Commission on Population and Development and the Third Round of GCM Negotiations

Commission on Population and Development (“CPD”)

The 51st CPD was held at the United Nations from 9 to 13 April 2018. The CPD theme was Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration.

Migration and urbanization are transforming the world socially, economically and demographically – leading us to face a range of opportunities and challenges. In 1994, the Programme of Action was adopted, listing several actions to be undertaken regarding migration and urbanization, and the purpose of the CPD is to annually review progress made, since the Programme’s adoption.

Unfortunately, the CPD failed to adopt a final outcome document for its third consecutive year. During negotiations, the member states were unable to reach consensus on the Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration text, particularly regarding references to sexual and reproductive health and immigration. Although disappointing, this outcome is understandable when considering the need to balance and accommodate a range of differing views and interests within the CPD’s tight time frame.

Third Round of GCM Negotiations

The third round of migration negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (“GCM”) were held over four days at the United Nations (“UN”), from 3 to 6 April 2018.

The sessions commenced with the usual address from the co-facilitators, Ambassador Gomez Camacho from Mexico and Ambassador Lauber from Switzerland. The co-facilitators made their desire clear: to create a document that can be read in isolation and by those unfamiliar with the context provided by the UN systems and agreed migration language, under which we operate.

The co-facilitators explained that GCM - Draft Revision 1 (“Draft Rev.1”), is an amendment of the original document, incorporating feedback from the first two rounds of negotiations by the Member States. It was emphasized that in order to create the best text possible, there must be an understanding by all that, this is an ongoing process and the text will continue to be developed.

An ongoing issue for debate between the member states was the need for protection of vulnerable migrants forced to migrate due to climate and environmental factors. The debate centres on the appropriateness of this type of humanitarian protection falling under the GCM or the Global Compact for Refugees (“GCR”).
During stakeholder engagement, Civil Society advocated for international standards of protection for these vulnerable groups. It is critical that we ensure these migrants are given appropriate protection and do not fall in the gaps between the two Compacts, leaving the group further disadvantaged in achieving a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”). A number of member states and NGOs are requesting the inclusion of a specific objective and associated actions to address this point.

Positively, several member states continued to advocate for developing legal pathways in order to tackle irregular migration. It was emphasized that migratory status and access to human rights, protections and services, is a key protection tool against the discrimination of migrants.

The Draft Rev.1 deleted important references to mixed migration, including on status determination and the right to seek asylum. This is concerning as we consider screening and information about asylum procedures as essential elements of ensuring due process.

However, a positive outcome was the number of member states in agreement that detention, particularly of children, is a last resort and ineffective deterrent of irregular migration. A number of stakeholders recommended consideration of community based alternatives to detention for migrants as a specific action in Objective 13.

Finally, majority of the member states maintained earlier positions that the implementation, follow-up and review be led at a regional and national level with the support of IOM.

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