

25 June 2019

H.E. Ambassador Masud Bin Momen
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations
New York

H.E. Ambassador Augustin Santos Maraver
Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations
New York

Re: Modalities - Request for 4 Days of the IMRF and for a Stronger Civil Society Role in Organizing the Multi-Stakeholder Hearing

Dear Ambassadors Bin Momen and Santos Maraver,

We are writing to you on behalf of a wide range of civil society organizations who have been actively engaged in the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) process, and facilitated through the Civil Society Action Committee-

We thank you for your leadership of the process to develop modalities for the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) that fulfill the ambitions and commitments in the Global Compact for an inclusive, consistent and effective review. To that end, and as indicated on the attached document, we strongly urge the modalities to reflect the following two elements:

1. *Four* days for the IMRF program to give the roundtables a reasonable chance to do their work.

The current draft of the modalities provides only two days for four roundtables to review all 23 objectives of the Global Compact. More precisely, section 21(a) of the draft states that “the four interactive roundtables *will offer space for discussion covering all 23 objectives* of the Global Compact *with the aim of reviewing the progress made in its implementation at all levels...*” (italics added here for emphasis.) This is simply not reasonable, neither for discussion nor review. Nor is there is any evidence to our knowledge that such crowding and haste has worked in other such undertakings, even those less ambitious. It will be a race, not space, impractical in the extreme even as the focus of the whole forum is on practical implementation.

An increase from three to four days—i.e., just one additional day, gives the IMRF and its roundtables a decent chance to accomplish their objectives. We know that some states want five days, others three. Four is a good compromise. We believe it is essential to success.

2. Civil society self-organizing of the multi-stakeholder hearings, as in many past migration processes.

Robust, meaningful and open civil society engagement at all levels is a cornerstone for effective implementation and review of the Global Compact for Migration.

We specifically welcome the decision to hold informal multi-stakeholder hearings in connection to the IMRF and see this as an important opportunity that will allow different stakeholders, including civil society, to mobilize and take stock of existing initiatives for implementation, review progress at the different levels, highlight challenges and opportunities and prepare to engage in the IMRF more meaningfully. We also strongly welcome the invitation in paragraph 4 for all stakeholders who were accredited to the GCM process to participate in the IMRF.

Modalities should affirm, not reduce the role and value of stakeholder *self-organizing* the hearings. We are concerned by the minimal role being accorded to stakeholders, including civil society, in the planning, preparation, and execution of this multi-stakeholder hearing in the current draft. This is actually a retreat from effective self-organizing that civil society and other stakeholders have done in many high-level processes, including in direct coordination with the President of the General Assembly (PGA) and UNDESA for the UN High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013, and, working closely with the IOM and others, for the Stocktaking ahead of the Global Compact on Migration in 2017.

In these processes, a group of civil society organizations active in migration and development around the world self-convened an International Steering Committee that also quite deliberately comprised leading thinker-actors from academia, the private sector and local authorities. Together they planned and ensured proper outreach and participation of stakeholders of all kinds, from all regions and at national and grass roots levels, in programs designed to make a practical contribution to the larger process. There was abiding respect for the design, the objectives and the states-led nature of the processes, and for the PGA and UN parameters.

The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) is also another space where this role and value has been clear. Starting from 2011, the Civil Society Days (CSD) of the GFMD have also been fully self-organized, including through the selection of CS participants (both to the CSD, common space and government days) and setting the agenda. In these processes of self-organizing, and in the GFMD programs themselves, civil society included other stakeholders, especially other practitioners, directly, actively and prominently, most notably the growing (and welcome) movements of actors from the private sector and local authorities.

This self-organizing has consistently been evaluated as well-ordered and effective in independent assessments by academics, foundations and representatives of intergovernmental institutions, including the UN and EU. The governments of Switzerland, Mauritius, Sweden, Turkey, Bangladesh, Germany and Morocco—all former GFMD chairs—might offer further support to the contribution of such self-organizing over the past 8 years of the GFMD,

Civil society is in the fact the stakeholder with the richest history of engaging with Members States both in UN and non-UN processes on migration. This engagement has been the basis of mutual learning, trust building, collaboration, which allowed us to move far beyond our modest beginnings in the first High-Level Dialogue on Migration (HLD), in 2006, where a separate civil society hearing was entirely organized by the President of the General Assembly (PGA) and only a select few were allowed to participate at the HLD.

Moreover, given the central focus of the IMRF—on implementation, it is of the essence that **civil society actors are also *practitioners and partners with governments in every region of the world***, constantly and concretely at local and national levels as well as in and across regions. As practitioners and partners, we bring significant human, social and financial resources to precisely the implementation that the Global Compact calls upon the IMRF to review.

We are concerned that returning to earlier models of civil society participation at this level will send the wrong message, especially at a time where civil society faces increasing scrutiny and shrinking spaces in many national contexts.

Accordingly, **as a key partner in implementation and in this process, we respectfully request¹ that:**

- Civil Society and other stakeholders are once again entrusted with the responsibility to fully organize the multi-stakeholder hearing, including through setting the agenda, selecting the participants and panelists
- All participants at the stakeholder hearing are granted the right to participate in the IMRF
- CS and other stakeholder participants in the IMRF are given the right to take the floor both in plenary and round table discussions
- The stakeholder hearing is linked to the IMRF through reporting of outcomes, not only in the opening plenary but in round tables which could be co-chaired by rapporteurs from the multi-stakeholder hearing
- Civil society rapporteurs to the IMRF are self-selected

Both the governments of Bangladesh and Spain have been staunch proponents of strong and diverse civil society voices. We hope we can continue to rely on your leadership and support on that direction in the IMRF and the multi-stakeholder hearings.

We remain committed to work with you, member states and other stakeholders in full, meaningful implementation and review of the GCM.

¹ A separate document with exact language proposals is being submitted along with this letter