

**FIFTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

New York, 16-17 February 2017

**CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE FIFTEENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION<sup>1</sup>**

*League of Arab States (LAS)*

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

Since its establishment, the League of Arab states (LAS) has been focusing on the issue of international migration and Arab Expatriates, in an effort to: develop more effective policies for utilizing migration in favor of Arab regional development, integration and international cooperation, and to communicate with its expatriates, build bridges of dialogue and cooperation with them for the benefit of both parties.

LAS and its specialized organizations offered a framework for the Arab countries to cooperate on issues related to migration and human mobility within the region, and with sending and receiving regions. Intra-regional cooperation in the field of migration in the Arab region started in the 1950s with the Agreement on Arab Economic Unity issued by the Arab Economic Council in 1957, followed by a set of agreements, declarations, and charters which focused on freedom of mobility for Arab citizens to live and work throughout the Arab region in addition to giving Arab labor priority over non-Arabs and to simplify recruitment procedures.

The importance of the issue of international migration to LAS has been sparkled in the past decades, as the declarations of Arab summits have consistently included references to international migration and Arab expatriates through reflecting the interest in the role of Arab Expatriates in the development of their home countries and stressing the importance of promoting it, besides defending migrants' rights, regulating migration of Arab workers abroad, giving attention to skilled Arab migrants, and strengthening their relationship with their home countries.<sup>2</sup>

The First and the Second Meetings of the Arab Ministers in charge of Migration Affairs and Arab Expatriates, convened in Cairo at LAS headquarters in February 2008 and November 2009, recommended strengthening the role of Arab expatriates in Arab development, supporting the rights of Arab expatriates, and encouraging coordination among Arab countries on migration. In line with this, the Declaration of the First Arab Expatriates Conference, held in Cairo at LAS headquarters in December 2010, reconfirmed the interrelationships between migration and development in the Arab region and called for strengthening the role of Arab expatriates' NGOs, utilizing expatriates' skills and experience through specific programs to attract and invite them to contribute to the development efforts in the Arab world and linking them to institutions and Arab scientific entities that operate in the same areas of specialization.

As an implementation of these declarations, LAS has put many programmes to maximize the benefits of migration and minimize its negative aspects, communicate with Arab expatriates living abroad, promote their participation in the development of the Arab region. Among LAS' most important programmes are the capacity building programmes aiming to improve the migration management capacity of the Arab governments, the cultural programme for Arab expatriates second and third generations to engage them with their home countries and the programme on crime prevention and human trafficking. In the implementation of these programmes, LAS organized cultural trips, conducted studies and reports, organized conferences, meetings, seminars, workshops and field visits.

Undertaking to continue intensive regional cooperation in the field of migration, LAS (Refugees, Expatriates and Migration Affairs Department) assists Arab Member States to establish a fruitful dialogue and cooperation in the field of international migration between them and with other regions. It focuses on supporting them to develop more effective policies for utilizing migration in favor of

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<sup>2</sup>The declarations included references to migration are: declaration issued by Tunis summit in 2004 on the process of development and modernization in the Arab world, Brasilia declaration issued by the Summit of Arab States and the countries of South America in May 2005, Khartoum declaration in 2006, Doha declaration issued by the second Summit of Arab States and the countries of South America in March 2009, the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit, held in Kuwait in January 2009, Kuwait declaration issued by the third Africa Arab summit in November 2013, Riyadh declaration issued by the Arab and South American summit in November 2015 and Malabo declaration issued by the fourth Africa Arab summit in November 2016 have included some paragraphs concerning international migration and Arab expatriates. Agreements and declarations are available on: [www.lasportal.org](http://www.lasportal.org).

Arab regional development, integrating expatriates in national development plans and building bridges of dialogue. To achieve this, further progress was required to coordinate dialogue and action amongst LAS Member States, related international agencies and institutions working in the region and external receiving and sending regions.

In this framework, LAS worked on establishing new mechanisms for cooperation in the field of Migration in the Arab Region; among them the *Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration (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 ARCP was officially launched during the “Fifth Global Meeting for Chairs and Secretariats of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration” hosted by LAS at its headquarters and organized in collaboration with IOM in October 2015. The ARCP endorsed its strategy and 2016-2017 work plan.

*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 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, UN-ESCWA and 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. The two sides held a meeting on 30 November 2016 at LAS headquarters in the framework of the second strategic dialogue between LAS and EU to discuss the concept note of the working group.

#### A. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING 2016 TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MIGRATION-RELATED COMMITMENTS OF THE 2030 AGENDA

Interstate cooperation at both regional and global levels is essential nowadays, as no country will be able to successfully implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda or can manage migration effectively on its own. At this stage, LAS focusses on building strong partnerships with UN agencies, other regional and international entities and civil society organizations. In this framework, LAS, as the secretariat of the ARCP and through its different abovementioned mechanisms will address the migration related targets in the SDGs in partnership with other entities.

The ARCP will work as a link between the national level and the global one; inputs and perspectives from the national level should be considered and analyzed at the regional level and feed into the global process. It can also help countries to translate global goals into policies, norms, standards, and guidelines that can be implemented at the national level, as well as mobilize partnerships and cooperation.

##### 1. Second ARCP Meeting:

The second meeting of the ARCP was held on 24-25 May 2016 at LAS headquarters in Cairo. The migration related targets of the SDGs was one of the topics discussed on the meeting's agenda. UNFPA and IOM have contributed to the meeting by giving presentations on the migration related targets in 2030 Agenda.

As the SDGs are the base now for all the related stakeholders working in the field of migration, this was reflected in the ARCP's strategy and 2016-2017 work plan which were adopted by the Member States during the meeting. The meeting agreed on the following role, strategy and work plan:

- The ARCP's role in realizing the migration-related targets of the 2030 Agenda:
  - 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.

The ARCP should focus 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.

This role should take into consideration the current crises in the Arab region and joint response to existing challenges should be one of our targets.

- The 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 are reflected in the ARCP's Programming Document and its 2016-2017 work plan.

- 2016-2017 Work Plan:
  - "Following-up and reviewing with Member States on the regional level on the migration related targets" is a permanent topic to be discussed on the agenda of the ARCP annual ordinary meetings.
  - A training workshop aiming at raising awareness and improving knowledge base on migration related SDG targets to be organized in July 2017.
  - 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.

## 2. LAS contribution to the implementation of the migration-related targets 2030 Agenda at the national and regional levels:

Monitoring mechanisms to guarantee effective implementation, follow-up and review of migration-related targets is of great importance. 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 favor of development.

## 3. Regional Technical Task Force:

LAS has established a regional technical task force, in coordination with its Member States and UN agencies. It comprised of experts and representatives from selected countries. The task force will organize annual meetings in collaboration and support from LAS, UNFPA and ESCWA. It will discuss and reflect on the Arab region SDG agenda and its priorities and the linkage at regional and national levels, study the final list of global SDGs indicators in light of ICPD based priority indicators, suggest a priority list of indicators on SDGs tracking at the Arab regional level including ICPD based SDG indicators, advocate for the priority indicators among Arab National Statistics Offices, develop a mechanism for reporting every five years at regional and national level.

### B. INITIATIVES TO BE 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 ARCP at its headquarters in Cairo on 2-3 August 2016, in cooperation with United Nations High Commission 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, will 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 Responsibility Sharing for Refugees*, and the *Global Compact for Orderly, Safe, and Regular Migration*. The findings of this follow up process will be shared with the committees assigned by the UN General Assembly for this purpose.

#### 1. ARCP Extraordinary Meeting to follow up on the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants:

LAS is planning to hold another extraordinary in September 2017, in cooperation with United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) to follow up on the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

LAS, as the ARCP secretariat, will take the inputs of its Member States, analyse them at the regional level and feed into the global process through submitting/ presenting reports on the progress of the Arab Region to the concerned UNGA forums/ meetings.

LAS will work on encouraging its Member States to actively participate in the ongoing discussions for the global compact on responsibility sharing for refugees, and the global compact for orderly, safe, and regular migration, and encouraging the diplomatic delegations of member States in New York to coordinate with each other in this regard. It will cooperate with related UN agencies to provide the required technical support for its Member States to be able to participate in the consultations with a unified vision which reflects the needs of the Arab region.

## 2. Updating the Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries:

LAS, in cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), worked on a 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. LAS is cooperating with UNHCR in this regard since 2008. 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.

The consultation process of the Global Compact on Refugees is expected to be guided by UNHCR. They will develop the provisional compact, in consultation with Member States, host countries and resending countries. The updated abovementioned convention will be very useful for the UNHCR.

## 3. Capacity Building Workshop:

LAS is planning to organize a training workshop for government officials of the Member States by the end of 2017, in cooperation with related international agencies; among them UNHCR and World Bank. The workshop will aim at raising awareness and improving knowledge base on areas of refugees, and forced displacement.