

**SIXTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**
Population Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat
New York, 15-16 February 2018

**CONTRIBUTION
TO THE SIXTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION¹**

League of Arab States (LAS)

¹ The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.



**League of Arab States
General Secretariat
Social Sector
Refugees, Expatriates
& Migration Affairs Dept.**

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**League of Arab States (LAS) Contributions
In the Field of Migration**

**League of Arab States (LAS)
Refugees, Expatriates and Migration Affairs Department**

A. INTRODUCTION

Since 2011 the Arab region has witnessed major changes with regards to human mobility. This urged the League of Arab States (LAS) to work on establishing new mechanisms for cooperation in the field of Migration in the Arab Region; among them the *Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugee Affairs (ARCP)* which was established in 2014 as a State-driven, non-binding, flexible and informal forum to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between LAS member States on migration issues.

The Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region is another mechanism which gathers international organizations working in the Arab region in the field of migration, with the aim to prevent duplication of efforts; and to ensure a consistent, system-wide message and strategy for migration. It was established in March 2013 at the 18th RCM meeting under the chairmanship of LAS, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and with the membership of 13 UN agencies.

The Africa Arab Technical and Coordination Committee on Migration (TCCM) co-chaired by the African Union (AU) and LAS was also established according to the resolution adopted by the Africa Arab Summit held in Kuwait in November 2013, to help strengthening cooperation in migration management, and to promote and protect migrants rights, especially in the provision of sound advice to Member States on issues related to migration in both regions, in conformity with regional and international instruments.

A *Working Group on International Migration between LAS and the EU* is proposed to be established in the framework of the Arab - European strategic dialogue, in order to enhance cooperation between both sides in this field, particularly with the escalating refugee crisis that involves countries in both regions as sending, receiving and transit.

B. Initiatives Undertaken During 2017 to Support the Implementation of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants

In preparation of the UNGA High Level Plenary Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, LAS organized an extraordinary meeting for the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugees Affairs (ARCP) at its Headquarters in Cairo on 2-3 August 2016, in cooperation with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the aim of enhancing the regional dialogue and unifying the Arab position towards the topics discussed in the UNGA High-Level Meeting and to maximize the input and contribution of the Arab States during the roundtables of the meeting. A final declaration was adopted by the Member States and considered as an input from the Arab region to the High-Level Meeting. According to the declaration, LAS, as the secretariat of the ARCP, was assigned to follow-up on the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* at the Arab regional level, as well as the consultations of the *Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)*, and the *Global Compact for Orderly, Safe, and Regular Migration (GCM)*.

▪ The Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugees Affairs (ARCP) Initiatives:

1. Third ARCP Meeting:

The ARCP held its third ordinary meeting on 8-9 May 2017 at LAS Headquarters in Cairo. A session was dedicated to discuss Member States' efforts to follow-up on New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The Member States actively participated in this session and provided LAS, with papers on their efforts in this regard. Accordingly, LAS prepared a comprehensive paper including all the efforts undertaken by its Member States in this regard and disseminated it as a kind of exchanging information and best practices.

2. ARCP Extraordinary Meeting in preparation for the Consultations on the GCR and the GCM:

An extraordinary meeting for the ARCP was held on 25-26 July 2017 at LAS Headquarters in Cairo, in preparation for the consultations on the GCR and the GCM. The meeting was organized in cooperation with the UNHCR and IOM in the framework of ensuring the active participation of LAS Member States in the consultations of the two Global Compacts and encourage their diplomatic missions in New York and Geneva to coordinate with each other in this regard.

The meeting aimed at raising the awareness of LAS Member States on the ongoing processes to develop the GCR and the GCM, and to agree on the key messages that the Arab region is keen to include in the two global compacts, to be presented in all the forums held for this purpose.

19 LAS Member States were represented by the focal points of the ARCP along with other concerned ministries, mainly Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The international, regional and Arab specialized organizations were also represented.

Two separate outcome documents were adopted during the meeting; one on the contribution of the ARCP to the GCR, and the other on the contribution of the ARCP to the GCM. The outcome documents of the meeting were circulated to LAS missions in New York and Geneva, as focal points with the United Nations, which in turn circulated these documents to the embassies of the Arab States. The documents were also sent to H.E. Mr. Juan José Gómez Camacho and H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, the co-facilitators of the Intergovernmental Consultations and Negotiations on the GCM and to Ms. Louise Arbour, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for International Migration and Secretary General of the 2018 Intergovernmental Conference on International Migration. The documents were put accordingly on the UN allocated website among the general contributions of the regional processes and fora (<http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/general-contributions>), and among the written contributions in the dedicated section for the GCR on the UNHCR's website (<http://www.unhcr.org/595259bd4>).

LAS, as the secretariat of the ARCP, also presents these documents in all relevant regional and international events. The contribution to the GCM was presented during the Regional Consultation on International Migration in the Arab Region in preparation for the GCM, held in Beirut on 26-27 September 2017, and organized by UN-ESCWA in cooperation with LAS and IOM. It was also presented during the Seventh Global Meeting of Inter-State Consultation Mechanisms on Migration, organized by IOM on 10-11 October 2017 in Geneva.

▪ Regional Consultation on International Migration in the Arab Region in preparation for the GCM:

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), in partnership with IOM and LAS, and in collaboration with the United Nations agency members of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, organized a regional consultation in preparation for the GCM.

The consultation brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including high-level representatives of Arab governments, international and regional organizations, representatives of civil society networks, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, experts and academia.

It provided an opportunity to: enhance Member States' and other stakeholders' awareness of the global process leading to the adoption of the GCM; discuss key migration issues, priorities and challenges in the Arab region, which Member States would like to see considered in the GCM negotiations; and build a common understanding of the importance of the GCM as a framework to address the Arab region's and Arab countries' priorities in the area of international migration.

A summary of the regional consultation was submitted to the United Nations Secretariat as part of the outputs from regional consultations in preparation for the GCM.

▪ **Updating the Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries:**

LAS, in cooperation with the UNHCR, worked on an updated draft for the Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries which was adopted in 1994. The draft convention is currently being discussed in the joint council of Arab Ministers of Interior and Justice. When the convention is finalized it will help in determining the regional responses and feed into the consultation process of the Global Compact on Refugees. Recently, a joint meeting for experts from Ministries of Interior and Justice took place at LAS Headquarters on 22-23/10/2017. The meeting agreed on submitting the final draft of the convention to the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice and the Council of Arab Ministers of Interior in order to adopt it during their next sessions.

▪ **Capacity Building Workshop:**

A training workshop on refugee law was held during the period from 30/7/2017 to 1/8/2017 in Cairo. The workshop was organized by the UNHCR and the International Institute for Humanitarian Law (IIHL) in cooperation with LAS. It targeted officials of the general secretariat, the specialized Arab organizations and the Permanent Delegations of its Member States, who are concerned with the follow-up of laws and policies relating to asylum and refugee protection, with the aim of introducing them to the principles and policies for the protection of persons in need of protection in accordance with the principles of international law.

B. Recent and Future Activities to Support the Implementation of the Migration-Related Commitments of the 2030 Agenda

Interstate cooperation is very important, as no country will be able to successfully implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda or can manage migration effectively on its own. In this framework, LAS, as the secretariat of the ARCP and through its different mechanisms (i.e. the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region, the Africa Arab Technical and Coordination Committee on Migration (TCCM), the proposed Working Group on International Migration between LAS and the EU) will address the migration-related targets of the SDGs in partnership with other entities.

LAS focuses on supporting the governments of its Member States to develop more effective policies for utilizing migration in favour of national and regional development, integrating migration in national development plans and building bridges of dialogue. While doing this role, LAS takes into consideration the current crises in the Arab region and the importance of creating joint response to existing challenges.

Its role in realizing the migration-related targets of the 2030 Agenda will concentrate on: raising awareness; improving knowledge base on migration related targets; coordinating policies of the Arab countries in the field of migration; providing policy guidance through enhancing regional dialogue; implementing training programs; sharing information, experiences and best practices.

Monitoring mechanisms to guarantee effective implementation, follow-up and review of migration-related targets is of great importance as well. LAS can achieve this through its different mechanisms which help it to encourage Member States to share information, knowledge and experiences, and strengthen their respective capabilities. This will create transparency and promote mutual learning among Member States.

In order to implement this, LAS will work on: facilitating the exchange of best practices; prepare reports on the achievements of the Member States; periodic review of the progress in implementation; define coherent regional policies and approaches; provide technical support to the related bodies on the national level to develop more effective policies for utilizing migration in favour of development.

- **ARCP Meetings:**

The ARCP dedicated special sessions during its second and third meetings, held in May 2016 and May 2017 at LAS Headquarters in Cairo, to discuss the “Migration related targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda”. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and IOM have contributed to the second meeting by giving presentations on the migration related targets in 2030 Agenda. During the third meeting, IOM Regional Office (MENA) and the Director of LAS Sustainable Development Department had significant contributions as well.

- **ARCP Strategy:**

LAS was keen to formulate a comprehensive and integrated Arab strategy, in an effort to maximize the benefits of migration and minimize its hazards, strengthen the position of Arab states in negotiating migration issues regionally and globally, and open new horizons for cooperation and partnership between sending, transit and receiving countries.

In this framework, the ARCP has endorsed its Programming Document as well as its first work plan for 2016-2017 during its second meeting in May 2016. The migration-related targets of the 2030 Agenda were reflected in the ARCP’s Programming Document and its 2016-2017 work plan. A new work plan for 2018-2019 should be adopted during the ARCP fourth meeting in May 2018.

- **ARCP Work Plans:**

The ARCP biennial work plans include “Following-up and reviewing with Member States on the regional level on the migration-related targets of the SDGs” as a permanent topic to be discussed on the agenda of the ARCP annual ordinary meetings. Organizing workshops aiming at raising awareness and improving knowledge base on migration-related SDG targets are also included in the work plans.

Benefiting from UN-ESCWA, as the United Nations regional commission in charge of monitoring the implementation of the SDGs in the region, and IOM, as the UN agency in charge of migration, to provide the necessary technical support to Member States in their implementation of the migration related targets, a training workshop on migration-related SDG targets will take place during the second half of 2018 at LAS Headquarters, in cooperation with UN-ESCWA and IOM under the umbrella of the Working Group on International Migration in the Arab Region.