

## Regional Review Conference of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Arab Region

Day 2: Thursday, 25 February 2021, 13:30-14:45

### Round Table 4: Review of GCM objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23

#### Remarks by

**Ms. Roueida Adel El Hage, Regional Representative, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa**

1. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has welcomed **the Global Compact for Migration** as a **global commitment** to better govern migration by putting migrants and their human rights at the centre. The Global Compact for Migration provides a principled and comprehensive roadmap to reduce the vulnerabilities faced by migrants at different stages of migration; and to ensure the effective protection of migrants' human rights (*para. 12 GCM*).
2. The COVID-19 crisis has shed a spotlight on the human rights challenges faced by migrants in vulnerable situations. Migrant workers living in overcrowded accommodation were disproportionately affected by the virus. **Many migrant workers, including domestic workers, lost their jobs** and ended up in irregular situations, and in some cases in detention centres, lacking effective access to justice. However, at the same time, the pandemic has clearly showed us how much we are connected.
3. States have for instance provided migrants, regardless of their status with access to COVID-related **healthcare services** to ensure the health and safety of everyone. **States have extended** visa and residence permits to avoid migrants falling into an irregular status; have established alternatives to immigration detention; and have halting forced returns. The Global Compact for Migration has proven an essential and powerful framework to guide State action to reduce risks and vulnerabilities faced by migrants in the most critical times of the pandemic.
4. It is important to reiterate that 'vulnerability' does not mean an inherent weakness on the part of the person. The vulnerable situations in which migrants find themselves **are very often created or exacerbated by migration policies that fail to uphold human rights**.
5. The UN [Principles and Guidelines on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations](#) provide specific guidance to States in designing, implementing and monitoring measures to protect the human rights of migrants in vulnerable situations. **The Global Compact for Migration encourages States to draw on their content and recommendations to inform the delivery of a human rights-based global compact**.
6. The Global Compact for Migration also recognizes that promoting evidence-based public discourse and **confronting anti-migrant sentiments** is part of a comprehensive approach to migration. In the Global Compact for Migration, States have committed to promote a more realistic, humane and constructive public discourse on migration, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against migrants.

7. On International Migrants' Day, OHCHR launched a new, interactive [toolbox](#), which provides ideas and activities for how to change **the way we speak about migration**, encouraging a shift to more hopeful and positive stories, and moving away from **toxic and harmful ideas**, providing **actions and inspiration on how to create hope- and values-based narratives on migration**. Together with States and other partners, we hope the toolbox can encourage and empower more people to stand up for migrants' human rights.
8. For too long, many State responses to migration have been uncoordinated, ad-hoc and unilateral, often failing to see migrants as fellow human beings or to uphold their safety, dignity and rights. The Global Compact for Migration **recognizes that migration is a cross-border issue that no State can govern alone**.
9. Simply put, we cannot hope to address migration in all of its dimensions without stepping up regional cooperation. OHCHR encourages States to use the Global Compact for Migration as a roadmap of improved regional cooperation built on respect for human rights.

Thank you