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The Grand National Assembly of Türkiye

Parliaments and the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees: How to bring about stronger international cooperation and national implementation

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT)

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CONCLUSIONS BY THE CONFERENCE RAPPOREUR

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Introduction

The conference *Parliaments and the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees: How to bring about stronger international cooperation and national implementation*, which was held on 20 and 21 June 2022 in İstanbul, Türkiye, was jointly organized by the IPU and GNAT. It was in fact the first global parliamentary conference focusing on refugees and forced migration.

The conference was attended by 288 participants including parliamentarians from 46 countries worldwide, and representatives of international organizations and other institutions from Africa, Asia, Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East, and North and South America. Participants included 16 Speakers and Deputy Speakers, and senior members of parliaments.

The President of the Republic of Türkiye, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, formally opened the event in a speech delivered by video link. Inspiring, substantive opening addresses were also presented by the President of the IPU, Mr. Duarte Pacheco, and the Speaker of GNAT, Dr. Mustafa Şentop.

While addressing international migration in general, the conference focused on refugees and responses to forced migration. The six formal sessions addressed: international migration governance standards; global compacts and global policy agendas; sustainable solutions and root causes of forced migration; irregular migration including management of borders and combating of transnational crime; the experience of Türkiye as a country hosting the highest number of refugees in the world; and the human dignity, social inclusion and cohesion of refugees and migrants.

The sessions were opened by the following keynote speakers: Ms. Sahiba Garafova, Speaker of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan; Mr. Herimanana Razafimahefa, President of the Senate of Madagascar; Ms. Márta Mátrai, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary; Mr. Ahmed Al-Safadi, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jordan; Mr. İsmail Çatakli, Deputy Minister of the Interior of Türkiye; and Ms. Olga Sánchez Cordero, President of the Senate of Mexico. The session moderators were: Ms. Silvia Monica Dinică, Senator of the Parliament of Romania; Mr. Patrick Taran, President of Global Migration Policy Associates; Ms. Guoda Burokiene, member of the Seimas of Lithuania; Ms. Lucie Milebou-Aubusson, President of the Senate of Gabon; Ms. Ravza Kavakçı Kan, member of GNAT; and Ms. Farida Haddouche Ilimi, member of the National People's Assembly of Algeria. The interactive sessions drew first on information obtained from

interviews with parliaments, international organizations, academics and parliamentary experts, following which the voices, views and experiences of a dozen or more parliamentary delegates in each session were heard. Delegates of national parliaments were thus all able to contribute to the discussion.

Context overview

The conference took place in the context of international migration punctuated by recent increases in the forced displacement of people both within countries and internationally as refugees and asylum seekers. Speakers noted that, according to United Nations estimates, the number of international migrants worldwide – persons residing for a period of a year or more in a country other than their country of birth or citizenship – reached some 280 million people. The vast majority were migrant workers – of all skills and education levels – and members of their families.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates show that at the end of 2021, there were 27.1 million refugees and 4.6 million asylum seekers which represents a considerable rise compared to the several preceding years. In addition, there were also an estimated 53.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Concern for stateless persons was also evoked.

Numerous issues were flagged throughout the two days of intense proceedings such as the role and importance of international migration for economic sustainability of countries and regional economic communities. Migrants and refugees contributed to the economic growth and sustainability of both their countries of residence and safe havens with their skills and labour, and to their countries of origin with the remittances they sent back which represented an important economic resource for many these countries.

Concerns were emphasized throughout the conference on the huge challenges faced by many countries receiving refugees, asylum-seekers, forcibly displaced persons and war evacuees from neighbouring countries.

Parliamentarians from many countries pointed out that countries with the least resources hosted the greatest number of refugees and that, nonetheless, they provided far more generously refugee protection and assistance than developed countries.

Fair and equitable responsibility sharing and enhanced international cooperation clearly emerged as the fundamental messages. Many participants emphasized a rightful expectation that developed countries of the West, particularly in Europe, assume an equitable share of responsibility in providing protection to refugees and assisting countries with large refugee and displaced persons populations. Concern was also expressed that countries providing weapons to conflict situations and/or engaged in military interventions had a most crucial responsibility both to engage in peacemaking dialogue and negotiations and to provide support to the victims of those conflicts.

A major concern raised by parliamentarians as well as by experts and academics, was the rise in many countries of xenophobia, intolerance, exclusion and violence directed against refugees and migrants. Participants urged that attention to *rolling back* racism and xenophobia be an immediate priority for parliaments and governments and be given public attention worldwide.

The urgency for parliamentary engagement and action were reiterated throughout the conference, notably the imperative of governance under the rule of law and the key role, responsibility and functions of the legislative branch of government in that regard. Participants emphasized the need for parliamentary engagement and action in: the ratification and domestication of international conventions and guidelines; the elaboration and enactment of national legislative frameworks on governance and regulation of all aspects of migration, including human and labour rights; protection of migrants and refugees; and, as directly elected representatives of the people of their countries, in guiding the executive branch, and monitoring and holding the administration and other stakeholders accountable.

Special mention was made of parliaments' role in urging international dialogue and cooperation and the direct engagement in international dialogue of parliamentarians among themselves. The importance of generating international guidance for parliamentarians was underlined. Such guidance was provided by the IPU and was contained in regional parliamentary resolutions, conferences, guidelines, and practical handbooks.

I. Migration governance: International standards, global compacts and parliamentary imperatives

Participants reiterated that the foundations for national governance and regulation of migration, and refugee protection and assistance were: the international human rights Conventions; the International Labour Standards; the UNHCR 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol; as well as other relevant regional instruments. Most countries of participating parliaments had ratified many of these instruments, with the core Human Rights Conventions highly ratified in all regions. All States were bound by the ILO fundamental conventions and 150 States had ratified one or both the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Conventions on migration governance and migration for employment/migrant workers have been ratified by nearly 100 countries. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families counted 56 ratifications and 14 signatories. It was highly ratified in Central, West and Maghreb Africa; in Central and South America; in the Caribbean region; and was ratified by several countries in the Middle East.

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) are instruments that provide essential guidance for all countries in enhancing the realization of principles and standards contained in relevant international conventions. The compacts were a successful manifestation of multilateralism and international cooperation.

However, expert speakers and parliamentary participants noted that, while progress in implementation of the respective compacts was discerned in the recent review processes, there was still far more to be done to achieve the vision and practical results anticipated in the compacts.

Participants lamented that the contextual situation for implementation of the compacts had worsened in crucial ways since their adoption. Key factors in that trend included: the worldwide travel, mobility and migration restrictions imposed almost universally at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic; the evident rise in xenophobia, and in scapegoating of foreigners, migrants and refugees in spreading the pandemic; and the economic slowdown that raised unemployment and reduced economic activity which in turn reduced the financial means for governments and others in responding to the needs of refugees and migrants. Nonetheless, a number of countries took measures to include migrants and refugees in their COVID-19 responses, such as extending permits, regulating immigration statuses, suspending forced removals, and finding alternatives to detention.

The Sustainable Development Agenda (SDA) was emphasized as a key and fundamental package of standards and guidance that addressed migration in all its aspects, and in particular the drivers and causes of forced migration. Supporting development would ultimately enable conditions for people to remain where they were in safety, dignity and well-being with decent work, and have migration be a choice rather than a compulsion, as it was for many today.

Participants expressed a common view that parliaments must remain in the drivers seat to : domesticate international instruments; formulate policies in concert with the government executive; review and revise national legislation in conformity with international norms; and oversee government action and implementation of international standards and the global compacts.

II. Addressing root causes and drivers of compelled migration in countries of origin

The conference debated on root causes and drivers of compelled or forced migration, noting that they were important elements of the GCR agenda. Nonetheless, parliamentarians emphasized that implementing the targets and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would be the definitive means to resolve and indeed prevent the root causes of forced human displacement.

In the course of the conference, parliamentarians from most of the countries represented shared experience and views on factors compelling migration. The key factors identified in the discussion were:

- The absence of decent work and means for survival according to local standards.
- Environmental degradation, both from man-made and natural causes.
- The consequences of global warming, particularly sea level rise threatening the very existence of island countries, coastal regions and lowlands in many countries.

Participants were especially concerned about current and recent forced displacement resulting from civil warfare in numerous countries; external military interventions; inter-ethnic conflicts within and between countries; and other situations of mass violations of human rights.

Delegates identified several key roles and responses that parliaments should engage in: peacemaking; facilitating and engaging in negotiations; acting to prevent, impede and stop inter-ethnic conflict – including against foreigners, migrants and refugees; promoting jobs-rich development; engaging on regional integration for economic development – which concerned a large number of the countries represented; accelerating environmental mitigation and adaptation; and acting on the implementation of all elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

III. Demand driven mobility and migration

Discussion at different points across the conference acknowledged that a major factor in international migration today was the objective economic and demographic need for immigration in an increasing number of countries, and that the GCM included many elements of guidance for governance.

The conference acknowledged the needs and demand for immigration in countries in all regions of the world for reasons of maintaining economic sustainability and competitiveness; compensating for and ageing and declining labour force; obtaining skills and labour corresponding to fast changing technology (for which national workers were not trained); and of the changing locations of where work was done and where supply chains were located.

While the conference did not dwell substantively on regular migration, delegate voices reminded that there remained much to be done: to open or widen what the GCM referred to as regular pathways; to develop immigration systems; to expand and implement the existing systems of free movement in regional economic communities of States; and to expand multilateral and bilateral skills and labour mobility arrangements, including bilateral labour agreements while ensuring that they incorporated and upheld international human rights and labour standards.

IV. Responsibility sharing and managing borders/boundaries

Responsibility sharing and managing borders/boundaries were key issues of debate during the conference. They related to issues of binding international standards, international cooperation, and extensive guidelines in the GCR and GCM.

Delegates consistently reminded that refugees were a global concern and shared responsibility of all countries. Participants evoked a number of issues meriting particular attention, including:

- Humanitarian support to victims of war, violations of rights and deprivation of options for decent life, in all places and all circumstances.
- Priority for opportunities for settlement-in-place in countries of asylum or safe havens.
- Expanding opportunities and offers of resettlement elsewhere, especially sharing the responsibility with countries on the frontlines of refugee flight.
- Support for refugees choice to remain as close to their homeland, to return if and when possible, or to settle-in-place or resettle elsewhere where there may be possibilities for decent life and work.
- Enforcing the right to refuge.
- Ending practices of collective expulsion of migrants and refugees.

The conference as a whole insisted that the said responsibility-sharing concerns required adequate international support for front-line countries to enable them to host significant refugee populations and to offer durable solutions.

Delegates highlighted that countries that provided weapons to and/or intervened in conflicts had a particular responsibility to stop fueling conflicts, to engage in and/or support negotiated peaceful solutions, and to provide support for the victims of those conflicts.

Managing borders and preventing trafficking and smuggling were raised as particular concerns by some participants. A clear call emerged to enhance international cooperation on law enforcement and in particular the

prevention, protection, and prosecution in combatting of human trafficking and organized crime often behind such trafficking.

It was also pointed out that the best prevention of trafficking and smuggling was to provide options for regular mobility – to reduce the “market” for services to cross restricted borders and access labour demand, as well as for universal protection and enforcement of human rights and rights at work. They would help reduce the incentives to attract migrants who were more exploitable when left in undocumented or irregular situations.

Facilitating mobility within regional spaces, such the European Union (EU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC) and other regional economic communities, as well as Türkiye's agreements on facilitating mobility with neighbouring countries with a Turkic population, were also highlighted as successful approaches.

Participants agreed that all of the above must be done simultaneously, there are no *quick* fix solutions.

V. Türkiye's experience

One of the conference's session focused on the extensive experience of Türkiye and the many measures taken by the Turkish government and other stakeholders to receive, provide support for, and in many cases facilitate the integration of refugees in employment and the local society. Türkiye's experience as a country which was becoming increasingly a destination country for migration for employment was also highlighted.

VI. Inclusion, economic development, social cohesion

The inclusion of refugees and migrants in their cities and countries of residence, their contribution to development and economic and social well-fare and the social cohesion deriving from good governance, were highlighted by delegates as key concerns of both the GCM and GCR.

It was noted that the following issues must be attended to:

- Access to services, health and education.
- Specific attention to children.
- Gender-responsive approaches towards all migrant and refugee women and girls.
- Labour market employment integration and decent work.
- Skills assessments, recognition of qualifications and training.
- Inclusion, anti-discrimination, equality of treatment as imperatives of social cohesion.
- Specific efforts to combat xenophobia and violence against migrants and refugees.

VII. Conclusion

Own-initiative parliamentary action for refugee protection and assistance, and governing migration were an imperative in every country. These included: adoption and domestication of standards; national legislative frameworks for migration, human rights, refugee protection, economic sustainability, social cohesion; stronger collective international, bilateral and national actions; cooperation in regulating migration, borders and enhancing regular pathways; and freer movement, particularly within regional communities of countries.

Presently there was an urgency for further international parliamentary dialogue and cooperation on addressing causes of forced migration; regulating international migration; further implementing of the recommendations of the global compacts; and on realizing the sustainable development agenda.

Participants concluded with an enthusiastic expression of appreciation for the excellent hosting by Türkiye and the excellent organization of the conference by GNAT and the IPU. Appreciation was also expressed to the interpreters for facilitating the dialogue across many languages, and to the personnel of the Hilton Istanbul Bomonti Hotel for their highly commendable support.