

UN Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration FAQs

What is the Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration?

The September 19 Summit and the New York Declaration

On September 19, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly hosted a **High-Level Summit** in New York (<http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit>), marking the first time world leaders, heads of state and government, came together at the UN with the aim of improving international cooperation and governance of migration and refugee issues.

The **New York Declaration** was the outcome of this Summit (summary and link to full text at <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration>). In it, the 193 UN Member States committed to negotiating two “Global Compacts”, a “**Global Compact on Refugees**” and a “**Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration**.”

The Summit and the compact process that has emerged from it show how important international migration issues have become on the international stage. States seem to be showing a new willingness to cooperate with one another on migration policy. **The stakes are high: depending on what forms this cooperation takes, states’ cooperation could be good for migrants, or bad.** Migration policy is near the top of many states’ agendas, but it is a difficult time to negotiate an agreement to protect migrants’ rights and interests when around the world a wave of populist scapegoating is leading to increased racism and xenophobia directed at migrants. States committed in the New York Declaration to protect the human rights of all migrants, regardless of status, but they did not say how they would do this, and many states will feel pressure to backtrack on their commitments. **This is why civil society voices, especially the voices of migrant organizations communities, must speak out clearly and effectively on our own behalf** on the policy issues states will be addressing as they work towards this Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration.

The compact *could* provide more and better options for mobility, at lower cost and with greater security, respect for human rights, and access to justice when rights are violated. But states’ cooperation with one another could also be harmful to migrants—for example reaching agreements that would facilitate the uprooting of irregular migrants from their lives and families and returning them to countries that have little to offer in the way of decent work or social support, or supporting the expansion of highly restrictive circular migration programs that require migrants to give up fundamental rights and freedoms for the opportunity to work in another country. **As stakeholders and rights-holders, migrants must be prepared to speak up in this Global Compact process, so that international cooperation and governance of migration adequately reflect migrants’ interests.**

What is a “Global Compact”?

The **Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration** will be an intergovernmental agreement, an agreement that states make with one another. States have committed to completing it in time for another UN conference to be held in New York in September 2018, where they will formally adopt it. We talk about the timeline for consultations and negotiations below.

While the compact will be an intergovernmental agreement, other stakeholders **“including civil society, scientific and knowledge-based institutions, parliaments, local authorities, the private sector and migrants themselves”** will be able to contribute their views, opinions, and expertise to the process through a variety of different channels (see further details below).

The compact will

- “set out a range of principles, commitments and understanding among Member States regarding international migration in all its dimensions...
- present a framework for comprehensive international cooperation on migrants and human mobility,
- deal with all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, developmental, human rights-related and other aspects of migration.”¹

It may include “actionable commitments, means of implementation, and a framework for the follow-up and review of implementation.”

What will all these principles, commitments, frameworks, etc. be about? What will they do?

In the New York Declaration, states included a list of 24 topics, issues or “elements,” that the compact might address.² Some of these are welcome and could pave the way toward positive developments. Others are framed in ways that will be challenging for migrants, such as the element on return and readmission, “improving cooperation in this regard between countries of origin and destination.” In addition to some abstract issues like improving governance of migration, other key issues on the list to be addressed include:

- **“Effective protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants, including women and children, regardless of their migratory status, and the specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations”**
- Combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance towards all migrants
- The inclusion of migrants in host societies, access to basic services for migrants and gender-responsive services
- Remittances, including lowering costs of sending remittances
- Addressing migration drivers (such as absence of decent work opportunities, loss of livelihood due to climate change or disaster)
- Consideration of policies to regularize the status of migrants
- Protection of labour rights and a safe environment for migrant workers
- Promotion of labour mobility, including circular migration
- Recognition of foreign qualifications, education and skills and cooperation in access to and portability of earned benefits
- International cooperation for border control
- Combating trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and contemporary forms of slavery

¹ Modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the global compact for safe, regular and orderly migration, A/71/L.58

² See New York Declaration Annex II, para. 8, A/71/L.1

It is difficult to tell at this stage how some of these issues will be addressed, but in many cases relevant **international human rights and labor rights standards already exist**, and agreement on frameworks to support their implementation at national level could be a positive outcome that migrant and other civil society organizations could not only advocate for during the consultation and negotiation process (described below), but also monitor progress on after the compact is agreed.

What is the process and the timeline for this Global Compact?

Earlier this year, states agreed on the process and timeline. Between **April and November 2017** there will be a very busy schedule of **consultations**, most of which will offer at least informal opportunities for civil society and other stakeholder participation. The consultations will be organized by the UN Secretariat and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), together with the relevant UN agencies like the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), and, in the case of the regional consultations, the UN Regional Commissions.

A “stock-taking” phase of three months will follow the consultation phase, and then negotiations of the compact itself will be held from February through July 2018. During the stock-taking and negotiation phases, a total of four days of multistakeholder informal hearings will be held in New York (and possibly Geneva).

There will be six global thematic consultations. The 24 elements listed in the New York Declaration have been consolidated into six thematic areas, with a global multistakeholder consultation devoted to each. These elements and perhaps others will also be discussed at **regional consultations**.

1. **Human rights of all migrants**, social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance (May 8-9, Geneva)
2. **Addressing drivers of migration**, including adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters and human-made crises, through protection and assistance, sustainable development, poverty eradication, conflict prevention and resolution, (May, New York)
3. **International cooperation and governance of migration** in all its dimensions, including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration (June, Geneva)
4. **Contributions of migrants and diasporas** to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits (July, New York)
5. **Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery**, including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims (September, Vienna)
6. **Irregular migration and regular pathways**, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures (October, Geneva)

There will be four regional intergovernmental consultations, for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Arab states, mostly taking place between September and November, organized by the UN Regional Commissions according to the priorities of the respective member states. There will also be sub-regional consultations in advance of the regional consultations in some cases, and **46 states** have indicated to IOM that they will hold national consultations.

There will be five regional CIVIL SOCIETY consultations, one connected to each of the four regional intergovernmental consultations plus one for Europe (tbc). These are being facilitated by IOM and in most cases will take place just before the respective intergovernmental regional consultation.

There will be additional consultations in conjunction with existing Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs).

... Cancún,

How can we get useful up to date information about it throughout the process?

The Global Coalition on Migration has an email listserve devoted to the Global Compact, and will send out weekly updates. You can send a message to coordinator@gcmigration.org asking to be subscribed as well as indicating your organization's particular interests, constituency and priorities. You can also follow GCM on Facebook at Twitter @GCMigration. A list of useful links to UN and IOM pages is below.

How can we feed useful information on eliminating the barriers we face in our region to safe, regular, rights-protecting migration experiences into the process?

... *(To be completed)*

Useful links

<http://gcmigration.org>, Global Coalition on Migration website (which also has links to all of GCM's members' websites)

<http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit>, UN page on the 19th September High Level Summit on Refugees and Migrants

<http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration>, Summary of the commitments states made in the New York Declaration (with a link to the full text, available directly at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.1)

<https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>, IOM's Global Compact site, with updated information on thematic consultations, regional consultations, stakeholder meetings, etc.