

***“PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING MIGRANTS FOR DEVELOPMENT”***

**Final Conclusions and Recommendations of the Chair,  
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Republic of the Philippines**

We have reached that exciting point in our Global Forum meeting, where we can harvest the fruits of our labour together over the past 18 months, and share some thoughts about the future of the Forum. This may well be the end of the Manila meeting, but it is also the beginning of the next phase of the GFMD.

I see the two overriding achievements of our meeting this year as being **CONTINUITY** and **CHANGE**. Continuing and advancing the process of consultation and collaboration begun in Brussels last year, and changing the way the world looks at migration and development.

What we have achieved in the past two days is to move forward by a few more decisive steps an ongoing process that is changing our thinking and actions on migration and development, but more importantly, that is changing the way we deal with each other on these two complex, but interrelated, issues.

We have done this by building on the substantive achievements of the first meeting in Brussels and consolidating the structures that will assure continuity in this process.

**Turning to the substance or the themes of the Forum -**

The Brussels meeting focused on the first two priorities identified by governments in a survey undertaken at the outset of the GFMD process – labour mobility, and remittances and other diaspora resources. The Manila meeting took up the next two priorities, namely, rights and security.

These formed the basis of the RT 1 discussions on protecting and empowering migrants, and the RT 2 discussions about the policy frameworks that could foster such protection and empowerment by better balancing facilitation and control of migration. The third thematic area, policy and institutional coherence, has been continued from one meeting to the next as it provides the underpinnings of roundtables 1 and 2.

What is different about the Manila meeting is the spotlight on the human face of migration, and the human development facet of development. The Philippine Government chose the theme **“Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development”** to shift the debate away from the usual rational arguments about

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economic benefits of migration, and back to the migrants and their families. The greatest wealth of any country is its people, and the development benefits they can bring to their communities and countries are only possible when they are properly protected and supported.

As a major country of origin, managing huge outflows and diasporas for some 30 years now, the Philippines was well positioned to take up this cause, on behalf of our own migrants and their families, but also to share with other governments our hard-won good practices and lessons learned over this time.

The informal nature of the Forum has allowed new **friendships and partnerships** to blossom between migrant sending and receiving countries, which can lead to better deals for migrants in the future. It also helps the messages of the Manila Forum to reverberate more widely among countries around the world.

The informality of the process – the fact that we are not aiming for Declarations or binding agreements, but rather at efficiencies and effectiveness on the ground that serve everyone’s interests, particularly the migrants – has also helped us achieve more than may be possible in formal international debates about principles, norms and doctrine.

**Outcomes of the Roundtables**

But, having assured the continuity of the GFMD process, **what exactly have we achieved with the Roundtable discussions?** What are the real **FRUITS** of the Manila Forum? And where do we take them from here?

Our GFMD rapporteurs have shared with us a number of concrete outcomes resulting from the Roundtable sessions – studies, pilot programs, compendia of best practices, working groups - and these projects are important for connecting this meeting with last year’s in Brussels and with next year’s in Athens. They should bring fresh evidence and information to the Athens roundtable discussions.

But these outcomes tell us something more about the GFMD process. They tell us that we are beginning to achieve a certain **consensus of understanding** about the important connections between migration and development, where the gaps of knowledge are and how to fill those gaps. They take us one step closer toward common solutions to our common challenges. They bring us closer to a **consensus on action**.

**In Roundtable 1** on “Migration, Development and Human Rights” we sought to highlight the condition of migrants and their families, and show how their protection and empowerment could result in development not only of their person, but also of their countries of origin and destination.

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We wanted to see how principles and doctrines of protection and empowerment were working on the ground – a “bottom up” approach to policies that protect migrants’ rights. We also identified elements of an enabling environment for empowering migrants and diaspora to mobilize their resources more effectively for development.

There was consensus in RT 1 that migrants’ rights must be protected, not only because they contribute to economic development, but because it is their basic human right. **Protecting the rights of migrants is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do.** People are our biggest national asset. Economic development cannot occur without human development, that is, without human beings who are healthy, educated, employed, and able to care for their families.

In this regard, the need to protect the rights of women migrant workers, child migrants, and migrants in irregular situations was emphasized.

Protecting the rights of migrants is a shared responsibility of governments of origin and host countries. There is a need for political will at both origin and destination to translate the concept of “shared responsibility” into tangible policies and programs on protecting migrants’ rights. Non-government actors like the civil society and private sector also play an important role in this.

Many delegates called for ratification of the 1990 International Convention, ILO Conventions and other core international human rights treaties. There were some recommendations to review the provisions of the 1990 Convention or devise mechanisms that would improve rates of ratification and implementation. There were also suggestions to look at complementary approaches in applying the principles of international treaties in practical and concrete ways.

The GFMD plays an important role in facilitating an exchange of good programs and policies in this regard. These best practices include the Philippines’ comprehensive life-cycle approach to migration management, and the Abu Dhabi pilot project in deepening dialogue and cooperation, which may be replicated with possible assistance from other agencies and countries.

The GFMD could also be useful in disseminating information and the results of research on migration and development, which can inform governments about how to provide an enabling environment to empower migrants. It could help governments and other relevant stakeholders identify effective elements that encourage migrants to better contribute to development, such as strong reliable domestic institutions in countries of origin, secure legal status for migrants, and incentives and tools in both countries of origin and destination. The GFMD could likewise promote partnership between source and destination countries in facilitating diaspora’s financial, technological, and social contributions in both countries.

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The GFMD could consider other suggestions made to empower migrants, such as ensuring greater exercise of political rights by migrants, establishing a common lexicon or dictionary of terms to promote commonality of understanding, and the feasibility of issuing diaspora bonds in order to harness diaspora assets beyond merely their income flows.

In view of the foregoing, I propose that the GFMD considers setting up an ad hoc **Working Group on Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development**, which could conduct a study on the actual links between protections for migrants and their capacity to contribute to development. It could also catalogue good practices in joint arrangements to protect and support migrants and the diaspora for their contribution to development. I invite you to join the governments of the Philippines, the UAE, Belgium, and El Salvador – Co-Chairs of RT Sessions 1.1 and 1.2 - in forming this small and informal consultative mechanism.

**In Roundtable 2** on “Secure, Regular Migration Can Achieve Stronger Development Impacts”, we discussed how the best frameworks to protect and empower migrants for development are likely to be regular migration programs that are accessible, transparent and non-discriminatory. This is particularly so when legality is enforced through strong, effective measures to reduce exploitative and abusive practices such as migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons.

Migration programs that better match skills with real jobs, and are affordable and accessible to migrants, offer the best incentives to migrate by choice rather than by necessity. Enforcement alone has not prevented or solved the growing crimes of smuggling or trafficking, which can disempower migrants and reduce their capacity to earn and support families back home. We looked at more comprehensive approaches that combine enforcement with facilitation in a more balanced way.

While we all agreed there is no “one size fits all” approach to migration, there are some emerging “good practices” such as circular migration and bilateral labour migration arrangements that take account of the labour market and development needs of both the country of origin and host country. We saw that where labour mobility is managed flexibly between countries it can also help workers increase their skills abroad and contribute to sectoral development back home.

Governments are already able to benefit from the **Compendium of good practices in labour migration** established by the Moroccan and Spanish Governments as a follow-up to the GFMD meeting in Brussels last year. And we hope to expand and elaborate on that further before the next meeting in Athens.

Some **pilot circular migration programs** that have also resulted from the Brussels meeting will also be followed up and evaluated for the lessons they may yield in the coming year or so. We hope to continue the work begun last year on how to engage the

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private sector better in **lowering the costs of migration for migrants**; and to undertake some overdue **research on the costs and benefits**, and impacts, of regular and irregular migration on development.

Coming back to my observations about “continuity and change”, all of these outcomes are connected to the labour mobility theme of the Brussels Forum and the protection and empowerment theme of Roundtable 1 this year. They point to new and smarter policy approaches that could foster more development-friendly migration, such as circular migration and market-based migration policies that could compete with smuggling and trafficking businesses.

They also link with the theme of partnership and cooperation in Roundtable 3. Thailand’s suggestion that a meeting be held next year for heads of regional consultative processes to share information on migration and development-related activities and achievements is a welcome effort to link the aims of Roundtables 2 and 3, and to reinforce coherence within the GFMD substantive frame.

**In Roundtable 3** on “Policy and Institutional Coherence and Partnerships” we looked at the institutional and policy elements that need to be in place to achieve the aims of Roundtables 1 and 2 – the red thread of coherence runs through all other Migration and Development themes.

*First*, without a clear sense of those priority areas where strengthened data and research are required to assess the impacts of migration on development, and of development on migration, our arguments for policy and institutional coherence, joint approaches or partnerships are weak and will remain based on intuition and anecdote. We need more comparable data and must work towards common definitions and methodologies across countries. We need to improve our way of working, and promote new approaches to produce evidence-based information that can be of immediate use to policy makers in all regions.

The proposal arising from Roundtable 3.1 to set up an ad hoc **Working Group on Data and Research on Migration and Development** should thus be taken forward as part of our common effort to furnish this information. This working group can help us work towards more coherence and cooperation among key actors in these areas.

*Second*, the issue of policy, program and institutional coherence needs to be addressed both in terms of the concrete institutional and organizational arrangements governments are putting in place to achieve coherent policy making, and in the way these arrangements and resulting policies can subsequently be assessed and evaluated.

The second GFMD survey on policy coherence undertaken by Sweden, following the one undertaken for Brussels, has clearly demonstrated the political will and commitment by many governments to work towards such a coherent approach in addressing the



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migration and development nexus. The proposal of Roundtable session 3.2 to create an ad hoc **Working Group on Policy and Institutional Coherence** is well taken and should be pursued actively, including for the purpose of relying on the GFMD website to ensure on-going exchange among interested GFMD participating governments. This working group will also ensure that the critical issue of policy and institutional coherence remains on future GFMD agendas.

*Third*, we had a highly interesting debate on international cooperation, both within and across regions, including new initiatives for dialogue and cooperation at the inter-regional level. The effectiveness of regional and inter-regional consultations for development will be strengthened through an **assessment of the impacts of such processes on country policies**, and a **pilot program** will study the implementation of policy-relevant recommendations on migration and development. Governments also agreed to further strengthen the link between regional and inter-regional fora and our Global Forum in order to assure greater consistency and coherence of the positions they take in all these processes.

Our discussions in all Roundtables have confirmed again that coherence must stay on the agenda of the GFMD. The Global Forum can provide the framework for periodic reviews of data, research, methodologies, evaluation techniques, pilot programs, how governments integrate migration into their national development strategies and so on.

**Finally, to the structures and modalities of the GFMD -**

Our work of the past 18 months, and your conclusions during the Future of the Forum meeting, have ensured that the right structures and modalities will be in place to take the GFMD process forward to the next meeting and beyond. As you know, we are honored to hand the GFMD torch onto Greece for 2009, and after that at least three other countries have indicated their interest in hosting the meeting.

**How has Manila strengthened the structural foundations of the GFMD?**

We have continued to use the structural framework and the working methods set up in 2007 – the network of country focal points, the Roundtable teams of governments, the Chair’s Taskforce, comprising national and international experts, the Friends of the Forum, a Steering Group; and to help “govern” the process, the Troika of past, present and future Chairs.

We have retained the practical and results-oriented roundtable approach, which in itself is a change from the usual talk-fests of international conferences on these issues. Countries at every point on the migration continuum – at origin, transit and destination – have cooperated in teams to prepare the roundtable discussions **together**, explore ideas and good and bad practices **together**, and agree on some new policy approaches and

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partnerships that can benefit everyone, not just one side of the emigration/immigration equation.

**The road ahead**

Out of our Future of the Forum deliberations, most governments have agreed to add to the existing structural framework a light Support Unit to assist future Chairs-in-Office with the daily administrative management of this fast-growing process.

We have also considered other governance and strategic questions deemed important for the future of our Forum, such as its linkages with the UN, its relationship with the Global Migration Group (or GMG) and with Civil Society generally, future funding sources and responsibility for follow-up activities. Most of us agree that the GFMD is now firmly established as an ongoing government-led, non donor-driven process with links to the UN, particularly through the Secretary General’s Special Representative for Migration and Development. We need to continue working on our relations with the GMG and Civil Society. We are still feeling our way in this process, and new questions arise as the process grows, but also as global circumstances change.

The current global financial crisis, for example, is a sober reminder to us of the importance of good planning and coordination within and between governments at any time. But sound policies and institutional coherence are also the best buffers against the shocks of such a global crisis for the migrants, their families and home economies.

How we find the right answers to all the lingering and newly emerging questions in the future will determine the continuing relevance and usefulness of the process. It will be incumbent upon my successors to carry the suggestions you have made in respect of these crucial issues to a fruitful conclusion.

I can assure you that the Philippine government is prepared to fully play its future role as Troika member and to assist the in-coming Greek Chair whenever possible, notably in the follow-up to the conclusions reached here in Manila. The Government of the Philippines will hand the GFMD torch over to the Greek Government on 15 December 2008.

We have gained much ground in Manila, but there is still more to be done.

The **GFMD** remains a **“work in progress”** – to be completed ... to be continued...

**30 October 2008**