



Global Migration Group Principals' Retreat

9 October 2009
Menton Saint-Bernard, France

Concept note



Rationale

Created by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2006, the Global Migration Group (GMG) was to mark the enhanced investment of the United Nations System in furthering international cooperation and coordination on this topic. Since its inception, the Group has been enlarged with a current membership of 14 agencies, including the International Organization for Migration, and has produced a number of joint outputs. However, it has also become the object of criticism from the outside and from within. Some members criticize what they see as the GMG's excessive focus on procedural questions and the States-led Global Forum process. Many Member States and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration have expressed their dissatisfaction with the past performance of the Group.

The current state of affairs calls for a collective effort to revitalize the Group's purpose and functioning in order to make it more responsive to its members', its partners', and its clients' interests, needs and priorities. As current GMG chair, UNITAR wishes to transform the crisis within the GMG into an opportunity for frank and committed discussions amongst colleagues at the heads of agencies level on the value added of the GMG and on ways to strengthen its performance and political relevance. To this end, UNITAR Executive Director invites GMG counterparts for a one-day retreat that will have two major, long-term objectives.

First, to seize the momentum presented by the current global recession as a time to raise the GMG's profile and establish intellectual leadership by the United Nations (and other GMG members). While major news outlets around the world abound with anecdotal evidence of the crisis negatively affecting migrants, and governments starting to further tighten legal migration opportunities, the United Nations has been conspicuously absent from the public debate on this issue. Yet, at stake is nothing less than the achievements of the 2006 High Level Dialogue, and the follow-up Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) process, to build trust and create political momentum around the traditionally contentious issue of international migration. In October 2008 at the GFMD in Manila, the Secretary-General warned states not to undermine the public's confidence: failures in regulating markets must not translate into rash decisions on how to address international migration. The GMG must act with both a sense of urgency and a long-term vision to this global challenge.

In responding "as one", the GMG must formulate bold and innovative policy prescriptions on how states can best respond to the economic crisis and its impact on migrants. In doing so, it will also support the nascent GFMD multilateral process, over which the current economic crisis will loom heavily. The commitment of the Heads of agency to a set of policy prescriptions will be reflected in a joint GMG statement that will have been finalized at the working level between June and early October 2009. The statement will not be produced for the sake of it. It will be presented at the GFMD3 in Athens (4-5 November), at which time a press conference for GMG Principals will also take place. In addition, UNITAR will ensure that the policy statement is widely diffused among Governments and other stakeholders.

Second, to endorse a streamlined mandate and working methods for the Group based on recommendations emanating from working level deliberations on this matter. In order to address the crisis within the GMG, and after considerable research and analysis on the purpose and functioning of the Group at the working level, Principals will have the opportunity to provide new direction to the GMG by clarifying its purpose and value added for its members and member states alike.

Between June and early October 2009, a thoughtful analysis is underway at the working level which includes surveying current methods and concerns, comparative research with best practices drawn from other coordinating mechanisms, and a thorough review of the GMG's original mandate (terms of reference). The Principals will be presented with a succinct set of recommendations on two fronts: one, proposals for prioritizing the GMG's terms of reference to gain greater clarity and a new sense of purpose; two, action-oriented recommendations on the functioning (working methods) of the GMG. The aim is to ensure that the rules and procedures applying to GMG members and the GMG chair leave little room for a lapse in leadership and a crisis in governance, like the one that has marked the GMG for the last months.

Both sets of objectives will remain relevant well beyond 2009. Future chairs of the Group have agreed to maintain a thematic focus on the economic crisis and to pursue recommendations that will strengthen the performance of the GMG. The Principals' retreat is therefore an investment in the future functioning and future contributions of the GMG.

Format

A one-day retreat held in Menthon Saint-Bernard, France at the outskirts of Geneva on 9 October 2009. The retreat will be divided in two sessions. The morning session (lasting three and a half hours) will feature a lively, interactive exchange of views with pre-eminent experts on the impacts of the economic crisis on migration, and the implications for policy making and international cooperation. Rather than giving formal presentations, experts will be prodded by a high profile moderator to present brief position statements, followed by an exchange of views with Principals. The Special Representative of the Secretary General on International Migration, Peter Sutherland, and Ambassador Athanassios Nakos, Chair-in-Office of the GFMD Athens 2009 will participate in this substantive discussion. During the afternoon session (lasting three hours), Principals will be invited to 1) endorse a joint statement on policy prescriptions regarding the economic crisis and its impact on migrants; and 2) discuss and approve working level recommendations on a streamlined GMG mandate and working methods.

Participants

All GMG Principals are encouraged to participate. Indeed, the presence of all the Principals in person will be a crucial signal of commitment on behalf of the member agencies to take ownership and improve the functioning of the Group. In addition, SRS Peter Sutherland has confirmed his commitment to the GMG and his participation in this retreat. Principals will also be joined by four eminent migration and development experts, who will provide substantive inputs to the day's discussions on migration and the economic crisis. These

experts will contribute evidence from different world regions and disciplines. The Greek Chair of the GFMD 2009 will also participate in the substantive part of the retreat discussions.

Expected outcomes

- 1) A joint understanding and position of the GMG members on priorities to be addressed in conjunction with the economic crisis and its impacts on migration and the way forward in terms of positioning the GMG as a source of intellectual leadership in the field of migration and development (within the UN system, vis-à-vis GFMD etc.).
- 2) A joint statement of GMG Principals on policy prescriptions regarding migration and the economic crisis to be presented by ASG Carlos Lopes on behalf of the Group at the third Global Forum on Migration and Development in Athens (4-5 November), and, potentially, shared with the wider public during a press conference in Athens and through other media outlets.
- 3) A review of the mandate of the GMG, including clear provisions on working methods, providing the Group with a shared sense of purpose and ensuring its smooth functioning and political relevance.

Proposed agenda

Over one day, during two substantive sessions, the retreat agenda is designed to address a) the impacts of the current economic crisis on international migration and migration policies; b) the crisis of the GMG and steps towards revitalizing the Group's purpose and its functioning.

Time	AGENDA
9:30 – 13:00	Morning Session
9:30	Welcome by Carlos Lopes
9:45	Tour de table
10:15	Migration and the economic crisis: experts share their views <i>Roundtable discussion including all participants* and pre-eminent international experts, moderated by media personality.</i>
11:45	Coffee break
12:00	Address by SRSB Peter Sutherland
12:30	Address by Ambassador Athanassios Nakos
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 17:30	Afternoon Session[†]

* Principals may wish to bring to the fore issues of particular concern to their organization's mandate and work.

† Working coffee break during the sessions.

14:30	Informal discussion of Principals on joint statement for GFMD3
15:30	Discussion on "GMG revitalization" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction by Carlos Lopes</i> • <i>Open discussion on:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Revised GMG Terms of Reference, including working methods</i> - <i>Relationship with GFMD</i>
16:30	Discussion on any other business
17:00 - 17:30	Closing session

Programme

1) Morning session: "Migration and the Economic Crisis"

Drawing from the diverse perspectives and expertise of its membership, the GMG is ideally placed to capture and reflect on the multiple ways in which the current economic crisis affects international migration and migrants, and to provide timely advice to Member States in their formulation of policy responses. From questions of data and evidence gathering on trends in migration flows and stocks to ensuring migrants' rights, protection and welfare; from analyzing changes in remittances levels to assessing the longer-term development implications, the GMG can function as a 'hub' for the sharing and pooling of knowledge, analysis and policy recommendations. Above all, it has a crucial role to play in supporting continued and enhanced international dialogue and cooperation on international migration and development. Contributions from eminent experts will serve to inform the Principals' discussions on how the UN and others can provide succinct policy guidance for the short term, including on how States and other stakeholders should prepare for 2010, as well as predictions on what to expect for the mid- to long term.

2) Afternoon session: "Revitalizing the GMG"

The retreat will also serve to agree upon appropriate methods of work that will facilitate the development of future joint GMG positions, as well as the ongoing coordination between GMG members, e.g. in the areas of information sharing, research and policy advice. To this end, the afternoon session will discuss the findings of the working level deliberations on the GMG mandate and working methods and will serve to endorse the draft recommendations emerging from this review process.

Methodology

The retreat is intended to provide a forum for informal, in-depth strategic discussions among GMG Principals. The chair will introduce the main sessions of the day. In addition, all Principals will be invited to actively contribute throughout the day to facilitate a lively exchange of views among the Group and with the expert speakers, and the representatives of the Secretary-General and the host of the next GFMD, the Government of Greece. More detailed information will be provided in due course.

Financial aspects

UNITAR would like to acknowledge the kind support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for the organization of the retreat. GMG agencies are expected to contribute to this event by covering the expenses related to their Principals' participation.