



Mixed  
Migration  
Centre

# COVID-19 and the Global Compact for Migration

Is a Compact born in a crisis born again in the whirlwinds of  
three global crises?

MMC Discussion Paper, September 2020



*“What greater impact could the crises have on the GCM, than to generate the most concrete of proof of its relevance: States and others taking action, even without clear prior reference to the GCM, in precisely the directions it prescribes.”*

**Front cover photo credit:**

Bram Frouws/December 2018

Marrakesh, Morocco. Entrance to the venue of the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

# Acknowledgements

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## About this report

This report was commissioned by the Mixed Migration Centre (which is part of the Danish Refugee Council) and focuses on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. A companion report, commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council, focuses on the Global Compact on Refugees. In December 2018, UN Member States adopted the Compacts in two overwhelming majority votes at the UN General Assembly.

As the Compacts approach their second anniversary, the reports provide the possibility to consider how each Compact is being referred to and implemented in the very particular time of not one but three COVID-related global crises. Together, the reports further provide an invitation to consider important intersections, and gaps, in the complementarity of the two Compacts.

The information and views set out in this report are those of the author and the Mixed Migration Centre and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Danish Refugee Council or any of the donors supporting the work of MMC or this report. Responsibility for the content of this report lies entirely with the MMC.

## About MMC

The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is a global network consisting of seven regional hubs (Asia, East Africa & Yemen, Europe, Middle East, North Africa, West Africa and Latin America & Caribbean) and a central unit in Geneva. The MMC is a leading source of independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of, and governed by, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). While its institutional link to DRC ensures MMC's work is grounded in operational reality, it acts as an independent source of data, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration for policy makers, practitioners, journalists, and the broader humanitarian sector. The position of the MMC does not necessarily reflect the position of DRC.

For more information on MMC visit our website: [www.mixedmigration.org](http://www.mixedmigration.org)





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# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>COVID</b>	COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2 (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2)
<b>DRC</b>	Danish Refugee Council
<b>GCM</b>	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; here also “the Compact”
<b>GCR</b>	Global Compact for Refugees; here also “Refugee Compact”
<b>GFMD</b>	Global Forum on Migration and Development
<b>HLD</b>	UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development
<b>HLM</b>	UN High-level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants; also called the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants
<b>HLPF</b>	UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
<b>ICMPD</b>	the International Centre for Migration Policy Development
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>MMC</b>	Mixed Migration Centre
<b>SDGs</b>	sustainable development goals, under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# 1. Introduction

What does a less than two-year old global agreement offer against three sudden globe-shaking crises?

This report is a check-in on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration<sup>1</sup>: two-thirds of the way

into the year, are the trio of linked crises this year—the COVID pandemic plus the economic and protection crises it has generated—being seen as a Compact cemetery, or a proving ground?

## One virus, three crises: A COVID cascade fully global in 2020



- The **global health crisis** exploded in 2020, exponentially and worldwide from outbreaks of the unknown, wildly contagious and lethal new virus now traced to December 2019.<sup>2</sup>
- Aimed desperately at controlling the pandemic, a kaleidoscope of policy decisions by national and other authorities worldwide immediately triggered a **global economic crisis**, with abrupt closing of borders, businesses and workplaces, astonishing lockdowns of towns, cities and regions, and weeks-to-months of quarantine and home confinement, resulting in catastrophic drops in employment and income, food and housing security, business activity, trade and GDP the world over. Hundreds of millions of lower-paid and less educated workers and others were hit double, especially among the two billion total workers in informal and “gig” economies everywhere, losing income and jobs in far greater numbers and for longer periods, often with little personal reserves and no social protection.<sup>3</sup>
- Also immediately, and within both the health and economic crises, refugees and migrants and members of their families began to suffer disproportionately, regardless of their immigration status and often doing work deemed essential to others and the economy of their “new” country. Reports and data confirmed significantly higher levels both of exposure to the virus, sickness and death, and in loss of income, jobs, food and housing security, and mobility options, including refuge for those seeking safety and asylum. Remittances have plummeted by 20% or more. Countless millions, at times even those with regular immigration status, have confronted ordinary—or hardened—exclusion from food, health, shelter, education and other public services, and widespread scapegoating, discrimination and xenophobia. Among their particular vulnerabilities: situations of crowded worksites, living space, camps and detention, being stranded or forced to return, and abandoned or vilified once home. This third COVID-related crisis, specific to refugees and migrants, is what UN Secretary-General António Guterres calls the **global protection crisis**.<sup>4</sup>
- In waves that ebb and flow, but tidal waves in places, these three crises are not disconnected. Their intersections and overlaps multiply their potency, and, it is reasonable to expect, their duration too.

1 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018), [https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713\\_agreed\\_outcome\\_global\\_compact\\_for\\_migration.pdf](https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf)

2 WHO Declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, 30 January 2020, [https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov))

3 IMF Statement: The Great Lockdown: Worst Economic Downturn Since the Great Depression, 23 March 2020, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/03/23/pr2098-imf-managing-director-statement-following-a-g20-ministerial-call-on-the-coronavirus-emergency>

4 COVID-19 and People on the Move, UN Policy Brief, June 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/policy-brief-covid-19-and-people-move-june-2020>

On the one hand, this report offers a kind of energy check just ahead of the Compact's two-year anniversary at the end of 2020. On the other hand, almost a *validity* test, too. That is, in a world where north, south, east and west, countries and people everywhere reel from not one, but these three crises fully global: where does the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration matter for people across or crossing borders, and the communities and countries from, through and to which they move?

Born itself out of a crisis—the so-called migration crisis of 2015, is this Global Compact actually fit for responding to new crises?

As they wrestle with today's three crises, are States and others looking to the GCM before they take action, as a kind of dynamic *global positioning* system that points the way to practical alternatives and solutions in the three crises? Do they cite the connection of their action(s) to the GCM later, in reports or other exchange of practice? Or not at all—and if not, why not? Does it really matter if States and other actors cite the Compact as long as their practices match it?

But most important to everyone consulted for this report: is the Compact making a difference for people on the ground, or is it just one more paper and set of processes?

How do leaders active in international migration at the front-lines answer these questions?

Reflections from the front-lines. Nearly two years on from the near-universal agreement to adopt the Global Compact, and in the middle of not one but three crises wreaking havoc worldwide, this is a gathering of reflections from a mix of 34 direct interviews and inputs among leaders in States, cities and local authorities, business, civil society and stakeholders across a diversity of geography and on front-lines of all kinds at local, national, regional and international, levels. Listed in Annex 2, 21 are themselves current or former migrants or refugees.

To be clear, the report is not an international perspective developed in isolation from migration policy centers in Geneva, New York or elsewhere. Nor at the other end of the spectrum is this a full global mapping, either of policy, practice or of actors.

Straight from leaders and actors in the center of international migration in a time of three crises, these are their reflections. They are presented directly, and not on the part of the author or the Mixed Migration Centre publishing this report.

Perspectives from interviews and inputs are reflected here under Chatham House rules of confidentiality. As such, the content of interviews and inputs is neither attributed nor is identifying information provided, other

than in a few exceptions, where authorization was expressly provided by the source, either directly to the writer or in a context that was public.

## Principal Findings and Recommendations

These eight findings and recommendations present a consolidated sense from among those consulted for this report.

### I. General Findings on COVID and the GCM

**1. The energy around the Compact for Migration** continues to be positive but scattered in the whirlwinds of "COVID-time". There seems little change among either the overwhelming majority of States (152) that voted to adopt the Compact in 2018 or the small subset of States opposed (5) or abstaining (12). If anything, civil society actors, business leaders, and city representatives seem more positive. Many believe that the GCM has actually been validated by the wide range of actions endorsed in the GCM that States have implemented in responses to the three linked crises.

However many among those consulted for this report also express concern, even alarm, at the mix of hesitation and distraction that is impeding States and other actors from expressly referencing the Compact as they act in ways that clearly correspond to it. Many note the crushing rush and urgency of responding to three COVID-linked crises exploding all at the same time, which naturally makes the newness of reporting under the Compact seem manifestly less urgent. More than a few also blame ongoing pressure to ignore the Compact from some of the States who were pushing in that direction even before COVID-time, and/or a political sense in some States that there is more risk than gain in linking domestic action regarding migration to the Global Compact. As several of those consulted for this report noted, this would not be the first time that governments were shy about referencing an international framework for what they're doing.

**2. Citing is important nonetheless:** there was strong convergence among those consulted for the report that **it is imperative to connect and cite the Compact when concrete action implements it.** To be clear, linking to and reporting actions under the Compact is a priority that accompanies, not precedes the action. Nor does it really matter who does the linking; as one civil society leader put it, "if a State is shy for whatever reason from doing that, OK, but everyone else can make the point, and over time it becomes more and more normal, even less threatening for States that are shy."

There was also wide agreement that the particular

value of citing the Compact was not really to “validate” the GCM, but to reinforce it as a source of inspiration and to provide examples of concrete implementation for exchange, assessment, replication and adaptation.

3. Many expect the reports that States and others provide to the **regional migration review forums** that the UN is organizing at the end of 2020 to make copious connection between the Compact for Migration and what States have been doing most especially in response to the three crises. Many of those consulted believe that the effect of those reports connecting so much action to the GCM will generate further energy and momentum, motivating States and others to refer to and implement the Compact even more—for any second wave of the three crises, and beyond.

4. Many of those consulted for this report expressed surprise at how much “new and different” **change on the ground** has occurred in migration policies and actions during these crises, and how many of them directly match parts of the Compact that were relatively “new and different”. They pointed, for example, to the ever-widening range of regularizations, access to health care and other public services and alternatives to detention to name a few (See the Table in Chapter 2 for more).

## II. Specific Findings and Recommendations

### 5. On preparing for a “next wave”... and recovery: moving from “temporary” to permanent actions and solutions

#### FINDING:

Even as the “first” wave of the three COVID-related crises continues to drive decisions and implementation of GCM actions, it is also necessary to prepare for the next wave that is expected. Many suggest that in the absence of vaccinations that are effective and widespread—neither of which is certain at the time of this writing, and with government resources depleted, the next “wave” may be a tsunami, leading again with the health crisis, but with possibly higher contagion, sickness and death, together with a second wave of the global economic and protection crises too.

There are signs already that the second wave of all three crises may be worse than the first wave. But like the first, any “next wave” of the three crises will also require solutions. So will recovery from the crises.

More than GCM actions simply providing alternatives and solutions that are effective for reaction within the crises, i.e., in this “temporary”

period, there is a growing appreciation that many of those same alternatives and solutions will also contribute to actual recovery from the crises. Far and away the alternatives and solutions most commonly mentioned are regularization of essential workers and their families, in particular, in home and institutional healthcare, food growing, meatpacking, grocery stores, public transportation and construction, and access of *all* to basic healthcare (i.e., no one is safe unless everyone is safe), with firewalls to ensure access of migrants and members of their families without reprisals.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

for States, working in particular with civil society, business and city actors, and with international and regional organizations:

- More than simply report actions responding to the three crises that correspond to the GCM, also identify the specific actions that most recognize, empower and benefit from migrants and migration as part of solutions.
- Among the actions where migrants are part of the solutions in the crises, assess which ones are also part of solutions for recovery from the crises, and beyond.
- Communicate and exchange with other States and actors, and with the public, regarding the value of those actions as solutions in the crises—including in any “second wave”, and their enduring value for recovery and beyond.
- Actively reinforce the growing awareness in many countries of migrants as part of solutions—in particular, regarding essential work and essential workers—as the major new factor in the shifting of public opinion and narratives, and extend that appreciation for essential work and workers in the crises to a recognition of their essential role in recovery from the crises, and long-term.
- Recognize and insist that many of the “temporary” solutions in times of crises are also solutions for recovery from those crises and long-term; and make permanent those that have clearly been successful.

## 6. On what the crises show in GCM gaps, overlaps and underlaps

### FINDING:

The crises are also exposing the need to further interpret or even re-consider certain actions included or omitted under the GCM. For example:

- Some actions that build further upon the GCM that States have recently implemented as practical alternatives and solutions for crisis problems—and beyond. Standout examples include regularization specifically of “essential workers” as a class; access to crisis-related relief assistance, and emergency simplification of immigration procedures regarding residence and employment, including automatic extension or bridging of lapsed visas and work authorizations.
- Some actions for which States adopted ambiguous language in the GCM in order to reach compromise in difficult negotiations of the Compact, e.g., GCM Objective 15(b), which backed away from a strong commitment in earlier GCM drafts to firewalls that systematically prevent reprisals against migrants and members of their families who access health and other public services

Inefficiencies, imbroglios, and gaps in protection where the Compact for Migration intersects in the real world with refugees and asylum seekers, the Compact on Refugees<sup>5</sup> and even UNHCR. Among those consulted for this report, civil society actors in particular emphasized that much work has to be done where the two Compacts, and those who implement them, are supposed to complement each other in order to ensure appropriate protection of all refugees and migrants. For example, both Compacts touch upon protection of people in labour markets and workplaces, and in situations of mixed migration. Gaps in protection in those contexts, among others, have exploded in COVID-time, a major part of what UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres calls the “global protection crisis”.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A “companion” report to this one is currently being completed for the Danish Refugee Council<sup>6</sup>, focused on COVID-19 and the Global Compact on Refugees. Reflection on the two reports together may also provide insight into how the two Compacts work alongside of, and

with, each other—or not. Where does their implementation truly complement the one to the other; where do they overlap—or, most worrying and provocative, underlap? Why, and what action can be taken to make sure that real alternatives and solutions are built with and provided to real people, their communities, and the world, in real time?

- This reflection should be led by front-line stakeholders, with representatives of cities in prominent roles. Actors who are or work both with refugees and migrants should be priority participants, including the Mixed Migration Centre global network and the three leading global civil society coalitions: the Civil Society Action Committee, coordinated by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC); the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA); and the NGO Committee on Migration/New York.

## 7. On pros and perils of the new remote

### FINDING:

The crises have required, and generated, unusually urgent, often rapid-fire multi-actor exchange, analysis, guidance, and communications pertaining to GCM matters and the GCM itself. Zoom and other electronic platforms have globalized a lot of this, including far greater and more “democratic” participation”, with extremely well-attended webinars organized by States and other leading actors in search of exchange, cooperation and partnership.

While these and other benefits of remote engagement are considerable, they come with many risks for achievement of actions like those to which States committed in the Compact for Migration, whether in crises as now or beyond. Already, two risks stand out in particular:

- What might be lost—or not even achieved—when key working relationships are chronically remote, not only with colleagues and other actors, but with migrants in the center of it all.
- The undermeasured risk of an outsized computer culture, where “click-and-send, click-and-attend” and keyboard-driven process take over to the detriment of real action on the ground.

<sup>5</sup> Global Compact on Refugees, [https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR\\_English.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The Mixed Migration Centre, which commissioned this paper on COVID and the GCM, is part of the Danish Refugee Council.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Watch for signs of keyboard-driven process overload and fatigue setting in; carefully consider capacity and what is reasonable with respect to things like webinars, surveys one-after-the-other and data collection, formalized plans and reviews that can be extra heavy—especially in the midst of not one, but three staggering crises.
- Before this becomes a self-inflicted “fourth crisis”, i.e., underperformance, beware the unintended consequences of incentivizing words over action, and positioning on paper over making a difference in real lives and communities.

### **8. Finally, and most exciting: on new energy, dynamic partners and common ground**

#### **FINDING:**

Perhaps the most surprising finding—and thrilling: the crises have driven strong affirmations of allegiance and/or expectation regarding the GCM, including increasing recognition of common ground and *clear appetite for much greater partnering*, among civil society, business and city actors in particular.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This is worthy of its own, full study without delay, possibly connecting with the Global Compact on Refugees as well.

# Chapter 1. The hope and scope of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)

## Origins and acceleration.

Academics and migration experts generally trace the origins of 2018's Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to the almost universal recognition at the 1994 World Conference on Population and Development, in Cairo<sup>7</sup>, that multilateral cooperation was needed in order to increase the benefits and reduce the negatives of international migration, whether by refugees, migrants, returnees or displaced persons.

However, for nearly ten years after that conference, there was, as representatives of a leading State, international organization and NGO recall, a distinct and disheartening lull of relative inaction on any serious discussion of migration governance beyond bilateral and regional processes. The record slowness with which the 1990 UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families<sup>8</sup> came into force—needing a full 13 years for just 20 States to ratify—only underscored the disinclination of States during this period to move forward on broad migration governance of any “global” nature.

Shortly after the turn of the millennium, a number of States and international organizations like Switzerland, ILO and IOM accelerated efforts at more coherent management of migration, including processes to build global governance of migration that could complement—i.e., both inform and complete—national governance. Most notably, processes within and outside the United Nations system produced the “Doyle Report”<sup>9</sup> in 2002, the Berne Initiative's *International Agenda for Migration Management*<sup>10</sup> (2001 – 2003), the two widely ratified international Protocols on human trafficking<sup>11</sup> and smuggling of migrants<sup>12</sup> (entering into force in December 2003 and January 2004 respectively, under the UN Convention Against Transnational Crime), and ILO's landmark, but non-binding *Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration*<sup>13</sup>, developed over the years 2004 – 2006.

## The run from 2003.

Practically speaking, it was during those same early years of the new millennium that the seed that sprouted and sprinted almost without interruption towards the GCM in 2018 was planted by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Global Commission on International Migration.

Annan launched the Commission in 2003 to make recommendations for how the United Nations could break through what he thought were chronic UN logjams that blocked cooperation on migration, leaving gaps, disorder, risk and lost opportunities for Member States as well as for migrants. He asked the Commission to reflect on new forms of governance that States would see as respectful, effective, and complementary to their own, sovereign management of the migration that crossed their borders and regions.

And that's what the Commission did, in a two-year process of global, regional and thematic consultations with experts, actors and migrants everywhere. In 2005, the report of the Commission<sup>14</sup> made 33 recommendations across almost every aspect of international migration. In particular, the report emphasized the link between migration and development, and the importance of good, governance at all levels. Among the recommendations, two called explicitly for reflection and a “revision of current institutional arrangements” to “ensure a more coherent and effective institutional response to the opportunities and challenges presented by international migration.” It was clear to all that the aim was to rethink approaches too much divided between refugees and migrants.

The reception of the Report of the Global Commission was at best mixed, and the UN logjam unmoved. Nonetheless, the Report ably provided Annan the grounds for three immediate masterstrokes: the launch of an ambitious series of global meetings both within and outside the UN, a focus not on migration alone, but on migration and development, and the appointment in 2006 of Sir Peter Sutherland as the first UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration. Authorized and reporting at the highest level of the UN, over the next ten years Sutherland poured his legendary vision and vigor into the task of mobilizing, driving, bridging and building convergence on practical action to improve migration governance, at every level

7 International Conference on Population and Development (1994), <https://www.unfpa.org/events/international-conference-population-and-development-icpd>

8 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, available here: [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg\\_no=IV-13&chapter=4&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-13&chapter=4&clang=en)

9 Report of the Secretary-General, A/57/387, 2002

10 Berne Initiative, <https://www.iom.int/berne-initiative>

11 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, available here: [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18&clang=en)

12 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, available here: [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-12-b&chapter=18](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-b&chapter=18)

13 ILO, *Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration*, [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS\\_178672/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS_178672/lang--en/index.htm)

14 Global Commission on International Migration (2005). *Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action*, [https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahia/site/shared/shared/mainsite/policy\\_and\\_research/gcim/GCIM\\_Report\\_Complete.pdf](https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahia/site/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/gcim/GCIM_Report_Complete.pdf)

and by everyone affected—including migrants of all kinds themselves.

### **Years of new speed and progress.**

The rest is history. With speed and progress that many interviewed for this report still marvel was unusual and unexpected—both for such processes and in the field of migration, the course to the 2018 Global Compact for Migration ran through two UN General Assembly High-level Dialogues on International Migration and Development (HLD) in 2006<sup>15</sup> and 2013<sup>16</sup>; a series of 11 annual Global Forums on Migration and Development<sup>17</sup> that the first HLD had expressly created to be led and organized outside the UN by States themselves, not the UN; and, of decisive effect towards the 2018 Compact: the unanimous adoption by all 193 UN Member States of the non-binding but monumental 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>18</sup> (the “sustainable development goals,” SDGs) in September, 2015, following a massive three-year process of inclusive discussion worldwide and negotiation at the UN General Assembly.

How decisive was the effect of the 2030 Agenda towards the Global Compact for Migration? SDG Goal 10.7 called on countries to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.” It is not a coincidence, but rather formative and directive that the 2018 Global Compact picks up the formula “safe, orderly and regular migration” in its very title. In doing so, it directly ties its parentage, and with it both substantial authority and responsibility, to the 2030 Agenda. Framing itself as a tool to achieve a goal adopted by all UN Member States, unanimously.

But the journey that arrived specifically at a Global Compact for Migration had three big jolts to it.

### **Jolt 1: A Compact for a crisis.**

The first jolt—and so important to consider in these current days of crisis—is that it was a “crisis” that inspired the first thought of a Global Compact: specifically, the so-called “migration crisis” of 2015.

Centered predominantly in Europe and the Mediterranean region, the “crisis” referred to the plight of millions of Syrian and other refugees and migrants forcibly displaced by conflict, and/or lack of food, water or work, moving or stranded in a full mix of circumstances and vulnerabilities, and either too many in too short a period for transit or destination countries to manage as they wanted, or rejected outright by them. The number and mix of migrants and refugees often together, arriving suddenly: their basic needs; the human rights of all and the further rights specific to the refugees, children, and victims of torture, trafficking and trauma among them; all collided in real time with the operational, legal, social and political challenges of countries of transit, residence and destination working to respond, even with the help of international organizations and civil society partners. To paraphrase one civil society leader at the front line back then, “it is a mistake to underestimate the difficulty of providing decent systems and response in situations of such mix, scale and urgency.”

So the idea of a Global Compact was born straight out of crisis. That is, even as its scope wound up going much further, a central purpose of the Compact was to help avoid, respond to and remedy crisis. And namely: related to large movements.

### **Refugees and migrants together.**

Indeed, moved by the dilemma not only of those refugees and migrants, but manifestly also of the countries through and to which they struggled to move, Peter Sutherland galvanized the UN Member States and system in September 2016 to convene at the UN General Assembly a High-level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants<sup>19</sup> (HLM). In an unprecedented and unequivocal way, this brought together the two streams of human mobility, i.e., refugees and migrants, that States, the UN system, and to perhaps a surprising extent, many even in civil society had long kept separate. The objective was straight, and to many, amazing: no less than to urgently update and move forward with a more unified approach to global governance of migration that would step up to complement, not control, and effectively, the sovereign efforts by States to manage migration of concern to them.

15 High-level dialogue on international migration and development, 2006, <https://www.un.org/migration/background.html>

16 High-level dialogue on international migration and development, 2013, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/>

17 See <https://www.gfmd.org/>

18 See [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

19 For more on the High-Level meeting in New York in 2016, see here <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit>

## **Jolt 2: Suddenly not one Compact; two.**

The second jolt, several interviewed for this report suggested, was almost a full reversion. In the run up to the HLM, Sutherland's vision, which had been one single Compact encompassing refugees and migrants together, met vociferous resistance among more than a few States and some in the UN system. They insisted that the more than half-century-old separation between refugees and migrants and the international institutions devoted to them should be scrupulously maintained. Blocked by that resistance, and even more so when Sutherland fell gravely ill on the eve of the HLM and unable to lead further, it was decided to move forward with two separate compacts, one for migrants and one on refugees.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, it was a monumental reversal. The unified approach was gone. Gone with it was the hope it had held out for improving institutional efficiencies and policy coherence in providing assistance, protection and solutions in contexts of human mobility across the board, including for refugees and others with distinct rights under specific conventions.

At the same time, the way ahead was open—if entirely uncertain—for a fuller focus on, as some in civil society referred to it, the “wide world of migrants”. That is, as noted by at least four among those consulted for this report from States, international organizations and civil society, once the migration Compact was “told” to leave the focus on refugees for a separate compact and UNHCR, the Compact for Migration was “basically free to focus on everything else in contexts of migrants and migration.”

States and others engaged in the process frequently expressed a double-determination: to make the most of “a once in a generation” opportunity for multilateral consensus-building, and to make that agreement as “concrete and real-world as possible, rather than forced to fit existing institutional approaches and architecture”, whether of the international community or of any other level or sector of society.

The third jolt in the development of the Global Compact for Migration gathered force in the run up to the HLM, and was solidified in the “New York Declaration” that was adopted by all 193 Member States at its close.

## **Jolt 3: “360 degrees except for refugees”.**

Specifically, rather than limiting the scope of the new migration Compact to contexts of large movements only (which was the initial framing for the HLM), States and others repositioned their Compact work openly, ambitiously and with real-world sense to focus on the “full 360 degrees” of migrants and migration.

It was, as several of those consulted for this report agreed, another “remarkable change” in direction—“but in a positive way.” The effect of adopting this 360° approach could not have been greater on the scope of the emerging Compact.

Suddenly, the Compact took up the situation of States, communities, people and their family members from the point at which people began to consider migrating—including causes and drivers, and whether or not forced or regular—through migration journeys and transit countries, to durable settlement and integration in a country of residence or destination, or return.

Not only in large movements, but in real-world movements of all size, scope and vulnerabilities, including the increasingly “mixed migration” movements in which men, women and children, accompanied by family members or not, journeyed and suffered together: refugees, asylum seekers, victims of human torture, trafficking and trauma—sometimes sick, disabled or elderly.

Moreover, regardless of immigration status or stage of the journey, the Compact would treat situations and challenges of employment, access to public services like health, education and justice, integration, discrimination and xenophobia. This before-during-and-after-journey scope framed the New York Declaration's call for development and adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.

Anticipating that wide panorama and its need of a full UN response, UN Secretary-General created the UN Network on Migration in May 2018—already seven months before the Compact was adopted. Expressing the commitment of “the United Nations system” in particular—but not only—to “supporting the implementation, follow-up and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”, the new Network's mission would be “to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States. In carrying out its mandate, the Network will prioritize the rights and wellbeing of migrants and their communities of destination, origin, and transit. It will place emphasis on those issues where a common UN system approach would add value and

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20 Following two years of separate but extensive processes of consultations, thematic meetings and negotiations, the two Compacts—both non-binding, like the SDGs—were adopted by supermajorities of UN Member States voting at the UN General Assembly: the Global Compact for Refugees 17 December 2018 (181 Member States for, 2 against and 3 abstaining); the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration 19 December 2018 (152 Member States for, 5 against and 12 abstaining).

from which results and impact can be readily gauged.”<sup>21</sup> Comprised at launch of 38 UN agencies engaged with migrants and issues of human mobility, the Network would be governed by an Executive Committee of eight UN agencies “with clear mandates, technical expertise and capacity in migration-related fields”, and managed by a small Secretariat based in Geneva, with the IOM Director General serving as Network Coordinator.<sup>22</sup>

Several of those consulted for this report, including representatives of States as well as international organizations and civil society, recall their surprise when they first heard States, UN and other leaders, including at IOM, signal this wider scope for the GCM. Few thought that the States-led drafting process, the negotiations, and the final agreement would succeed so well to fill the final Compact with that real-world 360° vision.

### **But... the interaction of the two Compacts?**

As one of those consulted for this report observed, “the wider scope let the Compact for Migration cover all people on the move in international migration, and in all contexts related to their movement, up to the line drawn reserving recognized asylum seekers and refugees to the purview of the Global Compact on Refugees.” Still, as clear as that may seem to be, several of those consulted for this report—from States and civil society in particular—regretted that “all sorts” of practical implications and questions regarding coherent application of the two separate Compacts (often referred to as “complementarity” or “interaction”), were, as one put it, “wholly left to be considered—somehow—later”, including, for example, in situations of mixed migration, among others.

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21 The Terms of Reference of the UN Network on Migration is available here, [https://www.un.org/en/conf/migration/assets/pdf/UN-Network-on-Migration\\_TOR.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/conf/migration/assets/pdf/UN-Network-on-Migration_TOR.pdf)

22 <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/about>

## Chapter 2. Compact = Act + Impact in the crises today: a snapshot

As noted, the very idea of a Global Compact was born straight out of crisis, namely, the sense of a migration crisis in 2015, with millions of refugees and migrants suddenly on the move and arriving in countries unprepared for or unwilling to accept them. Alternatives and solutions for responding in crisis situations were built into the Compact throughout.

### Compact: a snapshot

#### **23 objectives.**

The Global Compact is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration. The Compact contains a range of 23 objectives, each with a declaration of commitment (beginning with the crystal clear words “We commit to”) followed by a list of concrete actions that “we will draw from” in order “to realize this commitment”, often through cooperation of States together and with other actors.

The list of actions goes 360 degrees, i.e., across the fullness of before-during-and-after phenomena of migration, and covers movement of all kinds, whether voluntary and involuntary, large and small, regular or not, and mixed, and generally speaking, migrants of all kinds but not recognized refugees. (Refugees continue to be covered with specific international protection under the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, and the Global Compact on Refugees.)

#### **A deliberate States process and content.**

States designed the GCM to be action oriented, and practical. In many cases the Compact simply codified existing options. Some of the options were more obvious than others, even widely in practice, others not. And some, like regularization, making their first, careful appearance in an internationally negotiated agreement on migration. Indeed, regularization is referred to in not one, but two actions of the GCM, (i.e., (h) and (i) under Objective 7, Address and reduce Vulnerabilities in migration), but not with the words “regularization” or “naturalization”, which at the time the Compact was adopted, were still considered too difficult to include by name.

The Compact was adopted at the UN, but it would be a mistake to understate the importance of the GCM as the product of work led and controlled directly by the States, over more than a two-year process of global, regional and thematic consultations across all stakeholders. So even though it is not legally binding—like the sustainable development goals and so many other international frameworks for action—the Compact is a framework built by the States themselves. These are their ideas, their commitments, their specific actions; this is their

agreement. In fact, a huge majority of States voted to adopt it, in a formal vote of the UN General Assembly 19 December 2018. In the words of Mr. Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC), “Non-binding? It’s morally binding. Why should we worry?”

#### **How relevant are GCM commitments and actions for problems in the current three crises?**

Three-quarters of a year into the global COVID-related health, economic and protection crises of 2020, what are the most serious problems that the linked crises have caused in the situation of migrants and migration? And do parts of the GCM talk about such problems?

As usual, some of the best proof of a framework’s relevance is whether it has been implemented or not. The table below illustrates a range of actions in the GCM that have been implemented specifically in response to the three COVID-linked crises this year.

#### **Most importantly, is the Compact making a difference for people on the ground, or just one more paper and set of processes?**

This is the question that States and other actors are raising with more and more insistence, including major donors for these practices. And it is the question of the essence to migrants of all kinds, their families, the diaspora, and the communities and countries from, through and to which they move.

On the ground in COVID-time, many practices that the Compact explicitly encourages have been introduced or expanded, one after the other. In fact, most of those consulted for this report exclaimed that the number of practices that have been implemented since the beginning of the COVID outbreak have been of a type, speed and scope that “no one expected when the Compact was being adopted.”

Several further expressed surprise at the wide diversity of States implementing such practices—as one put it, it was “not just the usual States, or countries of origin” leading in implementation. And as one representative of civil society consulted for this report put it, “*what could be more real in making a difference on the ground than the examples we’ve been seeing?*”: regularization of essential workers, including asylum seekers; expanded access to public services, in particular health care; relaxation of visa renewal deadlines; suspension of deportation, and release from detention, often to community-based alternatives, as long advocated by civil society actors and explicitly endorsed in the GCM.

Here, many among those consulted for this report insisted on a further point of great clarity. In the whirlwinds of these three global crises, the role of civil society (refugees, migrants and diaspora included), in providing emergency relief of all kinds to migrants—often one-to-one; and of so many cities and local authorities working to provide not only emergency relief but often also critical access to key public services, has been, in a word: phenomenal. Front-line, every day, and phenomenal. It could fill a book.

For this report however, the following Table presents just a modest sampling of these actions and others. As indicated, most are actions that States in the GCM firmly committed to take forward, to make a difference to real people, communities and countries. Here the focus is implementation—and some gaps—in response to the COVID-linked crises.

# Solutions on the Ground in COVID-time: A Sampling of GCM Relevance, Implementation... and Gaps?

**Key: each of the nine sections below is organized in four horizontal rows:**

- **The first rows present crises problems most widely cited**, drawing from consultations and research for this report, these are some of that have arisen for refugees and migrants during the first eight months of 2020 from the three COVID-linked global crises, i.e., the health crisis, the global economic crisis, and the protection crisis.
- **The second rows present the provision(s) in the GCM, if any, most directly related** to that problem.
- **The third rows provide examples<sup>23</sup> of real policy change being implemented during the crises** that implement the GCM provision(s), whether or not the GCM was actually cited for having inspired those policies or programmes. .

- **The fourth rows provide examples of further policy change in a similar direction that goes beyond the GCM** and is being advocated or implemented in COVID-time. In consultations for this report, these examples were suggested as “gaps” that the three COVID-linked crises are revealing in the GCM.

**Note:** this is only a *sampling* of problems and policy changes, primarily at national levels; not a full mapping. Note further that many of these changes were implemented with limited scope and duration.

**Broad context:** COVID exposure or infection; loss of or inability regarding income, housing, immigration status or mobility

1		Crisis problem	Exclusion from healthcare
	Key GCM provision(s)		Broadly, the actions under Objective 15, “Provide access to basic services for migrants”, but further relevant specifically on health: Objectives 6, action (i); 7 actions (c) and (f); 13 actions (f) and (h); 16 action (c); and 22 action (b).
	Examples of related policy change		Access to COVID-related healthcare services extended to undocumented migrants: Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK (United Kingdom), UAE (United Arab Emirates) Other examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Italy</a>, <a href="#">France</a> and Luxembourg renewing residency permits due to expire, giving asylum seekers access to national healthcare</li> <li>• Malaysia: no fees for COVID-related healthcare</li> <li>• <a href="#">Morocco</a>: access to healthcare to migrant workers.</li> <li>• Portugal: healthcare made available for a limited period for immigrants and asylum seekers with pending residence applications</li> <li>• Qatar: free health care for migrant workers affected by COVID in the Doha Industrial Area</li> <li>• US: New York State access to COVID-related health services for low-income migrants regardless of status</li> </ul>
	Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		Wide and strong advocacy continuing by civil society, international organizations and many cities for explicit and systems-wide firewalls to separate access to healthcare—and the range of public services—from immigration enforcement. (Firewalls were explicitly included in initial GCM drafts but resisted by certain States in negotiations and replaced with lesser language of protection in the final GCM.)

23 Examples were drawn from many sources, including *What’s Happening to Undocumented People during the COVID-19 Pandemic?*, July 2020, by PICUM (the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants) and *COVID-19 Crisis through a Migration Lens*, April 2020, by the World Bank.

2		Crisis problem	Exclusion from healthcare
	Key GCM provision(s)		Broadly, the actions under Objective 15, "Provide access to basic services for migrants"; also consular role of countries of origin in Objective 14, actions (d), (e) and (f) in particular
	Examples of related policy change		Access regardless of immigration status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to emergency programmes: Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK</li> <li>to food and nutrition programmes: Belgium, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland</li> <li>to shelter programmes: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK</li> </ul>
	Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		Access to special COVID relief programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia: migrants from New Zealand covered in broader programme of payroll support to employers for temporary migrant workers</li> <li>Access includes undocumented immigrants: Ireland, and in the US: California and New York City</li> </ul>
3		Crisis problem	Unpaid wages for work performed
	Key GCM provision(s)		GCM Guiding principles (b) on international cooperation, (d) rule of law and due process, and (f) human rights across all stages of the migration cycle"; also Objectives 7 actions (c), (g) and (h); 9 action (f) in contexts of smuggling of migrants; 10 actions (e) and (h) in human trafficking; and broadly Objective 21
	Examples of related policy change		Yet to be determined in the context of the current crises, however there are examples of existing, but often underused mechanisms and processes that focus in various degrees on recovering unpaid wages in such circumstances, e.g., Bahrain, India, Myanmar [Migrant Worker Center of Confederation of Trade Unions, with support from ILO], Qatar
	Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		Strong new movement of civil society groups, including trade unions and workers organizations, joined by a growing number of governments, international organizations and the private sector, actively advocating a new "Transitional Justice Mechanism" to recoup unpaid wages
4		Crisis problem	Residing, working and/or lapsing into irregular or undocumented status
	Key GCM provision(s)		The GCM points to—but never uses the words—"regularization" or "naturalization". Specifically, in Objective 7, Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration", in particular action (h), "develop accessible and expedient procedures that facilitate transitions from one status to another... including for those who have fallen out of regular status"; and action (i), "build on existing practices to facilitate migrants in an irregular status to an individual assessment that may lead to regular status"
	Examples of related policy change		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canada: full regularization with paths to citizenship for asylum seekers in essential jobs</li> </ul> Other examples of temporary regularization or other legal protection for certain workers deemed "essential": <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Argentina, Australia and Paraguay extended visas</li> <li>Italy extended temporary residence permits</li> <li>Spain: temporary regular status for agricultural workers</li> <li>US: some suspension of enforcement against migrant farmworkers deemed essential</li> </ul>
	Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s) Civil society, and to an extent city and business actors, have advocated widely and strongly for regularization as a central logic of migration policy. Simplification of procedures, including automatic extension or bridging of lapsed visas and work authorizations: Australia, Portugal, UAE; and speedy processing of provisional documents upon arrival: Uruguay

5 Crisis problem		Migrants stranded without ability to move either forward or home because of lockdown of migrant housing, cities or closed borders
Key GCM provision(s)		Crosscuts with other rows, especially on access to healthcare and emergency and/or COVID relief programmes, # 1 + 2 above; Also broadly: Objectives 5 (pathways for regular migration) action (g) "... admission based on compassionate, humanitarian or other consideration", including "owing to precarious situations"; and Objective 21, on return readmission and reintegration.
Examples of related policy change		Crosscuts with other rows, especially on access to healthcare and emergency and/or COVID relief programmes, # 1 + 2 above Note: Many countries of origin have engaged in ad hoc, often belated evacuation of their nationals; IOM also assisting widely through its Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme
Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indonesia: aid packages to its nationals in Malaysia lockdown</li> <li>Mexico: Mexico City strengthening or extending existing programmes and services to allow access to migrants</li> <li>Uruguay: Montevideo has a fund to help migrants avoid eviction</li> </ul>
6 Crisis problem		Loss of channels for migrants to send remittances
Key GCM provision(s)		Broadly, objective 20
Examples of related policy change		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kenya: Central Bank promoting mobile money systems</li> <li>Uganda: temporary waiver of fees for mobile money transfers</li> </ul>
Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UK: Civil society diaspora associations, business actors and others successfully advocated for remittance service providers to be expressly recognized and protected by law as "essential services" so that they could remain open during COVID time</li> <li>Led by the World Bank, Switzerland and the UK, some 30 States and 20 UN, international, regional, civil society and business organizations mobilize a global call to action to preserve safe processes for transferring remittances in COVID time</li> </ul>
7 Crisis problem		Immigration detention, including in crowded settings and/or at risk of infection
Key GCM provision(s)		Broadly, objective 13
Examples of related policy change		Partial or wide release from detention, with and without community-based and other alternatives to detention: Belgium, France, Indonesia, Netherlands, Peru, Spain, Thailand, UK and US. Wide and strong advocacy by civil society (including concrete programme building and management), UN agencies, the Council of Europe and others for immediate community-based alternatives to detention in COVID time
Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		Wide and strong advocacy continuing by civil society for an absolute end to all child detention for immigration purposes. (This was hotly debated in GCM negotiations but resisted by certain States and reduced in the final language of the GCM.)
8 Crisis problem		Public narratives that are negative or brutal against migrants
Key GCM provision(s)		Objective 17
Examples of related policy change		Yet to be determined in the context of the current crises, however in January 2020, a group of governments, led by Canada, created within the Global Forum on Migration and Development a new, multi-stakeholder Ad Hoc Working Group on Public Narratives on Migration, which Canada co-chairs with Ecuador and the GFMD Mayors Mechanism.
Related examples implemented or advocated beyond explicit GCM provision(s)		Wide and strong advocacy continuing by civil society, IOM, UNHCR, the World Bank and other international organizations, joined with strong and fresh commitment by a growing number of States, cities and business actors

Many of those consulted for this report regret the slowness, limitations of scope or time, and gaps left in even the most progressive of these policies. In particular, many questioned that most of the new policies had distinct end-dates, i.e., they were temporary measures enacted for discrete slices of the current crises, with no vision of the near- or longer-term value of those measures.

Indeed, one of the final questions on these crises and the Global Compact for Migration will surely be: are the actions taken during this period that correspond to the Compact, like many of those described above, only temporary? That is, are they exceptional measures, for these three crises, this time only, or, are they, as suggested by the commitment of States in the Compact, alternatives and solutions that are practical and effective for the longer term, and permanently?

### **Extending the temporary solutions for the “second wave”.**

Most health experts have long warned to expect another wave of the pandemic in 2020-2021, i.e., another “terrible temporary”—or even “new normal”, in the minds of some who warn of a coming new era of pandemics. But just as the first wave was more than the health crisis alone, there seems no doubt that the second wave also will bring the global economic and protection crises with it.

Gravely, many fear that in the absence of vaccinations that are effective and widespread—neither of which is certain at the time of this writing, and government resources depleted, the next “wave” may be a tsunami, especially in how the global economic crisis and protection crisis could each worsen significantly. Already, signs in that direction can be seen beginning to spiral in places as governments once again respond to rising COVID cases much as they did before; with border and business closings, quarantines and lockdowns, etc. Except that this time, there is dread of whole industries in freefall with massive numbers of businesses on the verge of closing permanently, temporary government relief programmes and extensions of employment, loan and rent deadlines coming to an end everywhere, threatening the loss of countless more jobs, evictions from homes and apartments, and a horrific rise in the number of people unable to feed themselves. Many of those consulted for this report expect outbreaks of violence and unrest with certainty.

Among those consulted for this report, many said that if migrants were needed—and seen—to be part of solutions in these crises already, i.e., the past months, it stands to reason that they will be needed again this next period—and “even more”. In this context, specific GCM actions that were an effective part of those solutions before should logically be part of them again, even if the actions before had only been intended to be temporary. In that direction, many consulted for this report expressed

at least some confidence that advocacy, if equipped with solid reporting and data on the positive effects of these policies the “first time”, will encourage consideration of carrying them forward for the “second wave”.

But “does it make sense”, one civil society leader asked, “that good actions and solutions go away automatically just because the virus and economic mess finally do?” Or are migrants seen as part of the solution for recovery too?

### **Recognizing GCM solutions for recovery, and beyond.**

The actions that States were so methodical about putting into the Compact for Migration were never for crises only. Rather they were framed as alternatives and solutions to consider at any time for building and strengthening healthy communities and economies, rights and protection, jobs, development, order and social coherence.

Recovery from crisis is one such time. Many of those consulted for this report said that, in addition to the value in implementing GCM actions to respond to crises, many of those same GCM actions offered great value to recover from crises. Far and away the examples they most commonly cite are regularization of essential workers and their families, in particular, in home and institutional healthcare, food growing, meatpacking, grocery stores, public transportation and construction; and access of all to healthcare (i.e., no one is safe unless everyone is safe) with firewalls to ensure access of migrants and members of their families without reprisals.

This implies recognizing, and extending, GCM actions that were “temporary” solutions in the crises as a permanent driver of recovery: migrants not only as part of solutions, but as key to recovery.

Among those consulted for this report it was suggested that the key will be not only in “political” will for this, but in direct public will that has emerged with surprising potency in the COVID-linked crises. However, hope and belief separate on expectations of where “public will” may go.

### **Hope and belief.**

On the one hand, more than a few see signs of paradigm shifts in many countries that reflect an emerging sense that inclusion of migrants is essential to everyone, whether the migrants are filling shortages in essential jobs and sectors or accessing public services like healthcare, where exclusion of anyone puts everyone at risk. On the other hand, as suffering and loss from the three crises deepen and crush almost everywhere, many expect catastrophic scapegoating and discrimination against migrants, “essential” or not.

### **Which will prevail?**

A mix of representatives of States, business and civil society consulted for this report suggest that the answer may turn on perceptions not of migrants themselves but rather on perceptions of migrants within “solutions”—solutions that are fair for *all* in the societies to which they have moved, not just for the migrants, their families and countries of birth. Solutions, and recovery.

## Chapter 3. Citing and doing, or doing and citing—and how important is citing the Compact anyway?

The examples in the Table in the preceding Chapter demonstrate that States and other actors are clearly implementing important parts of the GCM in COVID time, many of the actions (e.g., regularizations, access to public services) altogether unexpectedly and with surprising speed and scope.

But are States and others *looking for inspiration* to the GCM, i.e., as a “Go to” menu of alternatives and solutions for ideas on addressing problems in the linked crises?

Do they actually cite the GCM as a positive factor in their thinking on such solutions? If so, do they cite before they start to act, or only after? If not at all, why not?

And how important is citing, anyway?

### Looking first for inspiration.

There is strong convergence among those consulted for this report that the Compact for Migration is seen and slowly but increasingly being referred to as the premier source of inspiration— one said “a global positioning system”— for practical actions across the range of human mobility.

Some of the inspiration is as specific as the commitments and actions endorsed in the GCM; some as general as the GCM’s guiding principles and can-do approach to cooperation, multilaterally, among specific States and/or with other stakeholders.

Several of those consulted asserted that an “accumulation and assimilation” of GCM content was already happening even before the Compact was adopted, i.e., through the many years of meetings, debates and exchange of practice that led up to the decision to develop the Compact, and then the intensive drafting, consultations, drafting and negotiations through its adoption in 2018. These processes built a focus, expertise and exchange, appreciation, and something of a “community of practitioners” across States, regions, international actors and others who, as one put it, “became fluent in the GCM” and the commitments and actions endorsed in it. Action-oriented, this GCM inspiration and fluency is reinforced by GCM-linked focus and investment in other processes and communities of discussion and exchange, notably:

- since its founding in 2007, the continuous work of the States-led Global Forum on Migration and Development to explore and promote much of what the GCM committed to in 2018;
- the constant dialogue, policy development and programmes of UN agencies like IOM, ILO, and the World Bank, especially in projects and within existing relationships at national level;
- more recently, the emphatic GCM-centered work, guidance and partnerships under the umbrella of the new UN Network on Migration and its many UN member organizations; and
- collaboration with civil society both in policymaking and concretely on the ground almost everywhere, and increasingly with cities and private sector actors.

### Promoting inspiration from and linking action with the GCM.

Many of those consulted for this report lauded the UN Network on Migration for its resolute focus on implementation of the Compact, beginning, as many noted, with its consistent articulation of the Compact’s Guiding Principles. The Network’s investments in coordinating the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, including significant fundraising; in helping to structure the upcoming Regional Migration Review Processes; in publishing a well-received series of briefings regarding migrants and migration in COVID-time, and organizing a series of webinars specifically focused on COVID-19 and elements of the Global Compact.

With attendance consistently comprising hundreds of actors worldwide, many of them reporting on urgencies and action in their regions or countries, the webinars provided a clean view, often straight from the ground, of progress on Compact objectives during these crises—as well as the need for more of it. To be clear, participants in the webinars did not hesitate to talk about opposite trends, also, including reversals and barriers. Nor have participants hesitated to express high expectations, not only for GCM implementation on the ground, but of the UN system’s role at national, not just global level, and directly, not remotely.

Civil society, representatives active from the business community and a small, but increasing number of city officials active in international migration also refer constantly to the Compact, and express expectations to the States on it. Many evoke specific provisions of the GCM, ranging from expanding pathways for regular migration, recognition of skills, reforming processes for recruitment of migrant workers, access to public services, and other policies of inclusion and integration.

In a well-received publication *Civil Society 2019 Engagement in Global Compact for Migration Implementation, with a Post COVID-19 Outlook* (July 2020)<sup>24</sup>, a wide diversity of civil society worldwide demonstrated particular confidence and expectations for implementation of the GCM, declaring “civil society, a champion for the GCM”. Presenting the first broad mapping of practice under the GCM, the publication featured a 20-page matrix of civil society activities implementing the GCM in its first full year, through policies, practices and partnerships on local, national, regional and international levels around the world.

The rise and resolve of business and city actors on GCM-related action is striking—some even say it has the makings of a “game-changer”. For example, many of those consulted for this report remarked upon the prominence of business and city representatives pushing in these directions during the many regional meetings organized with States and others by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Chair of the 2020 Global Forum on Migration and Development. Some, though not all, referred to the GCM by name.

### **Compact “friends and foes” among States.**

There is a sense among those consulted for this report that the majority of States continue to be positive about the GCM. Logically, this reflects their overwhelming vote to adopt the Compact just under two years ago.

But few at the moment are boisterous, either in promoting the GCM or even in characterizing some of their own practices as implementation of the GCM. Among those consulted for this report, several representatives of civil society and international organizations observed that in general States have thus far given far more attention to the GCM in global processes than at home. On one measure, this is not necessarily different from similar “lag” time that it takes States to “nationalize” other internationally negotiated frameworks, including even conventions that are binding. Much more bluntly however, several of those consulted in national and local contexts said that “COVID chaos” has in many cases completely diverted focus and capacity away from Compact process to emergencies on the ground in every direction.

Nonetheless, the UN Network on Migration and its multi-stakeholder working groups are collaborating closely with a diverse and growing group of States that in one way or another are standouts in their support and/or implementation of the GCM. This includes nine States

who have contributed over USD \$12 million in funding to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund<sup>25</sup> that the UN Network administers to assist UN Member States in their national implementation of the GCM.

### **A standout barrier to seeking inspiration from and linking action to the Compact.**

Several of those consulted for this report expressed fear of the dilemma they have faced from certain States, in particular the United States and several others in Europe, or donors, at times including the European Union, resisting even the slightest reference to the GCM— and for any projects, not just COVID, even those clearly inspired by or connected to concrete Compact objectives. Though arising from a small minority of States, those States have exerted disproportionate negative impact on invoking the Compact, from open discussion to proposal writing, implementation and reporting. To be clear: this pressure to not cite the GCM has been so prominent that “GCM pushback” was actually on the agenda for discussion at a UN Network on Migration consultation with civil society in December 2019.

It would be an error to underestimate the power of this hostility, but it would also be a mistake to overgeneralize or overreact to it. On the one hand, several representatives of States and international organizations consulted for this report said that such hostility is a distinct worry for them, especially because it has already proven to be effective in propelling populist backlash against the Compact at national levels.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, such hostility even by this small subset of UN Member States has a chilling effect on reference to the GCM in other UN documents. For example, representatives of States described the struggle to get even a single reference to the GCM into a comprehensive statement on health that was being negotiated by Member States at the UN in New York, “even after one year and a half and the pandemic”, and the absence of any reference to the Compact even in a “Joint Statement on the Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants<sup>27</sup>” sent to the UN Secretary General 12 June 2020 on behalf of 103 States across all regional groups.

On the other hand, several of those consulted, including several civil society leaders, noted that many of the hostile States—and in some cases, just their current leaders—have been notoriously anti-UN and opposed to multilateralism in general.

Ironically, in the whirlwinds of these three COVID-linked crises, some of this small subset of adverse States

24 Civil Society Action Committee (2020). *Civil Society 2019 Engagement in Global Compact for Migration Implementation*, available <https://csactioncommittee.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Mapping-report-FINAL.pdf>

25 <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/MIG00>. Beginning with the highest funding commitment, the nine States/donors are the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Norway, GIZ, Portugal, Mexico, France and Cyprus.

26 In the weeks preceding and accompanying the adoption of the GCM in 2018, several governments suddenly faced “pop-up” but powerful campaigns demanding that they reject the Compact, on grounds that it was an abrogation of national sovereignty, an evasion of ordinary democratic law-making, and an invitation to massive and uncontrolled immigration. Only 5 States did so; 12 abstained, while 152 voted to adopt.

27 Available here, [https://www.un.int/philippines/statements\\_speeches/joint-statement-impact-covid-19-migrants](https://www.un.int/philippines/statements_speeches/joint-statement-impact-covid-19-migrants)

are implementing precisely the actions that the GCM encourages, e.g., regularizing essential workers, widening access to public services, organizing alternatives to detention. So Compact cemetery? Or proving ground?

### **To cite or not to cite, and when?**

Citing is important: there was strong convergence among those consulted for the report that it was imperative to connect and cite the Compact when concrete action implements it. There was also wide agreement that the particular value of citing the Compact was not so much to “validate” the GCM, but to reinforce it as a source of inspiration and to provide examples of concrete implementation for exchange, assessment, replication and adaptation.

In this direction, one civil society representative consulted for this report observed that the immediate value of connecting and citing the GCM for solutions that have been effective in the COVID-related crises thus far is to strengthen tools that will be needed for the next or enduring waves of the health, economic and protection crises. With signs and statistics of the pandemic increasing in many parts of the world, and others almost in seamless high crisis, the results—positive or not—of the full range of GCM-based efforts will be key to guiding further efforts and results.

### **Not necessary to “cite before acting.”**

Many among those consulted for this report said that to their knowledge, States are not currently citing the Compact with any regularity regarding action they are taking in response to COVID-related crises, even actions explicitly enumerated in the Compact.

In any case, many, among States, international organizations and civil society in particular, say that it is either a false question, or simply unimportant, to suggest that the measure of the Compact’s relevance is whether States are looking to or making reference to the Compact before they act. As helpful as looking to and citing the Compact may be in advance of action, they say, what matters most is whether States and others do the action itself.

For comparison, one civil society leader noted that this is also true for achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among other non-binding frameworks that commit to action. As the representative of one of the UN agencies explained, “it is not necessary for a State to declare from the start that it is aiming to end poverty to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, so long as the State acts concretely in that direction, and reports its results along the way.”

As Mr. Shabari Nair of the International Labour Organization put it, “When ILO works with governments on fair recruitment, we can say ‘you’re implementing Objective 6 of the GCM.’ When governments talk with us about the importance of skills of migrants, or

returning migrants, we can say, ‘that’s Objective 18 on skills development, also Objective 21 on reintegration; Objective 2 on decent work at home...’ Perhaps it is forgotten sometimes, but if we are there to also underline some of these elements constantly then I don’t think it is lost out.”

One State representative asserts simply: “the Compact is zealous for action, not jealous for credit.” Indeed, there was a widespread sense among those consulted for this report that the Compact neither needs nor has ever asked to be cited or credited before actions corresponding to the Compact are taken.

Several said that the real worry is if no one cites the Compact even after.

### **Why might States and others not be citing the GCM before acting?**

Those consulted for this report see several reasons in addition to the hostility of a small subset of States mentioned earlier:

1. The Compact is still fairly young; no one has the habit of citing it yet, nor have there yet been any processes for formally reporting actions connected to the Compact. Making reference to the Global Compact on Refugees, also adopted by a comparable near-consensus of UN Member States in December 2018, one civil society leader commented, “It’s still early to expect people” to refer regularly to the Compact, or to judge it inadequate because actors are not yet citing or reporting on their implementation of it. In fact, for the GCM, the very first formal process for reviews of implementation are yet to occur, scheduled at regional level between October and December 2020.
2. “The crisis context; in fact, the urgency to act in response to the three crises simultaneously.” In an emergency, few naturally rush to cite sources.
3. “To a great extent, many of the GCM solutions are fairly well known, some even obvious and implemented by States and others, like cities.” Some also have long been pushed, in particular by civil society and international organizations, for much wider and more consistent implementation.
4. What the crises have done is change the equation on implementing a number of these GCM actions in particular, which States and others had long considered too difficult to take forward for political, economic or public reasons. In many cases “the crises have entirely flipped that around”. For example, where even the words “regularization” and “access to healthcare” were often toxic in international as well as national-level discussion of options for migrants, the crises deemed them not only helpful but essential to fight no less than existential threats in the crises, such as the lack of native-born doctors and other medical

workers, home health care aides, farmworkers and meatpackers, other food service and sales staff, and workers in public transit and construction<sup>28</sup>.

5. “The moment to blow the horn”, as one put it, is coming shortly, in the regional and international migration review forums that the Compact requires each two years, with the first regionals scheduled for the final months of 2020.

### **Citing the GCM while or after acting.**

There was solid convergence among those consulted for this report that linking to and reporting actions under the Compact is a priority that accompanies, not precedes the action. And it does not really matter who does the citing and linking—as long as someone does. If there is a (temporary?) States problem, then for example, civil society can do it.

Nonetheless, many expect that States and others will do so, and prolifically, in their reports to the regional migration review forums at the end of 2020, including detail about significant application of the GCM during COVID-time.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, taken together they say, these reports will “validate” the almost “uncanny foresight”, wisdom—and the timeliness—of the GCM as a source and “go to” document for positive, practical actions regarding international migrants and migration, in times of crisis and beyond. A civil society representative consulted for this report emphasized how powerful the reports will be: “Even more than for accountability”, he said, “the reports will motivate States and others to see the GCM as a set of practical solutions and inspiration”, including, as the GCM was intended, for action-oriented exchange of practice and cooperation.

Finally to underscore, as described earlier: many consulted for this report are clear that it is not only States that can do this important referring and linking to the GCM. If States are shy, others can. And should—not only to ensure awareness, exchange and replication of good alternatives and solutions under the GCM, but also to ease the way ahead for States (and others) to do more and more of the referring and linking themselves.

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28 Many of those consulted for this report attribute much of this shift to the role and rise of business actors and of migrant and refugee diaspora groups, together with the cresting of movements worldwide against inequality—most notably the meteoric emergence of the Black Lives Matter phenomenon almost everywhere.

29 What the regional reports are not expected to present, nor does this report here, is the long list of policies and practices on the darker side, well outside the GCM and intentional or not, that have been implemented in many places regarding international migrants and migration during the three COVID-related crises, in many cases ‘under the cover of COVID’ (MMC’s forthcoming (November) Mixed Migration Review 2020 provides a detailed overview). Though not entirely original, some of the policies and practices have been especially brutal because of the nature and intersections of the crises, and the desperation of authorities, communities alike, including migrants and their families, whether together or across borders. The list includes migrants stranded by the closing of town, city and national borders; blocked or forced returns; tens of millions of workers losing jobs, with millions not paid their wages; rocketing exploitation of migrants for work, sex and transit; pervasive exclusion from health, education and other public services, even for COVID testing and treatment; systemic exclusion from food, water and shelter assistance and special COVID relief programmes; scapegoating of all kinds, including blame and related violence for COVID spread; and obstacles to remitting earnings to family members and communities in countries of origin. Depending on how long the crises continue, and whether they deepen, these policies and practices could well get even worse, either in certain countries or broadly, and implementation of the GCM fall.

## Chapter 4. How does reference to the GCM so far compare with other frameworks on mobility?

As the GCM approaches its two-year anniversary, it merits taking a quick, comparative look at how States and other actors are referring to and using other international frameworks that deal with major aspects of human mobility. Three are particularly interesting in this regard: all directly related to the GCM and/or moments of crisis, and all, like the GCM, non-binding. In order of their age—which several consulted for this report say is important to consider when evaluating reference and implementing—they are: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs, 2015), the Guidelines of the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MICIC, 2016) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR, 2018).

### The SDGs, 2015.

Many point to these goals as a “gold standard” (one consulted for this report said the “goal standard”) of multilateral ambition, agreement and reference. Including but going well beyond migration, the SDGs are 17 goals and 169 targets that all 193 UN Member States adopted unanimously at the UN General Assembly in September 2015, to work towards and measure and report progress on over the next 15 years, with full achievement by the year 2030.

The new SDGs replaced the UN Millennium Development Goals<sup>30</sup> (MDGs) at the end of their own 15-year term. Though themselves a major landmark in international agreement, the MDGs had said nothing about migrants and migration.

States decided to say a lot about both in the new SDGs. First, the preamble makes clear that all goals pertain to all people, everywhere—meaning migrants of all kinds, too. This includes goals to eliminate hunger and poverty and provide access to healthcare and education. All are directly pertinent in the three COVID-related crises—and, experts say, all are in dire peril because of them.

Second, for the first time ever, States also devoted a number of the goals and targets—i.e., nine of the SDGs—specifically to migrants and mobility. Ranging from goals to protect labour rights of working migrants and fighting human trafficking and forced labour, to improving safe migration, the transfer of remittances, and data, the essence of all nine was vigorously taken forward in provisions of the Global Compact for Migration.

In fact, SDG 10.7, to facilitate safe orderly, regular and responsible migration, generated both momentum for development, and the very formula, of the GCM. As one consulted for this report put it, the two are so closely linked that “implementation of the migration Compact fully covers achievement of that SDG, and more.” Generally speaking then, reports on achievement of that SDG 10.7 serve also as reports on achievement of a great part of the GCM.

Given the stature of the SDGs, earned through a record of massive global effort and achievement across the 20 years including the preceding MDGs, it is often forgotten that the goals are not legally binding. Achievement is voluntary. So is reporting, which States do with extensive, multi-actor systems of data collection, measurement and analysis, among others within processes of the UN High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Time will tell whether and how reporting under the GCM, including in the regional and international migration review forums, will match up to or benefit from the levels of reporting under the SDGs—and where, if any, specific cross-efficiencies make sense thanks to the “shared gene” of SDG 10.7.

**The Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MICIC, 2016)**<sup>31</sup> was itself born out of a migration crisis, when hundreds of thousands of migrants, most of them workers, were suddenly displaced and in grave danger during the Libya uprising in 2011. Urged to act by UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration Peter Sutherland, States, civil society and international organizations at the 2014 Global Forum on Migration and Development launched a two-year States-led process—headed by the United States and the Philippines—of global and regional multi-stakeholder consultations to develop practical guidelines, with specific applications for assistance and protection of foreigners trapped in crises of conflict and natural disaster.

A non-binding, practical tool with no formal reporting requirement, the MICIC Guidelines were presented to UN Member States at the UN High-level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants in September 2016, and expressly endorsed in its closing “New York Declaration”. Since then, a number of publications, workshops and trainings on the Guidelines have been spearheaded around the world by IOM, ICMPD (the International Centre for Migration Policy Development) and civil society organizations, including in the December 2018 GFMD in Morocco, where the GCM was referred to the UN General Assembly for adoption. In fact, the GCM itself endorses the MICIC Guidelines by name.

30 [https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/mdg\\_goals.html](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/mdg_goals.html)

31 <https://micicinitiative.iom.int/>

There has been consistent consensus that the Guidelines, ranging from engaging countries of origin, consular officials and communities of migrants and diaspora to identify those in need, to organizing emergency assistance, protection, evacuation and return, are practical and promising for use in crises of conflict, natural disaster and others. So the absence of reference to these guidelines in the context of the current crises has been a puzzle to those consulted for this report who know MICIC.

For example, between May and July, 2020, in sessions focused on *Addressing Gaps in Migrant Protection* during four States-led regional meetings organized across Africa, Asia, North and Central America and the Caribbean by the Global Forum on Migration and Development, only one State and one international organization among some 200 participants made reference to the value that the MICIC Guidelines, practices and training could provide in responding to migrants in the current crises. And both references were made only after the explicit invitation of the moderator.

One of those consulted for this report wondered how much of this puzzle may be due to “the current aversion of the United States to all things migration, including the GCM”— the polar opposite of the enthusiasm and instrumental leadership that the US had brought to the MICIC Initiative earlier. Others speculate if, contrary to its genuine potential as launched, MICIC has been reduced, either inadvertently or intentionally, to its title: for crises of conflict and natural disaster only.

**Thirdly, the Global Compact on Refugees (2018).** Like the Compact for Migration, its fraternal twin, the GCR is relatively new, including for habits of referring to it, citing and reporting under it. Also like the GCM, the GCR is non-binding.

However, among the many differences from the GCM, the GCR is able to derive significant strength from a binding, widely ratified international convention: the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Moreover, a single UN agency, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, is mandated to guide implementation of both that Convention and the GCR. The GCR also created a new annual Global Forum on Refugees as an important tool for UNHCR to do this.

A “companion” report to this one is separately being completed for the Danish Refugee Council, focused entirely on examining COVID-19 and the Global Compact on Refugees. That report should be considered for approaches and practices in GCR contexts that may be of value to those keen to improve reference to and implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.

## Chapter 5. The impact of the crises on the Global Compact for Migration

Are the COVID, economic and protection crises being seen as a Compact cemetery, or its proving ground? What has been and will be the impact of the three crises on the GCM itself, both on immediate implementation and longer-term, including development of national implementation plans and regional reviews? And do the crises suggest that the GCM is actually missing some policies and practices? Those consulted for this report suggested the following:

### 1. “These crises are a make-or-break proving ground for the GCM”.

The three crises have presented extraordinary challenges, for which States in particular have had to consider actions that many had not seriously considered in ordinary times, or rarely took, e.g., regularization of migrants in irregular or undocumented situations, simplification of immigration-related procedures for residence and employment, access to healthcare and other public services, and alternatives to immigration detention. As indicated in the Table in Chapter 2, many of these actions are enumerated under GCM commitments.

For that reason, several of those consulted for this report see the crises accelerating “validation” of both “the foresight of the decision in 2016 for the GCM to go wide, and the way that it did.” This includes the GCM’s full 360-degree approach to the range of migrants and migration, the GCM’s comprehensive umbrella of guiding principles<sup>32</sup>, and the menus of practical actions that GCM provides across the range of migrants and migration. “What greater impact could the crises have on the GCM”, one asked, “than to generate the most concrete of proof of its relevance: States and others taking action, even without clear prior reference to the GCM, in precisely the directions it prescribes?”

As discussed in Chapter 2, the reports that States and others make to the GCM **regional migration review forums** in the fourth quarter of 2020 will demonstrate a wide range of actions across the world in response to the crises. To the extent that such actions clearly respond and correspond to commitments within the GCM, the impact will inevitably be to reinforce the relevance of the GCM as a menu of practical alternatives and solutions for migrants and migration. In turn, this will both furnish, and deepen the motivation of States to develop national implementation plans with GCM actions that work. As crucial as they are to real change on the ground, few have

moved forward on such plans, among them Morocco, Portugal and the African Union.

### 2. The crises are also exposing some gaps in the GCM

As many consulted for this report observed these gaps, this suggests a need to urgently:

- Consider some important actions that build further upon those in the GCM that States have recently implemented as practical alternatives and solutions for crisis problems. For example, as indicated in the Table in Chapter 2, these include broad regularization of essential workers, with access to public services and clear paths to citizenship, as Canada has done with asylum seekers working in health care; access to special crisis-related relief assistance, e.g., for migrants who have lost their jobs or homes and/or are stranded; and simplification of procedures to obtain residence and employment, including automatic extension or bridging of lapsed visas and work authorizations;
- In some cases, to re-consider some important things that States had considered during negotiations of the Compact but then decided not to put there, e.g., explicit firewalls that guarantee access of migrants and members of their families to essential public services, like health, education and justice, without fear that the access will trigger immigration enforcement reprisals; and
- Especially in the protection crisis, to work “earnestly” on inefficiencies, imbroglios—and wins for all—where the Compact for Migration intersects in the real world with refugees and asylum seekers, the Compact for Refugees and even UNHCR; in labour markets and workplaces and in situations of mixed migration for example.

### 3. The crises have required, and generated, unusually urgent multi-actor exchange, analysis, guidance, and communications pertaining to GCM matters and the GCM itself.

Whatever else we might think of the “Zoom-world”, it has globalized a lot of this, often with far greater and more ‘democratic’ participation” in extremely well-attended webinars including:

- Huge, sometimes multi-ministry engagement by States both in organizing global and regional webinars and presenting problems, perspectives, policies and practices in them, often in search of further discussion, cooperation and partnerships with other actors, in particular civil society and business actors. Several of those consulted for this report commended the United

32 In the GCM, States “agreed that the Global Compact is based on a set of cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles”: people-centred, international cooperation, national sovereignty, rule of law and due process, sustainable development, human rights, gender-responsive, child-sensitive, whole-of-government approach and whole-of-society approach.

Arab Emirates Chair of the 2020 GFMD for the timely and action-oriented regional consultations between May and July, centered on promoting partnerships across an important range of themes at the heart of the GCM.

- “A solid set of webinars”, as one put it, organized by the UN Network on Migration, others by UN agencies, including IOM and ILO to name a few; and others organized by Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism, (GRFDT) and the Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM), featuring high-level government, academic and civil society leaders, have been exceptionally good on the crises, migration phenomena and the GCM.

Several among those consulted for this report also cautioned against “too much enthusiasm” for Zoom meetings and other habits of work at home and remote engagement. For example, what might be lost, or not even achieved when key working relationships are chronically remote, not only with colleagues and other actors, but with migrants in the center of it all? This is also a serious concern in cultures that have long insisted on the importance of collaboration and negotiation that is “in-person, face-to-face”, including the culture of diplomacy itself. Several expressed genuine alarm about the undermeasured risk of an outsized computer culture, where “click-and-send, click-and-attend” and keyboard-driven process takes over to the detriment of real action on the ground.

#### **4. Finally, the crises have driven strong affirmations of allegiance and/or expectation regarding the GCM, with increasing recognition of common ground, and clear appetite for greater partnering, e.g.:**

- **A clear vote from civil society leaders.** In the view of the July 2020 report, *Civil Society 2019 Engagement in Global Compact for Migration Implementation, with a Post COVID-19 Outlook*, “COVID-19 and its progeny may be a litmus test for the GCM.”<sup>33</sup> The report goes on to assert that the COVID crisis “may actually help speed up some of what was agreed in the GCM. In their search for answers, countries are increasingly seeing migrants, refugees and diaspora as part of those solutions.”

- **Businesses and cities too**, noticeably so in their express and repeated emphasis of GCM commitments while participating in the GFMD regional meetings between May and July, mentioned above, especially with respect to labour migration, fair and safe access to essential public services regardless of status, and data.

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33 As mentioned earlier, the report is also notable for declaring “Civil society, a champion for the GCM.”

# Annex 1 - Methodology

By design and as indicated in Annex 2 that follows, this report is drawn almost entirely from a mix of 34 direct interviews and inputs focused on COVID and the Global Compact for Migration.

All interviews and email exchanges were conducted under Chatham House rules of confidentiality. As such, their content is neither attributed nor is identifying information provided, except where authorization was expressly provided by the source, either directly to the writer or in a context that was public.

Inputs also include internal analyses, and key presentations at webinars primarily between May and September 2020. For example, a global webinar organized specifically on COVID and migration by the United Arab Emirates Chair of the 2020 Global Forum on Migration and Development, and a range of webinars organized by leading international organizations and coalitions (e.g., the United Nations Network on Migration, the civil society Action Committee) and stakeholders at regional and national levels, many involving large numbers of migration leaders in States, cities and local authorities, business and civil society.

Such interviews and inputs were complemented by targeted research, principally among reports recently published on COVID and/or the Global Compacts, and certain communications with the author prior to May 2020.

**Central Questions.** Interviews, inputs and research aimed for reflection on these questions, each addressed in a corresponding chapter of this report.

## 1. What was the GCM “made” for?

That is: what was the vision that first motivated the UN and Member States to decide in late 2015 and 2016 to come together on a Compact or two? Did that first vision change—and if so, how did the final GCM match and/or go beyond that first vision?

## 2. Is the GCM relevant for problems that the linked COVID, economic and protection crises have created?

That is: what are the most serious problems that the linked crises have caused in the situation of migrants (broadly) and migration? And objectively speaking, do parts of the GCM talk about such problems? Which (if any) parts of the GCM are States and other actors taking forward in concrete partnerships and solutions?

## 3. Are States and other actors looking to the GCM for inspiration regarding policy measures or practice in the context of the three linked crises?

That is: do they actually cite the GCM as a positive factor in their thinking on such concrete partnerships and solutions—and is that important?

## 4. How does the way that States and other actors refer to and use the GCM compare to how they refer to and use other international frameworks relevant to international migration, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) and the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MICIC)?

## 5. Finally, are the COVID, economic and protection crises, being seen as a Compact cemetery, or its proving ground?

That is: what has been and will be the impact of the three crises on the GCM itself, both on immediate implementation and longer-term, including development of national implementation plans and regional reviews? Do the crises suggest that the GCM is actually missing some policies and practices?

# Annex 2 - Interviews and Inputs consulted for this report

This list of 34 interviews and inputs was assembled to cover full global geography and the themes of this report.

Most of the individuals consulted for this report have significant roles in their government or organization regarding international migration and/or action regarding migrants and migration in the context of the three COVID-linked crises (health, economic and protection.) 21 are themselves current or former migrants or refugees.

Most participated directly in interviews or by email with the author, almost entirely in the period May through September 2020. This was supplemented by public statements and presentations also during that period, in global or regional webinars in particular.

Exceptionally, some reflections were drawn either from communications with the author last year or from public webinars; these are indicated respectively by either an asterisk or a small “w” next to the name below.

This report reflects contributions of reflection, vision and leadership of the following individuals, who the author and the Mixed Migration Centre would like to acknowledge with deep respect and appreciation. Titles are as of the date consulted.

## States, cities and intergovernmental

**\*Mr. Francois Fouinat**, former Senior Advisor to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration

**\*HE Juan José Gómez Camacho**, Ambassador of Mexico to Canada

**HE Shahidul Haque**, former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, currently Senior Fellow South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at the North South University, Dhaka Bangladesh.

**Ms. Estrella Lajom**, Head of Support Unit, Global Forum on Migration and Development

**HE Pietro Mona**, Ambassador for Development, Forced Displacement and Migration, Switzerland

**\*HE Goetz Schmidt-Bremme**, Ambassador of Germany to Morocco

**\*Mr. Innocent Silver**, Project Coordinator, Kampala Capital City Authority, Uganda

**Ms. Sophie van Haasen**, Coordinator, Mayoral Mechanism of the Global Forum on Migration and Development

**Mr. Alex Zalami Iskander**, of the United Arab Emirates Chair for the 2020 Global Forum on Migration and Development

## International Organizations

**Ms. Nicoletta Giordano**, Head of International Partnerships Division, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**Ms. Michele Klein Solomon**, Director of the Policy Hub, Office of the Director General, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

**Ms. Michelle Leighton**, Chief of the Labour Migration Branch, International Labour Organization (ILO)

**Mr. Shabarinath Nair**, Regional Migration Specialist/ South Asia, International Labour Organization (ILO)

**Mr. Jonathan Prentice**, Head of Secretariat, United Nations Network on Migration

**Mr. Dilip Ratha**, Lead Economist, Migration and Remittances and Head of KNOMAD, the World Bank

## Business and the private sector

**Mr. Gibril Faal**, Partners, GK Partners, UK

**\*Mr. Brent Wilton**, Director of Global Workplace Rights, the Coca Cola Company

**Ms. Stéphanie Winet**, Head of Stakeholder Engagement, International Organisation of Employers (IOE)

## Civil Society

**Mr. Mohammed Badran**, Founder and Director, Syrian Volunteers Netherlands (SYVNL)

**Mr. Laxman Basnet**, General Secretary, South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC)

**Ms. Mary Bingham-Johnsen**, Executive Committee, NGO Committee on Migration/New York

**Mr. William Gois**, Regional Coordinator, Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)

**Mr. Mamadou Goita**, Executive Director, Institute for Research and Promotion of Alternatives in Development/Africa (IRPAD)

**Ms. Roula Hammati**, Coordinator, Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants

**Mr. Syed Saiful Haque**, Chairman and Founder, WARBE/Bangladesh

**Mr. Stéphane Jaquemet**, Director of Policy, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)

**Ms. WiesMaas**, Coordinator of International Programmes, Dutch Council for Refugees

**\*Ms. Kathleen Newland**, Senior Fellow and Co-founder, Migration Policy Institute (MPI)

**Ms. Stella Opoku-Owusu**, Deputy Director, African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)

**Mr. Ignacio Packer**, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

**Mr. Colin Rajah**, Coordinator, Civil Society Action Committee, ICMC

**Dr. Eva Sandis**, Chair Emeritus and Member of the Executive Committee, NGO Committee on Migration/New York

**Ms. Raphaela Schweiger**, Senior Expert, Robert Bosch Foundation

**Ms. Mirela Shuteriqi**, Director of Policy, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)



The MMC is a global network consisting of seven regional hubs and a central unit in Geneva engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy development on mixed migration. The MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

The MMC is part of and governed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). Global and regional MMC teams are based in Amman, Copenhagen, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Tunis, Bogota and Bangkok.

**For more information visit:**  
[mixedmigration.org](https://mixedmigration.org)

