



**Intervention by Elana Wong, Coordinator of the Civil Society Action Committee, at
'The Global Compact for Migration: Critical Perspectives on Migration Policy from
European Civil Society' Conference in Madrid, Spain
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The AC, GFMD Civil Society Mechanism and the global migration landscape

Thank you very much Eva, and to Michele for the rich examples and analysis of migration policy in Europe. Today I'm bringing perhaps the global perspective as Coordinator of two international platforms, housed by the International Catholic Migration Commission:

- First, the Civil Society Action Committee, which is a global network of over 60 organisations and networks engaged in international migration policy and governance. One of our main areas of work is organising to engage in GCM activities- providing support for regional mobilisation for the RMRFs, and mobilising internationally for the IMRF. We also work on collective engagement with UN agencies and governments.
- Second, we also serve as Civil Society Mechanism for the Global Forum for Migration & Development. This is a bit different as we are a mandated platform for civil society engagement and participation in the GFMD process, and guided by an International Steering Committee of active civil society members.

Both include large and small NGOs, migrant and diaspora organisations, trade unions, academia, faith based organisations, large global and regional networks- and include many here: PICUM, Caritas, and earlier- the Migration Youth & Children Platform, Alianza Americas, and the African Non-State Actors Platform.

We work to share information, particularly around UN and intergovernmental processes which, as many of you know, often have many complicated steps to be able to register, attend, understand what is happening and when. We work to synthesise that information and share it with our networks. Often we have members sharing with the wider platform too, to facilitate understanding and access, and we work to support that expanded access.

Links between the GFMD and GCM for Civil Society

One question we often get is what is the purpose of having these two spaces, and how are they different?

The GFMD: created in 2006, it is the first dedicated state-led process for governments to come together and discuss migration and development issues. It has 3 main characteristics: it is informal / voluntary, non-binding, and multi-stakeholder. CS were involved from the start-

engaging with governments, and with a CS rapporteur reporting on CS key priorities and recommendations, but it wasn't until 2011 when a dedicated mechanism was mandated for civil society to have coordinated participation. From 2020, all stakeholders were allowed full access to the process and to help shape the agendas. These now include the business mechanism, the mayors / local governments mechanism, and the youth stakeholder group (MYCP). The discussions and pushing of CS in these spaces- including to put topics like human rights on the agenda, was key to building the momentum needed for the creation of the GCM. We are currently working on the 15th Chairship under Colombia.

Now, with the GCM being focused around an agreement (though still non-binding / voluntary) with specific objectives, the GFMD has become a space to engage States who are both parties and non-parties to the GCM. It has the potential for 3 things:

1. Direct engagement and discussion with governments on the same level - something which is much more difficult to achieve at UN processes due to logistical and security restrictions.
2. Space for multi-stakeholder discussions on specific / focused thematics that sometimes do not get enough dedicated time in GCM activities.
3. Pushing and shaping agenda for topics that are perhaps 'more sensitive' or heavily politicised at the GCM / UN level

One example was the Chat Circles session that we hosted at the recent 14th GFMD Summit in January, where we held direct informal discussions between CS and govts around agendas that we set. Some topics that we chose:

- collaborating across GCM and GCR
- Diaspora, cultural tourism, reclamation of cultural heritage
- Borders and migration governance
- Alternatives to detention and returns (framing shaped by CS)
- Non-labour regular pathways
- We had representatives from over 29 states come to discuss with us.

Global Challenges facing civil society in advancing migration issues: GCM implementation and more

However, throughout many of these international policy spaces, we are facing some big challenges:

- Closing Civic Space: less and less funding for both CS and migration work and participation in decision-making spaces, logistical barriers to CS and grassroots participation such as visas and fast deadlines, and more CS also being monitored or barred by Member States.
- Lack of proper review and action: the overall impression from civil society is that of governments coming to spaces like the Regional Migration Review Forums just to talk about their own best practices / achievements- which are often isolated programmes or 'pick and choose' feedback on progress. The current format also establishes separation between Member States and stakeholders, with no set or guaranteed space for MS to have to hear or be challenged by CS.

- Lack of political will, coordination, and desire to share information between government divisions and levels on the implementation level:
 - But also, we see and even hear directly that Global North states- particularly in Europe- see the GCM and its objectives as a project to help the Global South with. Not that they need to improve the governance and circumstances of migration in their own countries or regions- this is highly problematic when many of the most hostile borders are around developed countries.
 - This also reproduces colonial legacies- it does not work when drivers of migration are affected and often exacerbated by actions of Global North countries.

So how do we work to combat this and push for meaningful change? Michele already pointed to it before- we need to connect and mobilise civil society globally:

- Share information, experiences, good practices that we have implemented and/or need to see from governments.
- Build solidarity and alliances to create united fronts- need to come together and strategise how we can advance migrant rights and protection- working together to overcome tokenisation, and the instrumentalisation of CS, migrants and diaspora.

Thank you.