

Did catchy slogans and future commitments in the IMRF reflect poor implementation of the GCM?

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The finalization of the Global Compact for Migration's so-called "Progress Document" for the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) through four townhall meetings, comprising the non-state stakeholders, convened by the UN's International Network on Migration and conducted by the UN's two co-facilitators included a number of catchy slogans and innumerable commitments. These appeared in the vocabulary of discourse leading to the IMRF in May 2022 at New York, the first four-yearly review of the implementation of the GCM for Safe, Orderly and Regular migration by the UN member states. A few of the holistic slogans are "the whole of government" and "the whole of society" approach, adopting "a 360-degree view", etc. The message was that the member states had so far failed to harmonize their policies across various government departments dealing with one or the other issues related to migration – both immigration and emigration. It was an indirect admission that harmonization was wanting over the last three and a half years as, for example, a national consultation reflected ministries highlighting limited responsibilities in their protocol-defined domains whereas some crucial ministries (like that of home affairs dealing with citizenship and immigration per se) were not even included in the consultation.

The focus was apparently also on inclusion of the whole of civil society organizations, those dealing with the migrants' labour rights, child rights, gender rights, civil rights, human rights, academia, media and so on. However, their effective participation has been minimized by allowing a "gagged" role of silent listening, delayed funding of travel for in-person participation, and limited facilitation of the US visas for their entry into the United States. In contrast, the prime stakeholder in the story, viz., the migrant, has been given a short shrift. Despite the fact that the migrant is a generic agency at the centre of the GCM, and despite many Civil Society Organizations requesting the explicit inclusion of specific migrant categories like the refugees (otherwise segregated from the GCM just because there is a separate GCR), the international students, the Diaspora and so on, "migrants" have been left undefined and without the diversity of their voices in the IMRF.

The author had suggested, through both verbal intervention and written submission, that spelling out the third stakeholder in a generic term, e.g., the "whole of migrant" alongside the "whole of government" and "whole of society" would complete the trinity of stakeholders of the GCM, effectively leaving no scope for "no one to be left behind" by default. It seems the persistence of this omission was driven by a majority of member states' veiled urge to downplay direct migrant voices as a separate entity. Only the admitted CSOs were allowed to talk on the migrants' behalf, narrating how the whole of state and the whole of society have failed the migrants through the COVID-19 miseries, and continue to fail them in general.

The member states have been seemingly confident that the CSOs can be countered by projecting the so-called "good practice guidelines" proudly paraded by state after state.

Confronting the use of innovative and more effective tools, would have helped to phase out the ineffective, failed and regressive policies, e.g., the draconian sedation law practiced since the colonial regimes. The member states, one after the other in an “orderly” but stereotypical way, presented their report cards of assumed success. They were hailed by the chorus sung by other states. Instead, the IMRF could have broken away from this tradition of the member states blowing one’s own trumpets and could have used the opportunity to highlight where they failed or met with inadequate success before stating all that they did on how they plan to do it in future.

Citing the missed opportunities of optimizing GCM objective 19 on the role and contribution of the migrants and Diasporas, this presentation will elaborate on how the GCM and the IMRF have so far been off the mark in implementation. A dynamic view will be presented of how, over time, refugees could become international students and eventually part of a Diaspora, such as to be able to contribute in attaining the objectives of the GCM through various forms of Diaspora philanthropy.