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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

## **Report**

### **Second Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region Multi-stakeholder consultation Cairo, 2 July 2024**

#### **Summary**

The International Organization for Migration, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Network on Migration, in collaboration with members of the Regional Network on Migration in the Arab Region, organized a multi-stakeholder consultation, held in Cairo on 2 July 2024.

The consultation assessed progress in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab region, reviewed the challenges and opportunities related to effectively engaging stakeholders in the Arab region, and formulated key messages and recommendations for submission at the second Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Migration and at the International Migration Review Forum 2026.

The consultation consisted of an opening session, an introductory session, two panel sessions with stakeholders, two open discussion sessions with all participants, a summary of the main findings, and a closing session. The meeting resulted in a set of messages to be presented at the Second Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Migration to be held in Cairo on 3 and 4 July 2024. The present report includes a summary of the main discussion topics and findings of the consultation.

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## **Introduction**

1. In preparation for the second Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Network on Migration, in collaboration with members of the Regional Network on Migration in the Arab Region, organized a multi-stakeholder consultation, held in Cairo on 2 July 2024.
2. The multi-stakeholder consultation assessed progress in implementing the Global Compact for Migration in the Arab region, in line with the guiding principles stipulated in resolution 73/195, discussed opportunities for effectively engaging stakeholders in the Arab region and the related challenges, and formulated key messages and recommendations for submission at the second Regional Review Conference and at the International Migration Review Forum 2026.
3. Participants comprised representatives of stakeholders identified in the Global Compact for Migration, including migrants; civil society; migrant and diaspora organizations, including those working with migrant women; faith-based organizations; local authorities and communities; the private sector; trade unions; parliamentarians; national human rights institutions; the International Red Cross and Red Crescent; academia; the media; and other stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels.
4. The multi-stakeholder consultation consisted of an opening session, an introductory session, two panel sessions with stakeholders, two open discussion sessions with all participants, a summary of the main conclusions, and a closing session. The meeting also resulted in a set of messages for presentation at the second Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region, to be held in Cairo on 3 and 4 July 2024. The following is a summary of these sessions and their main outcomes.

### **I. Key messages emanating from the consultation**

#### **A. Expanding civic space**

5. Shrinking civic space is a major concern that threatens the ability to achieve the Global Compact for Migration. It is therefore necessary to intensify efforts to expand civic space, including by reviewing and implementing the Global Compact for Migration.
6. The rise of anti-migrant rhetoric and hostility towards migrants threatens the future of the Global Compact for Migration and the ability to achieve its objectives. Civil society plays a crucial role in changing such rhetoric; however, shrinking civic space limits its role to that end.
7. Civil society organizations should be supported by developing their human and financial resources to promote the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.

#### **B. Improving immigration governance**

8. There is a need to develop consistent migration policies, and to align existing policies with international agreements that protect migrants, including migrant workers. Integrating migration into various development sectors is equally important.
9. Governments should involve civil society organizations and all stakeholders in developing policies related to migration.

### **C. Changing the rhetoric and combating xenophobia**

10. It is necessary to confront negative discourse about immigrants and migration in Europe, as it has a harmful impact on migrants in other regions, including the Arab region.
11. It is vital to urgently respond to the needs of communities hosting forcibly displaced persons, because those communities often suffer from indirect effects that lead to increased xenophobia towards migrants.
12. There is a need to stimulate communication between migrants and host communities, so as to confront hate speech and xenophobia directed towards migrants in the region.
13. The economic challenges faced by many host countries, especially as a result of the influx of refugees and mixed migration flows, lead to an increase in negative and xenophobic discourse directed towards migrants. Hence the need to strengthen efforts to change such discourse, by highlighting the positive contributions of migrants and refugees.
14. Academics play a key role in combating xenophobia and implementing the Global Compact for Migration by conducting research, collecting data, building capacity, and providing advice on relevant policies to improve the lives of migrants.
15. The media can play a crucial role in changing the discourse and combating xenophobia directed towards migrants.

### **D. Protecting vulnerable migrants**

16. Migrant children, including unaccompanied and separated, particularly migrants in irregular status, are among the most vulnerable groups of migrants in the region. They are often “invisible” since they are undocumented in most countries, and are therefore deprived of their human rights, including access to basic services.
17. Obstacles to family reunification, particularly for low-skilled migrants, increase the vulnerability of migrant children, including those left behind in countries of origin. This pattern can become cyclical, as many of those children eventually become low-skilled migrant workers, leaving their own children behind.
18. Migrants’ access to justice is lacking in many countries, particularly for migrants at risk, which increases their vulnerability. Moreover, the gap between policy development and actual implementation is large, even in countries where relevant laws and mechanisms exist. Migrants often have low confidence in those policies, and therefore do not resort to them, fearing repercussions.
19. The intersections between different vulnerabilities should be taken into account, and appropriate responses should be implemented.
20. The Arab region is witnessing large-scale mixed migration movements, in view of the ongoing and overlapping crises that have created increasing humanitarian needs that require stronger immediate responses, including providing food, water and sanitation services, facilitating family reunification, and identifying missing or deceased migrants.
21. There is an urgent need to develop migration policies that protect migrants, especially those living in crises.
22. It is necessary to mobilize resources to enable civil society to provide services to migrants, including those living in crises.
23. Equal attention should be given to men and women migrants who are at risk, and who face challenges that increase their vulnerability.

## **E. Protecting and empowering migrant workers**

24. It is necessary to abolish the sponsorship system, and find alternatives to it instead of just reforming it, so as to ensure the mobility of migrant workers and their ability to change employers. Alternative systems must also ensure protection from forced labour, and promote family reunification, access to justice, and the ability to join unions and form migrant organizations, among other issues.
25. Trade unions play a crucial role in ensuring the protection and integration of migrants into society, providing them with job security, strengthening social protection mechanisms to include migrants, eliminating forced labour and providing decent work, achieving social justice, and activating social dialogue.
26. Migrants' freedom of association must be guaranteed, and they should be able to join and vote in trade unions. Otherwise, trade unions will not be encouraged to defend the rights of migrant workers beyond a moral obligation, since they are not their members.
27. Close collaboration with the private sector is useful, particularly to provide reliable and timely data on skills required in the labour market, and to protect and empower both high- and low-skilled migrant workers.
28. It is important to provide immigrants with job and leadership skills to create job opportunities for them in host communities.
29. Access to finance is crucial for enabling migrants to start businesses, access better job opportunities, and contribute to development.
30. It is important to facilitate migrant students' access to meaningful employment opportunities after graduation, through trainee programmes, for example, which can enhance their skills and build the private sector's confidence in their capabilities.
31. Language barriers remain a major obstacle to migrant workers' access to justice.
32. It is necessary to strengthen the roles of embassies to support the integration and protection of communities, including migrant workers in host countries.
33. Technical and vocational education and training is vital in raising the skills of young people, including migrants, to match the skills required in the labour market.
34. It is necessary to address the negative role played by some migrant worker recruitment agencies, and to limit their practices that border on trafficking in persons and treating migrant workers as commodities.
35. Policies should protect migrant workers from heat stress and climatic hazards that endanger their lives, and ensure decent living conditions for them, especially in overcrowded settlements.

## **F. Widening migration pathways**

36. There have been some positive developments in terms of expanding migration routes for the benefit of the private sector, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, by facilitating entry visa processes, establishing new types of visas, and implementing self-sponsorship and residency systems for highly skilled migrants.
37. Policies should be changed to support family reunification for female migrant workers, who are subject to additional conditions compared with male migrant workers in some countries.

## **G. Regional cooperation**

38. Cooperation between Arab countries should be increased to find solutions to common challenges, and to save the lives of migrants at risk.

39. More opportunities for discussion, cooperation and collaboration between regions should be provided to address migration issues through transregional processes.

## **H. Young people**

40. Young people are not just beneficiaries of support programmes, but are leaders of change and must be involved in public policy discussions and development processes.

## **I. Regional Review Process of the Global Compact for Migration**

41. Regional reviews should not be one-off events or activities, but rather part of an ongoing process aimed at enhancing stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.

42. Countries must intensify their efforts to fulfil the commitment to leave no one behind, including migrants, so as to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

43. There is a need to align the means of measuring progress achieved in the Global Compact for Migration with international human rights agreements.

44. It is necessary to build regional partnerships and provide regional platforms, such as regional reviews, to encourage peer learning and exchange best practices and solutions.

45. More stakeholders should participate in the regional review of the Global Compact for Migration to ensure that the views of all stakeholders are heard.

46. The Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration should focus on the challenges faced by migrants from the Arab region. For example, migrants in Europe, including those from Arab countries, face challenges in maintaining regular status, with limited pathways for regularization.

## **II. Sessions of the multi-stakeholder consultation**

47. At the start of the meeting, Ms. Sara Salman, ESCWA Population Affairs Officer, made a statement in which she welcomed participants. She said that the current meeting was a continuation of a series of consultation with relevant stakeholders, and aimed to raise the voice of all stakeholders, benefit from their expertise, and explore the best ways to ensure their optimal participation in the regional review process of the Global Compact for Migration in the Arab region.

### **A. Opening session**

48. The opening session began with a welcoming statement by Ms. Catalina Devandas, Representative of the Director-General of IOM, Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Communications. She noted the current escalation of political tensions in the region, the spread of hate speech against migrants, and the violation of their human rights. She commended the constructive dialogue launched by actors in the region to improve the situation of migrants, and the achievements made to date, noting that there were still many gaps and that tremendous efforts were required to achieve the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration. She added that the consultative meeting with relevant stakeholders was a reminder of the need to work towards achieving the desired objectives, and an emphasis on the importance of the role of civil society in migrant affairs. She also urged participants to make additional efforts to enable States to fulfil their obligations towards migrants,

stressing the importance of the contributions made by stakeholders and the exchange of experiences and expertise among them, so as to benefit from best practices that suit their countries.

## **B. Scene-setting session**

49. Ms. Monami Maulik, Civil Society Liaison Officer at United Nations Network on Migration, gave an overview of the process to engage all migration stakeholders. She said that in the second regional review of the Global Compact for Migration, the preparatory process was designed to obtain stakeholder feedback to jointly set an ambitious agenda. In May 2023, the Network on Migration had published guidance on stakeholder engagement in regional reviews, which outlined the core elements of a whole-of-society approach to the five regional reviews. The approach was based on four pillars, namely the principles of transparency, inclusiveness, diversity, and meaningful participation.

50. She said that the secretariat of the Network on Migration had facilitated two virtual global stakeholder consultations on 31 October and 1 November 2023. The consultations had been attended by approximately 400 stakeholders representing various sectors concerned with migration, and members of regional networks. Inputs from stakeholders' experiences helped shape the road map for their engagement across the five reviews.

51. She noted that following the preparatory steps outlined in the road map, the secretariat of the Network on Migration, in collaboration with the Arab Regional Network, had held a virtual pre-consultation two months earlier, where it had solicited ideas from stakeholders on the approaches that they wanted to take to effectively engage in the review process. In May 2024, the Network had held online thematic consultations on the six regional priorities, which were attended by over 300 participants. These thematic consultations with stakeholders had become part of the process of drafting background notes for the thematic round tables at the International Migration Review Forum. The United Nations specialized agencies and Network members who had chaired the relevant round tables moderated the discussions on implementation progress and related gaps. They informed and guided discussions at the review meeting based on the stakeholder discussions, leading up to the current multi-stakeholder consultation that the Network supported being held in-person, so as to maximize in-person interaction between various actors.

52. She urged stakeholders to organize online conversations on the Global Compact for Migration. She also stressed that regional reviews should not be seen as a one-time event, but rather as part of building the partnerships needed to implement the Global Compact for Migration in the region. She expressed her hope that the review process would allow stakeholders to better fulfil their roles.

53. Mr. Igor Kravchenko, Data Analyst at the IOM Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, presented a summary of the results of the stakeholder survey. He began by defining the objectives of the survey, which included providing an overview of stakeholders in the Network on Migration for Arab countries, analysing progress in implementing the Global Compact for Migration and trends in stakeholder engagement, identifying key challenges and good practices related to implementing the Global Compact for Migration among stakeholders; assessing the application of the guidelines of the Global Compact for Migration in national action plans and their impact on achieving its objectives. He then presented the conclusions reached regarding each of the above-mentioned objectives, as follows:

- North African countries are most represented in the survey (51 per cent), led by Algeria, Libya and Tunisia.
- Most survey participants work in civil society organizations.
- The largest proportion of survey participants were involved in field work related to migration, such as protecting migrant rights, collecting data on migration, conducting thematic research, and accessing basic services.
- Half of survey participants indicated that the situation of migrants in their countries had improved since the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration.

- The majority of stakeholders said that they were not aware of steps taken by their Governments to formulate national action plans to implement the Global Compact for Migration.
- Only a few survey participants were involved in the development of national action plans, most of whom represented civil society organizations, academia and local authorities.
- Half of survey participants were involved in the follow-up and review process of the Global Compact for Migration in their countries.
- The majority of stakeholders had successfully implemented objective 15 of the Global Compact for Migration on providing access to basic services for migrants.
- Most survey respondents agreed that their greatest contribution to the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration was to amplify the voices of migrants in consultations with other stakeholders.
- Survey respondents considered capacity-building support a top priority to accelerate the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.
- The majority of stakeholders agreed that implementing the guidelines of the Global Compact for Migration was essential to accelerate implementation in their countries.

54. He presented a set of general recommendations addressed to Governments, partners and communities in the region, including diversifying stakeholders, enhancing implementation-oriented cooperation, integrating migration into development plans, and applying the guiding principles of the Global Compact for Migration.

### **C. Multi-stakeholder panel 1**

55. Ms. Zahra Mohamed Omar, Researcher at the National Research Institute at the University of Djibouti, moderated the first panel. The session included statements by representatives of stakeholders who spoke about their countries' experiences and challenges, and made proposals and recommendations based on their field work. The following is a summary of those statements.

56. Ms. Lala Arabian, representative of the Cross Regional Centre for Refugees and Migrants, addressed the most prominent problems currently facing migrants, namely the efforts of States to keep migrants outside their borders, and the imposition of severe restrictions on the work of civil society organizations seeking to assist migrants. She discussed the issue of the children of migrants, who were often deprived of their basic rights and unable to access minimum services owing to an absence of legal documents and identity cards; and the challenge of family separation. She highlighted the problem of migrants' inability to access justice in most Arab countries for several reasons, such as a lack of knowledge of the laws, and their weak legal standing to prosecute.

57. Mr. William Gois, Regional Coordinator of the Migrant Forum in Asia, emphasized the significant decline in the role of civil society, and the impact it would have on stakeholder involvement in policy development processes related to migration. He highlighted the importance of cross-regional consultation, since migration was not limited to a region's borders. It was therefore useful to discuss the issue with migrants' countries of destination, such as European countries. He noted that in the coming years, hate speech against migrants would intensify, and civil society must be prepared for that to effectively handle the issue.

58. Ms. Sarah al-Khatib, Programme Director and Gulf and Migration Specialist for the MENA region at the Solidarity Center, made a presentation in which she addressed some of the strategies followed by trade unions to defend migrants, including advocacy and alliance building to press for policy reforms related to migrants' rights, especially workers. She also stressed the importance of establishing alternative systems to the sponsorship system and irregular migration, which should be approached in an integrated manner and take into account issues such as freedom of movement and travel, freedom to migrate as a family, freedom to organize, the right to access justice and services, and protection from discrimination. She said that such work required many legislative and policy reforms, and could not be achieved in view of current restrictions on the work of



civil society organizations. She added that some stakeholders sought to open effective channels of dialogue with Governments regarding migrants, build bridges between various stakeholders, and focus on the issue of organizing migrants and strengthening their capacity, noting the need to involve representatives of these stakeholders in relevant dialogues.

59. Mr. Murtaza Ali Khan, Regional Managing Partner of Fragomen in the Middle East and Africa, discussed key issues where the private sector could play a prominent role, such as developing ambitious long-term economic plans that required specific skills and thus creating job opportunities for workers, including skilled migrants; providing temporary and seasonal employment opportunities; and exchanging workers between companies as needed. He noted the issue of facilitating and accelerating the process of securing necessary documents and granting entry visas for moving to a particular country, emphasizing the importance of modern technologies in that regard, and the importance of taking into account the experiences of workers when moving to another country and not just their educational qualifications.

60. Mr. Mohammad al Maita, the representative of the Arab Trade Union Confederation, said that trade union interest in migrant workers was only of a moral nature, since those workers did not have the right to organize and could not vote. He addressed the issue of injustice between local and foreign workers, which had been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as most Governments kept their employees at home and paid them allowances, while migrant workers were forced to continue working and risk contracting the virus. Hence the importance of issues such as decent work, ethical recruitment and fair transition. He emphasized the need to call for freedom of association for migrant workers, and the establishment of institutions that represented them.

61. Mr. Mohammed al-Arada, the representative of the Kuwait Trade Union Federation, made a statement in which he listed the achievements of the Kuwait Trade Union Federation, including establishing a special office for migrant workers to defend their rights and gains, providing legal and psychological consultations to migrant workers, and organizing several awareness campaigns. He reviewed a number of proposals submitted by the Federation, notably the abolition of the sponsorship system and the establishment of a government digital platform to recruit workers with the State as the main guarantor, so as to preserve workers' rights, eliminate human trafficking, ensure job and family stability for workers, and protect them from discrimination and violence. He said that the integration of migrant workers into societies was vital, stressing the importance of raising awareness among them and encouraging them to file complaints when necessary and without fear. He addressed the issue of human trafficking, which required comprehensive coordination at all levels, stressing the need to enhance international and regional cooperation in that regard; and the importance of tightening relevant procedures and penalties, of providing care for victims of the crime, and of receiving complaints with complete confidentiality.

62. At the end of the first panel, the moderator summarized the main points that had been discussed and spoke about her country, Djibouti. She said that Djibouti was both a departure and receiving point for migrant workers, a land of meeting and exchange, but it suffered from economic disparities, food insecurity, and the effects of climate change. She stressed the importance of the Global Compact for Migration for her country, as it constituted a structural framework that ensured the safety of migrants and helped them face prevailing challenges.

#### **D. Multi-stakeholder panel 2**

63. Mr. Abdul Majeed Yahya, representative of the Open University of the Sudan, moderated the second panel. He said that migration was not a modern issue and had always existed, but had become a matter of interest in the modern era owing to its complex nature. He added that migration had multiple causes, including economic reasons such as searching for decent work, political and security reasons such as fleeing persecution and wars, and environmental reasons such as escaping the impact of climate change. He noted that population movements posed challenges to host countries and were a source of concern for them.

64. A representative from the private sector expressed his pride in that his company had signed a partnership with IOM, and was undertaking several projects in collaboration with civil society to promote the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. He addressed the problem of hostility towards migrants by local communities. He stressed the importance of supporting both migrants and host communities to reduce tensions between the two parties, and to balance the needs of each. He added that it was necessary to adopt a comprehensive approach to the issue of migration, and to collect information on related challenges to know how to deal with them. He concluded by asking participants about how to reconcile the needs of host communities and protect the human rights of migrants.

65. A representative from academia made a statement outlining contributions of the academic sector in her country, Somalia, including conducting research, developing evidence-based policies, providing skills training for Somalis in Somalia or those wishing to migrate, facilitating their access to needed loans, and training recruitment agencies to secure jobs for job seekers in Somalia and abroad. She noted that the academic sector was working to support trade unions in Somalia, which were currently not very effective.

66. Mr. Khaled al-Humaidi, the representative of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, reviewed successful projects implemented in his country to improve immigration policies and the status of migrant workers, pointing to the need to reform legislation and manage the labour market at the same time. He said that there was still a pressing need to make many changes and reforms, especially in terms of the challenges related to the contracting and sponsorship system, calling for its improvement rather than its abolition until a suitable alternative system was available. He addressed the issue of access to justice for migrant workers who were subject to exploitation and faced obstacles preventing them from accessing justice, most notably the language barrier. He stressed the need to ensure that migrants had access to mechanisms that addressed violence and abuse in private and domestic workplaces; to improve the contractual status of migrants, employ them on ethical terms and ensure decent work opportunities; and to facilitate their transition from one job/employer to another. He highlighted the role that should be played by embassies of the countries from which migrants flow in protecting their citizens, especially in terms of translating the laws governing migrants.

67. Ms. Rasha al-Masry, the representative of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, discussed the humanitarian role that the Federation played in assisting migrants in the region. She said that the Federation worked to provide water and food to migrants, helped families search for missing loved ones, and provided support in identifying bodies. She listed a number of challenges that must be addressed, including the need to develop appropriate policies, the necessity of all migrants having access to basic services, the importance of providing support to migrants and host communities alike, and the need to enhance collaboration and coordination between various stakeholders in the field.

68. Mr. Sahil al-Gheriani, the representative of Libya, discussed the initiatives undertaken by the Moomken Organization – For Media and Awareness. He listed some of the achievements made in the field of empowering migrant communities, combating discrimination against them, tackling hate speech, organizing media campaigns that reached large segments of Libyan society, and promoting the integration of migrants into the labour market. He stressed that the biggest challenge facing civil society work in Libya was a lack of funding and resources, bureaucratic procedures that hindered the work of organizations, and weak capacity-building. He presented a set of recommendations, such as Governments involving civil society organizations in the policy development process and relying on evidence to enhance their effectiveness; and allocating more funding and resources to civil society organizations. He added that regional and international platforms, networks and forums could enhance the exchange of experiences and consolidate partnerships in the field of implementing the Global Compact for Migration in a fair manner.

69. At the close of the session, some participants addressed several issues, most notably the role that the Global Compact for Migration could play in protecting the rights of migrants forced to migrate as a result of ongoing wars in the region, such as the wars in Gaza, southern Lebanon and the Sudan. They discussed the role of the media in educating host communities and protecting the rights of migrants, and the role of the private sector in implementing and reviewing the Global Compact for Migration, especially with regard to

financing activities related to capacity-building and empowerment; and adopting a humanitarian and positive discourse in combating hate speech against migrants. They expressed their concern about the hate speech that had clearly increased recently. They also emphasized the contributions of migrants and refugees to host communities. They addressed other issues related to enhancing the understanding of government institutions of the Global Compact for Migration and its objectives; increasing cooperation with countries of origin, and strengthening data collection to assess the real impact of migration and ensure decent living conditions and access to social services for migrants.

### **E. Open discussion 1**

70. Mr. Castro Abdallah, President of the National Federation of Trade Unions of Workers and Employees of Lebanon, moderated the session, which focused on implementing regional and national plans and strategies on migration related to each of the relevant objectives of the Global Compact for Migration; integrating the interconnected overarching guiding principles, including the whole-of-society and whole-of-government principle, into existing plans and policies; and identifying the main gaps and challenges that hindered the implementation of regional and national approaches, strategies and implementation plans.

71. Mr. Abdallah discussed the experience of the National Federation of Trade Unions of Workers and Employees of Lebanon with migrant workers. He said that Lebanon was a country that received vulnerable labour and exported skilled workers. He noted that the focus was often on female foreign workers, especially those working in domestic service, while male workers in the construction sector and other vulnerable jobs were neglected. He referred to the establishment of a union for female domestic workers in Lebanon in 2015 to guarantee their rights, but it was not officially registered in the Lebanese State. He addressed the loopholes in the labour law, and the need to make necessary fundamental amendments to it. He also addressed the role of the media, and asked how the various parties concerned with the working conditions of migrants could work together to achieve the desired objectives.

72. In the ensuing discussion, a participant from Egypt explained the high unemployment rate among young people who found themselves competing for job opportunities with migrants, and noted shortcomings in vocational training in the Arab region as a whole, especially among school dropouts in rural areas and workers in the agricultural sector. He also addressed the difficulty of obtaining work permits for migrants.

73. A participant from Mauritania said that her country was a pioneer in the field of migration management, having established a migration-related counselling centre. However, owing to its large area, Mauritania had several irregular crossings. As a result, large numbers of migrants had left the country through those irregular routes, without the knowledge of the authorities, who did not have sufficient capacity to monitor all the coasts and control that type of migration. She noted the second type of migration, namely migration coming to Mauritania, stating that the Government provided facilities for migrant workers, which had led to tension with local communities due to competition resulting from the presence of migrants.

74. A participant from Kuwait stressed the importance of addressing the issues of freedom of association, providing migrants with access to justice, identifying the real needs of migrants, and emphasizing the role of countries of origin in protecting their workers.

75. A participant from Somalia said that the main problem was that host communities did not care about migrants, and that the solution might be to organize consultative meetings with stakeholders to discuss solutions that benefited both parties. Social media and modern technology could also be used to raise public awareness.

76. The representative of the Arab Trade Union Confederation said that the largest proportion of migrants were young people, which meant that migration drained countries of origin of their potential, preventing them from recovering economically. He added that European countries, in turn, benefited from the potential of those young people without incurring any cost, because they classified them as irregular. He noted differences in the description of migrants, explaining that Maghreb countries considered them to be persons who had left, while

Mashreq countries saw them as persons coming to them from another country. He addressed the issue of bilateral agreements that the countries of the Southern Mediterranean and Africa were hoping to conclude to regulate migration.

77. A participant from Lebanon said that the current priority was to stop the killing of innocent people in Gaza, southern Lebanon and the Sudan, as the crimes being committed were the primary reason for migration from those countries.

78. A participant from the Sudan noted that a small number of countries, including the Sudan, had established migrant worker attachés to protect them, preserve their rights and follow up on their affairs abroad. She also stressed the need to work to reduce irregular migration, provide the necessary training for migrant workers, and raise their awareness of the labour laws in force in host countries.

79. A participant from Djibouti said that her country was a transit country, as it was used as a passage to the Arabian Peninsula by irregular migrants who sometimes died of hunger and thirst on their way to destination countries. She stressed the need to provide assistance to transit countries and conclude agreements with them, so as to address the problems they faced.

80. At the close of the session, Rima Kalush, the representative of Migrant-Rights.org, made a presentation via Zoom, in which she discussed climate change and its link to migration in terms of its role as a motivating factor for migration, and its impact on the working conditions of migrant workers. She gave the example of migrant workers in GCC countries, who must be protected from working outdoors during peak heat hours. She said that the authorities only took into account temperature when assessing the risk of working outdoors, and did not focus on humidity, which played an important role. She concluded her presentation by stressing the need to provide appropriate working conditions for workers, such as ventilation and water, and to ensure their access to necessary medical services.

## **F. Open discussion 2**

81. Ms. Asma Neri, the representative of the International Detention Coalition in the Middle East and North Africa, moderated the session, which focused on promising practices and lessons learned that might be relevant to other regions and could be presented at the International Migration Review Forum 2026. She addressed the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration, stating that the Arab region needed support to accelerate the implementation of its guiding principles, in terms of funding, capacity-building, policy advice, data collection and analysis, technology, and partnerships.

82. Ms. Khadija Amahel, the rapporteur of the current Consultation from Morocco, made a statement in which she focused on young people, their concerns and needs. She stressed that they were the leaders of the present and the future at the same time, and therefore must be involved in all consultations and discussions. Their opinions must be listened to, and their voices must be heard. She invited the audience to read the Youth Policy Brief for the Middle East and North Africa to benefit from its contents.

83. A participant from Yemen made a statement in which he noted that there were two types of migration: regular migration, which was somewhat regulated by laws; and irregular migration, which often included the most vulnerable categories of migrants. He called for intensified efforts to advocate for migrants and defend their rights, especially the most vulnerable migrants, and to protect the rights of those defending the human rights of migrants, as they were subject to abuse in some countries.

84. Another participant from Yemen addressed the need to solve and reform the root causes of migration in migrants' countries of origin, by providing decent job opportunities for workers. She also stressed the need to conclude Arab-Arab agreements to solve the problems of migrants and provide them with training opportunities, and to exert international pressure to address their issues so that they were not exposed to danger during their transit.

85. One participant noted the need to enhance interaction between civil society organizations, and encourage peer learning platforms in the region and in Europe, so as to raise awareness about the issue of migrants. Another participant spoke about the importance of enacting a rights-based approach to migration laws, especially those related to irregular migrants, rather than the preventive, security or responsive approaches adopted by Governments.

86. In the ensuing discussion, one participant said that the focus on female workers, rather than male workers, was due to the fact that women were more exposed to violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, just as workers of African origin were more exposed to discrimination on the basis of colour. Hence the need to take into account intersectional discrimination on the basis of gender, migration status and origin.

87. A participant from Morocco addressed migration governance and the need to develop integrated policies, so that migration could become a source of opportunities rather than risks. She also stressed the need to focus on the human dimension in migration governance, include the issue of migration in social dialogue, and keep pace with legislation to ensure consistency. She noted the importance of the media and the need to update it instead of accusing it, to raise awareness so that it did not use stereotypical or negative discourse, and to involve social partners in governance.

88. A participant from the Sudan noted that his country had been a major destination for migration. Now, it had become a source of migration. He discussed the different perceptions of migrants, from those who considered them displaced persons to those who considered them victims of smuggling and human trafficking. Given the impossibility of ending the conflict, he noted the need to focus on managing it in a way that would mitigate human rights violations, which would contribute to reducing migration.

89. A participant from Jordan made a statement in which he noted that the majority of migrants were of working age, which meant that countries of origin lost their workforce and economic driver. Hence the need to link reducing the drivers of migration with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and using cross-sectoral approaches, and the need to reform the labour market. Another participant added that human resources from migrants could be supported by collecting data and using advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

90. A second participant from Jordan stressed the need to raise awareness in host communities to prevent migrant workers from being blamed for the economic crisis in the host country. On the contrary, there were professions that migrant workers had revived, thus contributing to economic growth.

91. A participant from Lebanon stressed the importance of establishing unions for migrant workers, both male and female, drawing on his experience with foreign workers who had worked in Lebanon and returned to their home countries, where they put pressure on their Governments to establish unions to organize workers and build their capacity. He called for benefiting from those positive experiences, and urged the International Labour Organization to press the Government to guarantee workers' rights.

92. Another participant stressed the importance of holding cross-regional discussions, which would have a positive impact on the situation of migrant workers. Another participant noted that the current discussions lacked the presence of representatives of economic stakeholders.

93. The moderator closed the session by highlighting the problem of funding and scarcity of resources in both countries of origin and destination. She stressed the need to benefit from experiences in which migrants were able to integrate into host societies, the importance of building partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations, and the need to communicate with government agencies that in turn needed training and awareness raising.

## **G. Summary of the consultation**

94. The rapporteur of the consultation, Ms. Khadija Amahel, presented the conclusions and key messages reached by participants in the consultation with stakeholders, which would be submitted to the second Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Migration and at the International Migration Review Forum 2026.

## **H. Closing session**

95. At the close of the informal consultations with multi-stakeholders concerned with migration in the Arab region, Ms. Amy Pope, Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration and Director-General of IOM, made a closing statement in which she thanked all participants, including session moderators, speakers and representatives of all stakeholders in the Arab region. She commended the rich and fruitful discussions, and the important and useful messages that had resulted from them for the Regional Review Conference.

96. She also thanked the rapporteur who had undertaken the task of summarizing and organizing the ideas discussed at the sessions. She commended the role of participants in view of the current circumstances worldwide, including rising hate speech against migrants that blamed them for the crises ravaging all countries. She urged stakeholders to continue what they were doing, and to continue supporting and raising the voice of voiceless migrants. She stressed the importance of making more advocacy efforts, at the local, regional and international levels, in support of various categories of migrants, especially vulnerable groups such as women, children, young people and persons with disabilities, and to preserve their rights, maintain their dignity and prevent their exploitation. She emphasized the essential role of migrants in the advancement and prosperity of the economies of destination countries, stating that if anti-immigration activists succeeded in implementing their goals, the economies, growth and economic activity of destination countries would witness a significant decline.