

“Enhancing the human development of migrants and their contribution to the development of communities and states”

First Meeting of the GFMD Steering Group
Palais des Nations, Geneva, Room XXIII
Monday, 06 February 2012

Chair: Mr. Ali Mansoor, Mauritius GFMD Chair

Attendance: 33 countries (Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, United States), **GFMD Task Force** (4 GFMD International Advisers) and **GFMD Support Unit**.

Report of the Proceedings

I. Welcoming Remarks by the Chair-in-Office

Mr. Ali Mansoor, the Financial Secretary of the Government of Mauritius and GFMD 2012 Chair-in-Office, welcomed 60 delegates from 33 GFMD Steering Group Member States that attended the first meeting this year. The Chair was joined at the podium by the GFMD Troika – Mexico, represented by Mr. Guillermo Reyes; Switzerland, represented by Amb. Eduard Gnesa; and Sweden, represented by Ms. Eva Ackerman-Borje – and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Migration and Development (SRSG), Sir Peter Sutherland.

II. Adoption of the agenda

The Provisional Agenda was adopted in its entirety. The Chair defined the main objective of the meeting – i.e., to agree on the substantive work that will be done for GFMD 2012, and identify the governments that will lead this process.

III. GFMD 2012 Concept Paper

The Chair made a PowerPoint presentation¹ on the basic structures and key elements of the GFMD 2012 draft concept paper. The Mauritius GFMD Chair-in-Office would like to build on the excellent work undertaken by the Swiss GFMD Chair last year, while moving the process forward by focusing more on challenges facing Africa and by adopting a more constructive approach towards engaging the international organizations, the civil society and the private sector.

¹ See copy of the PowerPoint presentation at the GFMD web portal: <http://www.gfmd.org/en/documents-library/mauritius-2012.html>

The Chair highlighted the fact that the current (i.e., third) draft of the GFMD 2012 concept paper represented the collective view of the Friends of the Forum. He thanked all countries that had given comments on the concept paper and/or attended the brainstorming meetings held in Mauritius in January. He anticipated that more comments would be offered during the Steering Group and Friends of the Forum meetings, and that the paper would be finalized in a week or so.

Following the series of consultations with governments that began with a themes survey in December 2011, the current draft concept paper now reflected the most important issues that governments would like to address at the 6th GFMD Summit in Mauritius in November 2012. It was proposed that four roundtables would be organized under the overarching theme, *Enhancing the human development of migrants and their contribution to the development of communities and states*, as follows:

- Roundtable 1: Circulating Labour for Inclusive Development
- Roundtable 2: Factoring Migration into Development Planning
- Roundtable 3: Managing Migration and Perceptions of Migration for Development Outcomes
- Roundtable 4: Gender, Human Rights and Migration

At the brainstorming meeting on January 18 in Mauritius, the Chair began the process of inviting governments to co-chair and/or join the government teams that would support the above Roundtables. He invited those governments that had earlier signalled their interest to confirm their intent to join the government Roundtable teams. He also opened the floor for more substantive comments on the draft concept paper. He asked that any editorial comments be directly submitted to the GFMD Support Unit and/or to the Roundtable Coordinators so that the meeting could focus on more substantive inputs.

Sixteen (16) delegates raised their flags, all expressing appreciation for the Mauritian Chairmanship for the work done for the GFMD 2012 and for the excellent draft concept paper that had been put forward. The following specific comments were offered:

On the draft concept paper

- One delegate praised the solid and strong concept paper and urged the Chair to move from the political to the technical issues in order to make progress in GFMD discussions. Also, it was suggested that the development concept be defined in terms of human development.
- One delegate affirmed the importance of gender, but suggested including the element of child protection, especially for unaccompanied minors.
- One delegate proposed the following issues to be added: in Roundtable 1, the circulation of democratic ideas in shaping new mentalities and in the shaping of changes in the countries of origin and destination; in Roundtable 2, a reference to external policies by states dealing with trade and economic activities; in Roundtable 3, the political role of governments and parties, as well as the media; and in

Roundtable 4, a reference to the negative impact of migration on families and women. Also, it was suggested that the notion of transparency be factored into the concept paper.

- One delegate remarked on the lack of specific questions in the concept paper, which could steer the discussions towards concrete outcomes. In this regard, it was suggested that the Roundtable co-chairs be given the chance to draft such specific questions. The same delegate also asked how the objective of addressing the challenges of African countries could be addressed without being prejudicial to the global nature of the Forum, and why irregular migration did not appear in the paper.
- Three delegates complimented the Chair for its objective to enhance the GFMD cooperation and coordination with the civil society, international organizations and the private sector. However, clarification was sought on how the Chair intended to engage these non-governmental actors in the activities of the GFMD, without losing sight of the inter-governmental nature of the process.

In response, the Chair shared the national experience of Mauritius in this area, pointing out that it was impossible for any government to take action and address problems effectively without the private sector and civil society organizations. He cited as an example the housing problem of migrants, which was a concern of their Ministry of Labor. He explained the two ways in which these non-state partners could help the government – a) the government will define the problem and civil society can propose solutions; or b) these non-state actors can identify gaps in existing programs and policies for the government to address. He believed that the same can apply at the global level. He would like the Co-chairs to define the issues and see where civil society, private sector and international organizations could help achieve the objectives of the government teams.

On addressing the African challenges, the Chair highlighted the fact that West Africans are more mobile than their European counterparts, with some 3% of West Africans living in neighbouring countries, twice that of Europeans living in neighbouring European countries. Problems related to the movement of Africans have increased through the years, but have not been given enough attention and resources. Thus, it was deemed helpful to bring to the collective attention of the GFMD such challenges.

On the organization of the Roundtables

- Some delegates confirmed, and others indicated their interest subject to later confirmation (TBC), to serve as Co-chair and/or government session team member, as follows:

Roundtable session 1.1: *Beyond-the-Border Skills and Jobs for Human Development*

Co-Chairs: Mauritius and the United Arab Emirates

Roundtable session 1.2: *Supporting Migrants and Diaspora as Agents of Socio- economic Change*

Co-Chairs: France, Ghana (TBC) and Kenya

Roundtable session 2.1: *Supporting National Development through Migration*

Mainstreaming Processes, Extended Migration Profiles and Poverty Reduction Strategies

Co-Chair: Switzerland

Team member: Sweden

Roundtable session 2.2: *Addressing South-South Migration and Development Policies*

Co-Chair: Switzerland

Roundtable session 3.1: *Shaping Public Perceptions of Migrants and Migration*

Co-Chairs: Mexico, Turkey, Philippines, Russia (TBC) and Portugal (flexible on being either Co-Chair or team member).

Roundtable session 3.2: *Migrant Protection as integral to Migration Management*

Co-Chairs: Australia and Indonesia

Roundtable session 4.1: *Enhancing legal, social and financial protection of women migrants and their families*

No co-chairs or government team members

Roundtable session 4.2: *and Protecting Migrant Domestic Workers: Enhancing their Development Potential*

No co-chairs or government team members

- One delegate felt strongly that the number of roundtables should be reduced to only three to make it easier to grasp the substantive agenda of GFMD 2012 and give rise to more tangible results. Three other delegates supported this view, adding that the work of the Forum may not be focused enough with four roundtables. A suggestion was made to mainstream the themes of Roundtable 4 -- which were considered as cross-cutting issues -- into the other three roundtables, thereby reducing the number of roundtables to three.
- But there was consensus on maintaining the important and substantive issues of Roundtable 4 – i.e., human rights, gender and migration. Three governments suggested keeping the Roundtable 4 sessions as proposed, while one government suggested merging the topics.
- While agreeing that the human rights issue of Roundtable 4 could be mainstreamed in the first three roundtables, one delegate pointed out the difficulty of incorporating gender in those roundtables as a cross-cutting issue. This delegate did not want to lose the focus on gender, whose importance had been well-established in previous GFMD meetings. This delegate offered to rewrite some of the concepts and submit written comments to the Mauritian GFMD Taskforce.
- One delegate stressed the need to rework the titles and not only the substance of the roundtables if the Roundtable 4 sessions were to be removed. It was deemed important to maintain the visibility of the words “gender, human rights and migration” in the title of whatever roundtable session would be agreed.
- Still another suggestion was to mainstream gender and human rights issues in the first three roundtables, but organize a third session under Roundtable 3 on the topic of

domestic workers. In this regard, the Philippines, Portugal and Turkey expressed openness to co-chair this possible new session on *Protecting Migrant Domestic Workers: Enhancing their Development Potential*.

- Another delegate proposed an alternative solution to discuss the Roundtable 4 topics in the context of the common space, subject to consultation with, and agreement by the civil society.

The Chair acknowledged the majority suggestion to remove the fourth roundtable, but reminded the Steering Group that the issue would be discussed at the Friends of the Forum meeting the following day. Meanwhile, he asked the delegate who suggested integrating the issues of Roundtable 4 into the other roundtables to work with the Co-chairs of the sessions and the Roundtable Coordinators to find a feasible formulation.

Before passing on to the other agenda points the Chair reminded the members of the Steering Group to send their comments and inputs on the concept paper within a week.

III. GFMD 2012 Calendar of Key Activities

The Chair announced that the Calendar of Key GFMD 2012 Activities would be circulated later and posted on the GFMD web portal.

IV. Budget 2012 – fundraising

The Chair informed the Steering Group that he would not discuss budgetary matters, because a donors' meeting was to be held the following day. He enjoined all delegates to urge their respective governments to consider making financial contributions to the proposed GFMD 2012 budget. He announced that if resources remained insufficient by March, the Chair would call on the Steering Group to address this matter.

The meeting was adjourned for a lunch break at 13.00 hrs and resumed at 16:25 hrs.

V. GFMD Assessment Phase 2 Process

The Chair called the meeting to order and gave the floor to Ambassador Shree Servansing, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mauritius to the UN in Geneva, to give an update on the Assessment Phase 2 process. Amb. Servansing reported that the first meeting of the GFMD Assessment Team² held earlier in the day discussed the work plan of the GFMD assessment in 2012, which will be dedicated to the strategic discussions among GFMD participating governments on possible options for the future. The discussion focused on organizational matters and not yet on the substance. He summed up the activities outlined in the GFMD 2012 assessment paper, as follows:

- **February to June 2012:** The Assessment team will meet regularly to achieve two objectives: a) analyze improvements to the way the GFMD functions as a process and b) discuss possible options on the connections with the United Nations, other

² The GFMD Assessment Team is comprised of 14 Governments, representing key regions – Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, India, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and United Arab Emirates. Mauritius joined the Assessment Team as of its 7th meeting on 27 September 2011.

international organizations and the civil society. The results of the Assessment Team reunions will then be shared with the Steering Group and the Friends of the Forum.

- **June 2012:** A paper on possible options for the GFMD future will be presented to the Steering Group and the Friends of the Forum for discussion and review.
- **June to November 2012:** A consolidated version will be prepared, subject to discussion and endorsement, for the Concluding Debate of the GFMD 2012.
- **December 2012:** The final Assessment Report will be prepared by the Mauritian Chair and will include all Assessment related discussions, reports and documents.

The Ambassador opened the possibility for countries other than the GFMD Assessment Team members to participate in the Assessment Team work by conveying their interest to the Chair within a week.

The Chair opened the floor for comments but none was given.

VI. Any Other Business

The Chair invited the delegates to take note of the Provisional Calendar of GFMD 2012 Key Activities which was distributed during the meeting, and hoped that it would help ensure their presence in future meetings. He added that a possible meeting on the GFMD 2012 budget may be called on 7 March³, after the second meeting of the GFMD Assessment Team, depending on the responses of governments to the Chair's call for financial contributions.

The Chair called Mr. Sutherland to address the Steering Group. The SRSG expressed his appreciation for the commitment, energy and application demonstrated by the current GFMD Chair Mauritius, notwithstanding its relatively smaller population and per capita income. He then raised the subject of GFMD funding, emphasizing the importance of obtaining financial support, which by far was the most difficult to get. He encouraged the delegates to discuss this urgent issue with their capitals.

The SRSG also shared his observation that the 2011 World Economic Forum scarcely mentioned the subject of migration, which showed that governments still regarded it as an issue of national sovereignty. But he believed that migration has now gained a strong interest in the media. He reminded the delegates of the upcoming High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development to be held in New York in 2013, where he anticipated that concrete issues will be addressed by governments. He ended on a note of hope that the GFMD 2012 will move in a favourable way towards the Summit in Mauritius, and then towards the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

There being no other reaction from the floor, the Chair adjourned the first meeting of the GFMD Steering Group at 16.50 hrs.

*Prepared by:
GFMD Support Unit*

³The 2nd Meeting of the GFMD Assessment Team was moved to 14 March 2012.