included in the Global Compact, it and the Global Compact on Refugees would jointly address them. He mentioned that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration had been used to examine the drivers of migration, with a view to identifying ways and means to better manage international migration by facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration and ways of reducing the factors that encouraged, often out of necessity, unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration.

He emphasized that the primary focus of the Global Compact was not to stop migration, but rather to reduce the adverse factors that motivated people to move out of unsafe, often desperate and dangerous conditions. Among the factors behind migration were crises, both natural and man-made. In order to promote voluntary, safe, orderly, and regular migration, the Global Compact would therefore be used to commit States to enhancing the use of humanitarian protection measures for displaced persons and to implementing measures, programmes and financial support to facilitate migration with dignity and empower governments, local civil society organizations and affected communities to address the drivers of displacement and forced migration.

Accordingly, he noted that the Global Compact would be guided by the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

With regard to innovative ways of financing the Global Compact, Mr. Gómez noted that there needed to be further deliberations to create a well-financed capacity-building framework to facilitate the implementation of State commitments and a follow-up and review system. In that regard, he noted that development should be viewed as a business by the private sector and that migration should be placed at the centre of private sector business efforts.

Remarks by the Special Representative for International Migration

Ms. Arbour stated that the average cost of remittances was 7.5 (i.e., it would cost \$7.5 to send \$100 to an African country), wherein a large proportion of those remittances was going into large financial banks. To some extent, the Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals were being used to attempt to address that. She mentioned that the Global Compact contained calls to reduce the cost of transfer of remittances so as to increase their net benefit. In that context, she stated that a large part of that cost was attributable to oversight obligations, so-called de-risking policies imposed on financial institutions as part of efforts to combat money-laundering and financing for security. While it was unclear how effective such oversight had been in the case of regular private transfers of very small sums of money, the Global Compact should be used to ensure that de-risking policies did not create unnecessary barriers to the continued flow of remittances across borders or for migrants to gain access to banking services in the first place, as agreed to in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Way forward, planning and implementation

Policy coherence

Given the prevalence of international and regional development agendas, it would be critical for member States to incorporate the Global Compact, in line with their national priorities, and draw from synergies between the agendas.

Multisectoral and multi-country responses

There should be a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach, namely, concerted efforts at the global, regional, national, and subnational levels, including a coherent United Nations system with governmental, intergovernmental, private sector and other stakeholder involvement. It was highlighted that relevant entities in each region, such as ECA in Africa, would facilitate such implementation appropriately.

Political will

Strong leadership and domestic commitment to the Global Compact and related international and regional agendas by mainstreaming migration into national plans would be critical for implementation.

Follow-up and review

The existing high-level dialogue should be repurposed, which would meet every four years as the International Migration Review Forum, with progress statements and specific measures that would further strengthen the global governance of international migration. Such a forum would also envision setting up region-specific forums, which would also meet every four years.

Final remarks

Mr. Gómez spoke about having a strategic follow-up and review scheme and a robust tracking of progress. He added that a robust tracking system would capture the meaning of migration to produce the intended results and build on a common position on the migration issue instead of a gathering several documents and reports. Furthermore, he mentioned the crucial conceptual importance of migration terms, which needed to have special consideration for the specific requirements of vulnerable individuals. In that sense, the concepts of “not sending back” and “refugees no more” were essential to differentiate and understand the specific distinction between the concepts of migrant or refugee. In addition to establishing basic requirements in terms of human rights, the fundamental point was that even irregular migrants should have basic human rights (e.g., access to health, education and the law), especially in emergency situations. Member States and governments should therefore determine whether they could meet that basic requirements for human rights.

With regard to international financing flows, Mr. Gómez mentioned that more innovative schemes to finance development were required. He added that that the problem was not money or liquidity, but rather how to secure money to finance sustainable development. Having the private sector be part of a legitimate system remained a challenge that, if addressed, could become an opportunity to attract external mechanisms for financing by having business models to promote development.

Regarding climate change, its importance as a crucial factor that had an impact on the migration process was acknowledged.

The Ambassador of Morocco to Ethiopia, who moderated the discussion, spoke highly of investing in human capital and of understanding migration as the movement of that capital, with a view to making the population, including migrants, safe, secure and healthy. Member States should therefore take on such a challenge with responsibility to reach common ground.

The Director of the Social Development Policy Division at ECA, Thokozile Ruzvidzo, closed the session by mentioning the importance of having not only a global discussion, but also a single voice for Africa, which was possible only given the partnership of the African group. She acknowledged that the consultative meeting represented an opportunity to meet and work together towards making migration safe, orderly and regular, and that, through the discussions contained therein, information and insights had been represented and shared among members. Lastly, she said that, on the basis of the critical issues and messages that had been raised and brought to attention, a report would be issued that would keep member States informed of the challenges in addressing the issues of migration and the opportunities to address them.