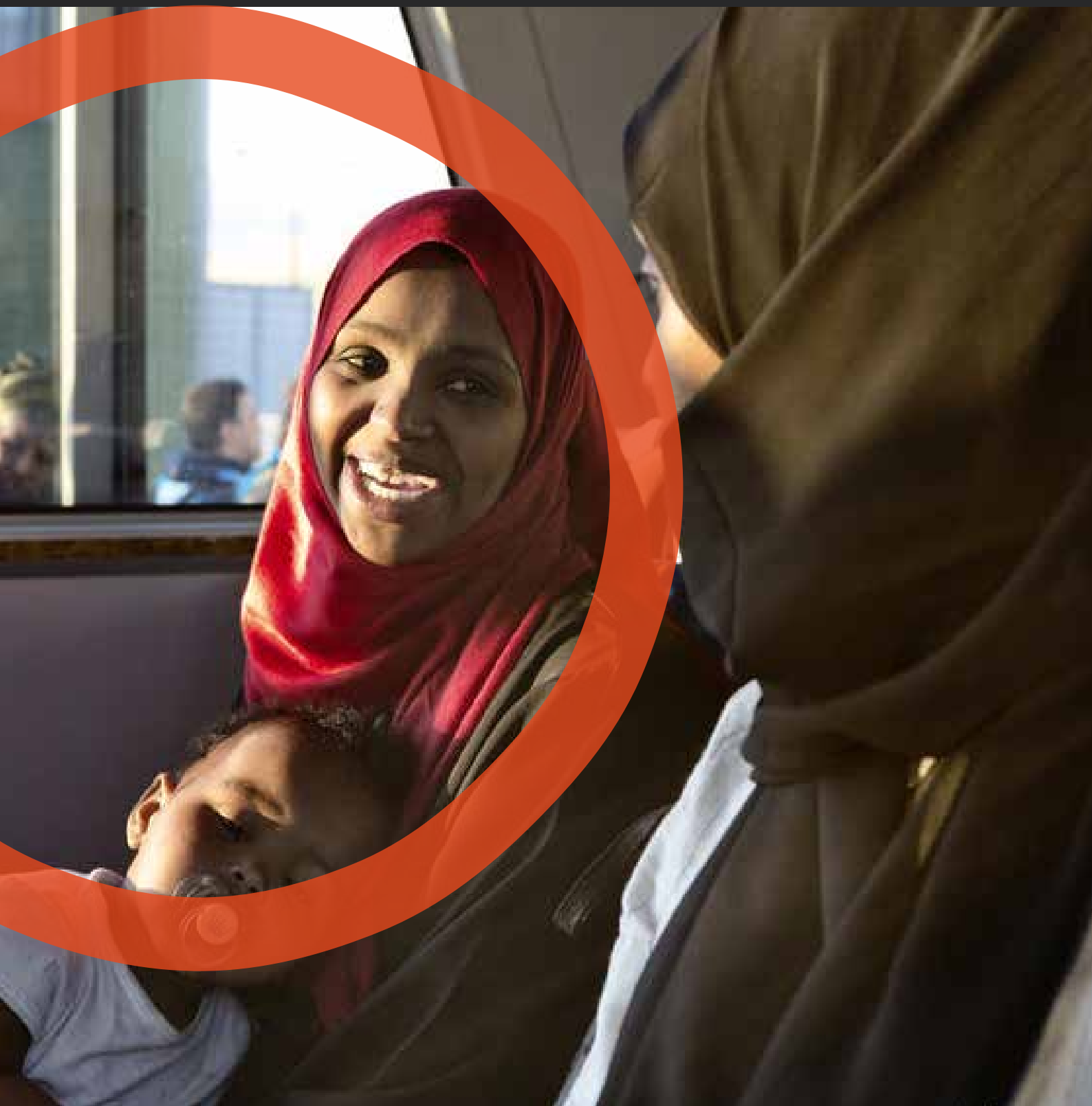


What progress on the global compact on migration?

by Aurora Ianni and Mattia Giampaolo

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"This background document has been realized in the framework of the project, to spread data and information based on a scientific analysis. If you want to know more about this project and be part of its activities, please feel free to contact the leading partner Diaconia in Czech Republic (email: nozinova@diakoniespolu.cz), as well as Focsiv in Italy (email: f.novella@focsiv.it)."

¹This background paper has been realised in the framework of the "Faces of Migration" project (Migrant and SDGs, contract number CSO-LA/2018/401-798), co-financed by the European Union. The paper has been elaborated by Aurora Ianni and Mattia Giampaolo with the coordination of Andrea Stocchiero (Focsiv). This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between May 17 and 20, 2022, the President of the UN General Assembly hosted the International Migration Review Forum at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The 2022 IMFR represented the first quadrennial platform “to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM), including as it relates to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders” (GCM, para. 49)¹.

In fact, once agreed in December 2018, the Compact included guidance on its monitoring in the years following its adoption. The document foresees that GCM States will review progress at local, national, regional and global levels in implementing the Global Compact within the United Nations framework through a State-led approach and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders (para. 48).² A few months before the IMRF, the UN Secretary-General reported on the progress of GCM

in countries around the world, also considering the impact of the pandemic and focusing mainly on inclusion of migrants in host societies and transit countries, promotion of regular migration, and reduction of vulnerabilities. While considering improvements by some States in terms of new structural policies towards migrants, the UN Secretary-General made recommendations to States and stakeholders aimed at, among other things, ensuring that all migrants are guaranteed and enabled access to essential health services and continuity of care, including COVID-19 vaccinations; cooperating through State-led and other regional, subregional and cross-regional processes and platforms to expand and diversify rights-based pathways for regular migration; complying with the obligation of non-refoulement at borders and stopping forced returns in situations where the health, safety, dignity and human rights of migrants and communities of origin and transit cannot be safeguarded; integrating migration as a core, cross-cutting issue in sustainable development and other applicable frameworks, including by developing ambitious national plans to implement the Compact, to strengthen its implementation, follow-up and review.



Ph. Global Goals for Sustainable Development



While leaving it up to the sovereignty of states to determine who enters and stays in their territory and to demonstrate commitment to international cooperation on migration, the Global Compact on Migration provides for initiatives to promote and monitor its implementation because “no State can address migration alone” (para. 7).⁴

¹ For the Global Compact on Migration, see <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/451/99/PDF/N1845199.pdf?OpenElement>

² Ibid.

³ For all the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General, see <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-compact-safe-orderly-and-regular-migration-report-secretary-general-a76642>

⁴ For further discussion, see M. Giampaolo and A. Ianni, The Global Compact on Migration: a worldwide opportunity for a common governance of migrations, April 2020, https://ambrela.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BackGround_no5_on_Global_Compact_on_Migration_by_Focsiv.pdf

Box 1. The Objectives of the GCM

Objectives for safe, orderly and regular migration⁵

1. Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies
2. Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin
3. Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration
4. Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation
5. Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration
6. Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work
7. Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration
8. Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants
9. Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants
10. Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration
11. Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner
12. Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral
13. Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives
14. Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle
15. Provide access to basic services for migrants
16. Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion
17. Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration
18. Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences
19. Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries
20. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants
21. Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration
22. Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits
23. Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration

⁵ GCM Objectives. See the full document at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/451/99/PDF/N1845199.pdf?OpenElement>



2. PROGRESS DECLARATION ON THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON MIGRATION: MAIN POINTS

The Progress Declaration was drafted based on four roundtables held during the IMRF and contains a final section of recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Global Compact and strengthen international cooperation on migration.⁶

The first roundtable was **dedicated** to objectives **2, 5, 6, 12 and 18** of the GCM. Major progress was achieved in mainstreaming international migration into development plans and sectoral policies; advancing labor policies (namely efforts to simplify migration-related administrative procedures and actions to prevent and reduce situations of vulnerability); facilitating the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications; and adopting strategies and policies related to climate change mitigation. However, the declaration pointed out that these policies are still **insufficient in mitigating** and addressing **the adverse effects of climate change** (environmental degradation and natural disasters being among the drivers of migration), including climate finance.

In addition, in terms of migrant workers' vulnerability, the **lack of mutual recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications** limits the benefits they can gain from their work and their contribution to sustainable development. Indeed, many migrant workers, especially women, continue to face precarious working conditions.

Women who have chosen to migrate are vulnerable to violations, lower wages, exploitation, and violence. Moreover, the lack of policies to implement Goal 4 of the SDGs (quality education) has affected the younger generation who suffer from high unemployment rates and are mostly employed in the informal labor sector.

The second roundtable, focusing on Objectives **4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 21**, was devoted to progress in cooperation and collaboration among Member States in terms of international search operations, prevention of trafficking and prosecution of human traffickers, and investigations. In addition, some Member States have taken steps to end the detention of migrant children and observatories have been established to collect migration data, including to improve the ability to identify migrant smuggler networks.

However, inequality, **violence and exploitation** remain the main effects of irregular migration, and due to government restrictions, identifying vulnerabilities among migrants has been increasingly difficult (notably for women and children). Poverty, inequality, economic exclusion and violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, among the key risk factors for trafficking in persons, have increased during the Pandemic. COVID-19 has also complicated access to, and provision of, support to victims of trafficking. Challenges remain with regard to international cooperation on the identification of nationals and issuance of travel documents, as many Member States still lack robust civil registration systems or the capacity to issue identity and travel documents.

In addition, **little progress has been made in drafting consistent policies to distinguish smuggling from search and rescue activities carried out by CSOs and NGOs** (see Mediterranean). Due to the Pandemic, many migrants have been returned to their countries of origin without considering the health and sanitation conditions in those countries.

⁶ For the full statement see: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/A%20AC.293%202022%20L.1%20English.pdf>

Moreover, the declaration underlined the difficulty of some Member States in ensuring the safe return of migrants due to the lack of bilateral cooperation between countries of arrival and countries of origin.

The third roundtable, focusing on Objectives **14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22**, was devoted to migrant services and progress in terms of inclusion (or exclusion) of migrants in basic and social services. Efforts to provide migrants with equal and safe access to affordable basic services, unemployment benefits and adequate social protection have been reported, but challenges remain.

Although progress has been registered in terms of health care services, including through the efforts of diaspora networks and communities that have set up humanitarian initiatives and digital platforms, migrants have often not been systematically covered by COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination policies. Safe access to basic services, social protection or recovery assistance has repeatedly remained limited to “regular” migrants. In addition, the huge loss of jobs (including low-skilled jobs in which many migrants are employed) and the increasing economic crisis have contributed to the **exclusion of migrants from ‘host’ societies**.

That said, progress has been registered for remittances, declared as essential services in many countries, which have been supported by digitalization and the provision of incentives in terms of fees. Remittances have become one of the most important sources of development and resilience in many communities around the world, but challenges remain, especially in terms of digital channels of remittances, which depend on good infrastructure, as well as digital and financial inclusion. Many migrants, especially women, remain sidelined as they lack the basic tools (access to financial

services and mobile-enabled data) to send money back to their countries of origin.

Finally, the fourth roundtable, devoted to Objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23, focused on migrant protection, especially during the pandemic period, and migrant data collection. In this regard, as outlined in the declaration, many Member States have adopted policies to protect migrants and their health by granting health and social services and extending visas and residence permits to prevent migrants from falling into irregular status. Regarding data collection and analysis, although many countries have developed migration observatories to exchange data on migrants, many problems remain. Indeed, data collection is still poor in terms of systematicity, and it is still difficult to get a clear picture of migrants in each country disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, and geographic location. In addition, **intolerance, xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination remain widespread**.

In terms of recommendations, the declaration aims to improve policies, especially by learning from the pandemic period under the principle of “leaving no one behind”, through a commitment to integrate “promising practices, consistent with the Global Compact and its guiding principles, into migration policies, accelerating efforts to integrate public health considerations into migration policies, and incorporating the health needs of migrants in national and local health-care services”. The most important focuses are those related to **the social inclusion of migrants to address discrimination and socioeconomic inequalities**. In this sense, the fight against xenophobia and racism should be at the core of these policies to end the negative perception of migrants.

A further recommendation is on the protection of women and children, who are the most vulnerable among migrants. In this direction, the declaration states: we stress the importance of ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the formulation and implementation of migration policies, while recognizing their independence, agency and leadership.

Another noteworthy point is that strictly related to the increasing commitment of the international community in the development of the SDGs. This should be realized through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, with the goal of eliminating adverse drivers and structural factors.

Regarding migration-related objectives, the development of a common and coherent policy, as well as measures to combat illegal migration and human trafficking, should only be achieved through increased cooperation and collaboration among countries of origin, transit and arrival, according to the declaration. In addition, much attention has been paid to policies related to land and sea arrival procedures for all migrants, including procedures for rescued persons, promoting responsibility-sharing in providing a place of safety, in accordance with international law.

Last but not least is the commitment to **consider migration as a cross-cutting issue**. This is a very central point that means that migration should be intended as a cross-sectoral phenomenon that should be addressed as such.

It means that it should be faced through national programs “in line with a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, and expand international cooperation and partnerships to implement the vision of the Global Compact, including through financial and technical assistance to developing countries, especially to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries”⁷.



Ph. www.alberodellavita.org



Ph. <https://portaleimmigrazione.eu>

⁷ Ibid., pp. 12.



3. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the great efforts of the international community in implementing the GCM, there is still little progress in terms of achieving the 23 Objectives of the Compact.

Pessimism, for now, seems to be the common sentiment among policymakers and analysts of the Progress declaration. Indeed, as outlined by Colin Rajah, coordinator of the Civil Society Action Committee and civil society representative to the IMRF opening plenary, “overall, the hopes of four years ago, immediately after the adoption of the GCM, have not been realized with the IMRF outcome document, which lacks ambition and vision”⁸.

COVID-19 has generated negative effects on less resilient societies, especially in poor areas of the world. In addition, the response of governments has not always been efficient, especially in terms of protecting the rights of the most vulnerable, especially migrants and migrant women.

Climate change, food security, and instability are still poorly considered and addressed by governments, despite the fact that they remain possible drivers of future waves of migration, regardless of their importance on sustainable human development. Also, there is still a lack of policies and practices, especially at the institutional level, that address the **xenophobia and discrimination** against migrants still prevalent in host communities.

Moreover, achieving the Goals of the 2030 Agenda still requires States to make progress, considering that the link between migration and development is still poorly understood.

That said, Russia’s recent invasion of Ukraine demonstrated how Europe can respond positively and immediately to huge waves of migration. The adoption of the Temporary Protection Directive means that the EU can improve its reception capacity. Building on the lessons learned from the Ukrainian crisis, the EU can decide to extend its channels of solidarity to other populations fleeing war and destruction, including engaging in public awareness campaigns on migration.

Moreover, while the COVID-19 pandemic was a lesson in terms of access to social services, the war in Ukraine has shown that alternative and less emergency policies can be put on the table to ensure that all migrants receive the basic rights they need.

These two tragic events should stimulate governments to engage in the development of coordinated migration policies, implementing cooperation between countries of origin, transit and arrival, but also accelerating these policies in terms of academic and vocational skills and facilitating entry measures. This can only happen if governments consider migration as an intersectional and structural phenomenon that affects all aspects of society which, in turn, requires comprehensive policies - from basic services to social and economic inclusion.

⁸See: <https://csactioncommittee.org/put-migrant-voices-front-and-center/>



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