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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Regional Consultation on International Migration in the Arab Region  
In preparation for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration  
Beirut, 26–27 September 2017

## Information note

### I. BACKGROUND

In September 2016, the United Nations held a High-Level Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants at the General Assembly in New York. The New York Declaration, which was adopted as the outcome of this Summit, committed Member States to “launching ... a process of intergovernmental negotiations leading to the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration at an intergovernmental conference to be held in 2018” (para. 63).

This commitment builds on a decade of international dialogue on migration issues, both within the United Nations framework through the two High-Level Dialogues on International Migration and Development held in 2006 and 2013, or through the State-led, voluntary and non-binding Global Forum on Migration and Development, held annually since 2007.

It also builds on the adoption by the United Nations Member States of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which, inter alia, calls for Member States to “[f]acilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals), as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which also commits Member States to “cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, with full respect for human rights” and “to increase cooperation on access to and portability of earned benefits, enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills, lower the costs of recruitment for migrants and combat unscrupulous recruiters” (para. 111). It further builds on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and its recommendations concerning measures to mitigate risks associated with disasters, as well as on the Paris Agreement of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) will help Member States to achieve these commitments by setting out “a range of principles, commitments and understandings among Member States regarding international migration in all its dimensions. It would make an important contribution to global governance and enhance coordination on international migration. It would present a framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migrants and human mobility”, including actionable commitments and a framework for follow-up to guide comprehensive action and international cooperation. “It would deal with all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, developmental, human rights-related and other aspects of migration” (New York Declaration, Annex II, para. 2).

## **II. REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION**

### **A. FOCUS OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION**

In accordance with the General Assembly Resolution A/71/280 on the modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration\*, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the League of Arab States (LAS), and in collaboration with the United Nations agency members of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, will organize a regional consultation in preparation for the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

The consultation will take place at the United Nations House in Beirut on 26 and 27 September 2017, and will bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including high-level representatives of Arab governments, international and regional organizations, representatives of civil society networks, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, experts and academia.

### **B. OBJECTIVE OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION**

The consultation will provide an opportunity to:

- Enhance Member States' and other stakeholders' awareness of the global process leading to the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;
- Discuss key migration issues, priorities and challenges in the Arab region, which Member States would like to see considered in the Global Compact negotiations; and
- Build a common understanding of the importance of the Global Compact as a framework to address the Arab region's and Arab countries' priorities in the area of international migration.

### **C. PROGRAMME OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION**

The consultation will address the six thematic areas highlighted in the General Assembly Resolution A/71/280 on the modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and are being discussed in global informal thematic sessions.

The consultation will start with a scene-setting session that focuses on:

- The New York Declaration and the Global Compact on Migration and its relation with other global initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and
- The synergies with other regional processes such as the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs (ARCP), the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, and regional civil society consultations.

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\* Paragraph 22 (a) of the Resolution *“requests the regional economic commissions and invites their subregional offices, in collaboration with other relevant entities of the United Nations system, particularly the International Organization for Migration, to organize discussions among States Members of the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to examine regional and subregional aspects of international migration and to provide inputs, in accordance with their respective mandates, to the preparatory process of the global compact”*.

To ensure common understanding of the specific context of the region, this session will also include a presentation of the drivers, trends and patterns of migration in the Arab region.

Given the priorities and specificities of the Arab region, the consultation will focus on four main thematic areas:

1. Decent work and labour mobility;
2. Protection of migrants in vulnerable situations;
3. Migration and development, remittances and links with the Sustainable Development Goals;
4. International cooperation and migration governance.

These thematic areas will be addressed from a human rights perspective, focusing on the specific needs of migrants, particularly women, girls and youth.

The roundtable discussions will feature short expert presentations, followed by interactive discussions by Member States and other relevant stakeholders. These will be chaired by Member States and supported by members of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region.

#### *1. Decent work and labour mobility*

This thematic area will include a discussion of labour migration issues, including decent work, labour mobility, fair and ethical recruitment, irregular migration and regular labour migration pathways, as well as the recognition of skills and qualifications of migrants. It will focus on concrete measures that can be put in place to ensure respect for the human and labour rights of all migrant workers, in accordance with SDG target 8.8, including through the provision of accurate information and orientation so that migrants can make informed migratory decisions, creation of safe and secure working environments for migrant workers, and facilitation of fair and ethical recruitment.

This area will also consider promising practices of Member States in the governance of labour migration, and will adopt a gender-sensitive and human rights-based approach, with a view to coming up with recommendations that can help to facilitate fair, safe, orderly and regular labour migration.

The International Labour Organization (ILO), member of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, will take the lead in the design and input to the discussion on this thematic area, in collaboration with ESCWA, IOM and LAS.

#### *2. Protection of migrants in vulnerable situations*

This thematic area will tackle the issue of migrants in vulnerable situations in the Arab region and outside the region, and will discuss key issues relevant to the human rights of all migrants, irrespective of their migration status, social inclusion and cohesion, and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance. This session will include the identification of vulnerabilities, existing protection systems in the Arab region and the protection gaps and needs.

This area aims to highlight appropriate policy responses to address and respond to vulnerabilities before, during and after the migration process. It will include questions of protection of migrants caught in crisis situations, and specific protection concerns of those moving due to climate change or natural disasters as well as especially vulnerable groups such as victims of trafficking and unaccompanied migrant children.

### *3. Migration and development, remittances and links with the Sustainable Development Goals*

This session addresses the importance of human mobility for development in the Arab region, exploring the complex inter-linkages between migration and development within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Throughout the discussion of this area, examples of policies on diaspora engagement and migrant empowerment and inclusion will be showcased to guide the formulation of recommendations on how to maximize the positive development impacts of migration. The dynamics of remittances and their macroeconomic and microeconomic impact on poverty alleviation in countries of origin will be highlighted. The topics in this session will also link to the discussion on decent work and labour mobility, particularly the issue of social protection for migrant workers and the portability of earned benefits.

### *4. International cooperation and migration governance*

This area will address the role of regional and international cooperation and the promotion of good migration governance. It will identify ways to strengthen dialogue and partnerships between governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, employers' and workers' organisations, and international and regional organizations. This area will discuss how international cooperation can build capacity in migration governance and what role civil society and the private sector could have especially in migration data collection, analysis and dissemination, promoting investments in countries of origin, and engaging diaspora communities. Promising practices of Arab countries and beyond the region would also serve as basis to identify ways to maintain dialogue and cooperation.

#### D. OUTCOME OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION

The outcome document (chair's summary) of the Regional Consultation will inform global discussions and will serve as input into the preparatory process of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. It will set out the Arab region's priorities and recommendations for the Global Compact, and will highlight the main messages of the participating Member States and other major stakeholders.

## **III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS**

### A. DATE AND VENUE

The Regional Consultation will be held at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon, on 26 and 27 September 2017.

### B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) is leading the organization of the consultation in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and in partnership with the League of Arab States (LAS) and United Nations agencies members of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region.

### C. PARTICIPANTS AND REGISTRATION

Participants include high-level representatives of Arab governments, including ministers and senior officials. Regional and international governmental organisations, civil society networks and organisations, the private sector, employers' and workers' organisations, and United Nations agencies will also take part in this consultation.

To confirm attendance, please complete the registration form by 28 August 2017 through the below link:  
<https://participant.escwa.org.lb/MeetingsReg.aspx? M=90Q1g6xrpXg=& N=N& O=N>

#### D. DOCUMENTATION

The consultation will be informed by the following documents:

New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Available in English, Arabic and French from:  
[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1).

General Assembly Resolution A/71/280 – Modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Available in English, Arabic and French from:  
[https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/280](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/280).

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available in English, Arabic and French from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Available in English, Arabic and French from: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/documents.html>.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. Available in English, Arabic and French from: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/43291>.

Paris Agreement of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Available in English, Arabic and French from:  
[http://unfccc.int/paris\\_agreement/items/9485.php](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php).

2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/208 available in English, Arabic and French from:  
<https://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/hld/>.

2013 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. Final declaration available in English, Arabic and French from: [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/L.5](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/L.5).

Global Forum on Migration and Development. More information available on: <https://gfmd.org/>.

Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs (ARCP). More information available on: <https://www.iom.int/arab-regional-consultative-process> and <http://www.lasportal.org/ar/Sectors/Dep/Pages/default.aspx?RID=25&SID=6>.

Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian Labor-Sending and Receiving Countries. More information available on: <http://abudhabidialogue.org.ae/>.

#### G. CORRESPONDENCE

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