



حوار أبوظبي بين الدول الآسيوية المرسلية والمستقبلة للعمالة  
Abu Dhabi Dialogue among the Asian Labor-Sending and Receiving Countries

Abu Dhabi Dialogue 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation  
**Report on the Implementation of ADD  
Thematic Programmes**

*Submitted to their Excellencies the Hon. Ministers*

17<sup>th</sup> October 2019



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## SUMMARY OVERVIEW

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- 1.1. The Fourth and most recent Ministerial Consultation of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue took place in Colombo on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and resulted in the Colombo Declaration. The Colombo Declaration outlined four thematic areas for cooperation between Member States over the two year cycle of the Sri Lanka Chairmanship:
  - Skilling, Certification and Mutual Recognition
  - Labour Recruitment
  - The Role of Technology in the Governance of Human Mobility
  - ADD Inter-Regional and Global Cooperation
- 1.2. In addition, the thematic agenda of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue carried over the programme on Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programming, first established under the Kuwait Declaration in 2014.
- 1.3. Since the Fourth Ministerial Consultation, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue has formally convened on three separate occasions. The first meeting was a Special Workshop on Operationalising the Four Tracks outlined in the Colombo Declaration. The second was an interim Senior Officials' Meeting in Colombo in May 2018. The third was a Senior Officials' Meeting in Dubai in April 2019, convened in order to prepare for the Fifth Ministerial Consultation. In addition, a number of Abu Dhabi Dialogue Ministers met informally on the sidelines of the World Government Summit in Dubai in February 2019, to discuss issues relating to the Future of Work.
- 1.4. This report outlines the progress that has been made across all thematic tracks established by the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. In addition, it reports on progress relating to the Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programming (CIOP) track, and a number of additional thematic tracks which have emerged during the course of the last two years.
- 1.5. Significant progress has been made in all areas. Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programming entered a new phase in December 2018, with further funding for development made available, and the signing of an agreement with the International Organisation for Migration to assist with implementation. Pairing countries have been established and work is ongoing in the development of content for training in countries of destination.



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- 1.6. Interim discussions at Senior Officials' Meetings led participating Member States to the conclusion that tracks relating to labour recruitment and technology could and should be incorporated, with the development of an IT linkage system between the governments of India and the United Arab Emirates demonstrating the role that technology can play in preventing contract substitution and other forms of non compliance.
- 1.7. With regards to skilling, an agreement was reached between the governments of India and the UAE in April 2018, with the aim of establishing a joint framework for the recognition of skills. Joint standards have been set for a number of key roles and, under a pilot programme launched in August 2019, the first workers are due to be deployed to the UAE by the time of the Fifth Ministerial Consultation.
- 1.8. As per the Colombo Declaration, the Chair and Secretariat of the ADD have been engaged in discussions on both an inter-regional and global level regarding the role of Regional Consultative Processes in governance frameworks for human mobility. A High Level Panel Discussion will be convened at the Fifth Ministerial Consultation to discuss further inter-regional and regional-global cooperation.
- 1.9. In addition to these tracks, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue has also, in the intervening period, addressed a number of key issues of relevance to the governance of labour mobility in the Asia-Gulf corridors.
- 1.10. As noted above, a number of Ministers met informally on the sidelines of the World Government Summit in Dubai in February 2019, where the issue under discussion was the Future of Work. The discussion led to consideration by attending Ministers of the impact of future trends – including automation, technology, and diversification of Gulf economies – on labour mobility in the region. To that end, a High Level Symposium on the Future of Work, facilitated by the ILO, was convened on the sidelines of the April 2019 Senior Officials' Meeting, and two reports on the issue have been produced for consideration by Ministers during a High Level Panel Discussion at the Fifth Ministerial Consultation.
- 1.11. Finally, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue has consistently, over the years, paid particular attention to issues relating to the protection of domestic workers. A report on the Future of Domestic Work was commissioned and presented to the meeting of Senior Officials in May 2018. Building on that report, the Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council has worked on producing a series of competency standards for domestic workers in four occupations. The Fifth Ministerial Consultation will also include a Panel Discussion on Improving Financial Literacy among Domestic Workers.



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## COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION PROGRAMMING

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- 2.1. The incorporation of the Comprehensive Information and Orientation Programming track into the thematic agenda of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue was first agreed during the Kuwait Ministerial Consultation (2014). The purpose of the programme is to establish coherence between the information and orientation programmes delivered by countries of origin and destination, accounting for the entire migrant journey, from pre-employment, through pre-departure, to post-arrival. The first phase of CIOP consisted of the development of a regional guide for pre-departure orientation. The current second phase of CIOP enables participating ADD Member States to operationalize a coordinated management system for the provision of orientation services, through the development of a tailored regional guide for post-arrival, as well as training materials, and train-the-trainer exercises.
- 2.2. This report outlines CIOP's progress since the last ADD Senior Officials Meeting, which took place on 30 April 2019. It walks through the main highlights over the last 5 months, culminating in the CIOP reports. After elaborating on the reports, it covers the next steps for the Programme.

### PROGRESS

- 2.2.1 Post-Arrival Orientation Overview: The International Organization for Migration, in partnership with the Migrant Forum in Asia, has completed a comprehensive mapping and needs assessment for post-arrival orientation (understood as the provision of information in countries of destination for temporary contractual workers, enabling them to better understand local labour laws, socio-cultural norms and practices, workplace expectations, good conduct and other relevant topics). This has included mapping current orientation modules, mechanisms of delivery and platforms used.
- 2.2.2 CIOP Consultations: A series of consultations have been conducted in participating Member States in order to collect insights and feedback from different stakeholders on current practices and needs. These stakeholders included temporary contractual workers, ministries with responsibilities for labour, welfare and immigration, government officials from countries of origin, employers, licensed recruitment agencies and industry experts.



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- 2.2.3. From 4 – 9 August 2019, consultations took place in the UAE. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with UAE government officials, representatives from Tadbeer and Tawjeeh centres, temporary contractual workers, labour attaches, employers and civil society organizations.
- 2.2.4. From 19 – 25 August, consultations were collected in Kuwait. Focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews were held with Government officials, workers, labour attaches, employers and civil society organizations.
- 2.2.5. The ADD Permanent Secretariat also sought feedback on surveys regarding post-arrival orientation from Gulf State focal points, inviting comment on orientation practices for temporary contractual workers.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND FINALISATION OF CIOP REPORTS**

- 2.3.1 For the ADD 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation, three sets of reports will be distributed to all delegates. They include:
- 2.3.2. Set 1: Pre-Employment Orientation: The Background Report (Report 01) for pre-employment orientation provides readers with a clear understanding of initiatives and programmes across select ADD countries of origin, with the aim of streamlining the provision of information and guidance to those considering foreign employment. This is accompanied by a Regional Guide and Management System (Report 02), containing a series of recommended modules for pre-employment programmes, for countries wishing to tailor the modules to their national contexts.
- 2.3.3. Set 2: Pre-Departure Orientation: Pre-departure orientation is more common and formalized than pre-employment and post-arrival orientation. Therefore, the Background Report (Report 03) for pre-departure orientation maps relevant programming in countries of origin, notes best practices, and provides recommendations for the consideration of Member States wishing to compliment current – or establish new – pre-departure orientation programmes. The pre-departure Regional Guide and Management System (Report 04) focuses on further refining and elaborating those components that could support the information needs of temporary contractual workers leaving their home countries.
- 2.3.4. Set 3: Post-Arrival Orientation: The Background Report on (Report 05) on post-arrival orientation includes key findings from the consultations conducted this year, as well as details of existing practices outside of ADD countries of destination that may be useful when designing national interventions. It notes best practices and



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provides recommendations for the consideration of countries of destination. The post-arrival Regional Guide and Management System (Report 06) is designed to act as a resource for ADD countries of destination who wish to establish a post-arrival orientation programme, or strengthen existing programmes.

## **PREPARATIONS FOR THE FORTHCOMING CIOP PILOT**

- 2.4. Preparations continue for the implementation of a CIOP pilot, designed to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of harmonized programmes. In support of participating Member States (Bangladesh, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and UAE), the International Organization for Migration is in the process of producing an operational handbook that will outline the practical steps of the pilot, as well as a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation design.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- 2.5.1 A CIOP Executive Committee Meeting is preliminary scheduled for November 2019, (with a meeting of the Advisory Board also anticipated in the near future). The CIOP Management Team will present the CIOP Pilot Handbook to Executive Committee Members, as well as detailing the monitoring and evaluation framework. The monitoring and evaluation framework outlines methods of data collection and methodologies to evaluate the impact of harmonized orientation.
- 2.5.2. The CIOP pilot is expected to begin in 2020, starting with the localisation of relevant modules across the participating countries as well as conducting training of trainers.

## **CERTIFICATION AND JOINT RECOGNITION OF SKILLS**

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- 3.1. In April 2018, the governments of India and UAE announced a Skills Harmonisation Partnership aimed at recognition of skills and certification. The program is anticipated to address mismatches between workers' skills and the requirements of employers, stimulate demand for skilled Indian workers in UAE and raise rates of mobility for certified workers. These objectives were reiterated during the 2018 Senior Officials' Meeting in Colombo.
- 3.2. Under the framework, a scalable model will be rolled out, under which Government of UAE will recognize an expanding set of Indian qualifications in



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several key sectors, backed up by incentives to promote the employment of certified workers.

- 3.3. The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, (Government of India) along with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is working with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE) and the Abu Dhabi Quality & Conformity Council (QCC) to develop a Harmonised Framework for Skills Recognition and Certification.
- 3.4. The following five stage process has been proposed for the harmonised framework and was presented jointly presented during the 2019 Senior Officials' Meeting:
  1. Aligning UAE and Indian Occupational Qualifications
  2. Training / Up-Skilling and Certification in Accordance with Standards
  3. Recognition of Indian Awarding Bodies
  4. Creating Upskilling Infrastructure in UAE
  5. Incentivised Recruitment and Retention of Skilled Workers
- 3.5. Under the new Harmonised Skills Framework, it was agreed to facilitate the recruitment of one hundred skilled and certified workers across two benchmarked occupations in the construction sector. The pilot program was initiated in August 2019, upon the identification of an employer (NBTC group) by the UAE Government.
- 3.6. Candidates were upskilled at identified training centres across three Indian States (Kerala, West Bengal and Jharkhand) and went through the Assessment & Certification process for identified qualifications, overseen by the Indian Sector Skill Councils. Based on the Indian Certification, QCC extended mutual recognition of certification and issued certification to the workers on UAE Occupational Terms.
- 3.7. Identified employer conducted personal interviews from 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 for 133 assessed and certified candidates across different training centre locations. Final outcomes of the interviews are yet to be shared by the employer. It is anticipated that a first batch of verified recruits will deploy to the UAE in mid October 2019.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**



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- 3.8. Going forward, the set of recognised occupational standards will increase and will expand to include sectors such as Healthcare, Tourism and Hospitality, Security, Domestic Work, Retail, as well as 'Future Technologies' (e.g. Blockchain, 3D Printing, AI etc.). For Occupational Standards yet to be developed by UAE, a system will be created to adopt / recognize Indian Qualifications.

## **THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN MANAGING THE RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT OF WORKERS**

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- 4.1. Technology has an increasingly important role to play in the governance of human mobility. In particular, it enables the creation of low cost and effective solutions to current challenges, including increasing transparency in the recruitment process, creating platforms for worker orientation, and facilitating information flow between governments to improve oversight throughout the migration cycle.
- 4.2. In 2018, the governments of the UAE and India agreed to cooperate on an IT linkage system designed to strengthen oversight over the recruitment process for Emigration Check Required (ECR) passport-holding Indian nationals being recruited to work in the UAE. The integration is now complete and should be live by the time of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation.
- 4.3. A lack of shared information created opportunities for a range of potential abuses, including contract substitution. The Indian government therefore needed information about the terms and conditions of work offers being made to nationals holding ECR passports being recruited and deployed overseas on a temporary basis.
- 4.4. The Indian and UAE governments therefore worked to integrate MOHRE's online system with eMigrate, with UAE employers able to access an accredited list of Indian recruitment agents. Design parameters for implementing information sharing included ensuring increased efficiency, speed of information transfer, and low cost of implementation.
- 4.5. Under the system, a UAE employer submits an application to hire an overseas worker through MOHRE's online system. The application requires that a copy of the worker's passport is included in the process. When an Indian passport



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is identified, MOHRE's system send the passport number and RA ID to eMigrate in order to determine the passport type.

- 4.6. eMigrate checks the passport number to identify the passport type. If the passport is ECNR (Emigration Check Not Required) – or if the MOHRE system receives no response within 48 hours of submission of the check – then MOHRE proceeds with the processing of the application.
- 4.7. However, if the passport is identified as being an ECR passport, then eMigrate notifies MOHRE, which then provides information to the Indian authorities regarding the job offer, including salary information, visa details and name and details of the UAE employer.
- 4.8. This information can then be reviewed by eMigrate administrators and can be rejected or accepted, according to internal guidelines.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

- 4.9. This system lends itself to further integration to strengthen joint oversight over recruitment and deployment processes, including over contractual relations between UAE employers and Indian recruitment agencies, or UAE and Indian recruitment agencies. It would be possible, for example, to require the inclusion of evidence of a standardised agency-to-agency contract, and commitments relating to the collection and payment of recruitment fees, for monitoring by governments of both countries, consistent with the laws of each country.

## **COLLABORATING ON A HUMAN-CENTRED APPROACH TO MANAGING LABOUR MOBILITY IN A CHANGING WORLD OF WORK**

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- 5.1. In February 2019, a number of ADD Ministers met on the sidelines of the World Government Summit in Dubai, where the focus of discussion was the Future of Work. There was consensus among attending Ministers that a number of questions regarding the impact of the Future of Work were pertinent to the issue of labour mobility, but there was insufficient understanding of the relationship between the two topics.



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- 5.2. To bridge this gap, the ADD therefore convened, in April 2019, a High Level Symposium on the Future of Work, on the sidelines of the Senior Officials' Meeting. The High Level Symposium was facilitated by the International Labour Organisation, whose Centenary Report was focused on the challenges arising from new trends in employment, and which called on stakeholders to avoid the pitfalls of seeing the issue in “techno-deterministic” terms and instead adopt a “human-centric” approach to policy.
- 5.3. The Joint Communique of the April 2019 Senior Officials' Meeting called for “the development of a concept paper outlining the way ahead for discussion at the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Consultation”. The ADD Secretariat consequently undertook the development of this Concept Paper.
- 5.4. The Concept Paper noted that, “ADD Member States have expressed an interest in assistance in the development of new national strategies, and / or the inclusion of future of work initiatives into existing national strategies. While the ADD may not be the appropriate platform – given the limitations in terms of mandate [of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue] – for providing space to collectively learn how to develop such strategies, the ILO can be called upon to provide such a space in due course.”
- 5.5. The Concept Note also noted that, “Where the Abu Dhabi Dialogue can undoubtedly play a role, in the immediate future, is in enabling joint consideration of the potential for Future of Work issues to impact labour mobility in our corridors. Understanding the scope of current trends in the region would be the primary task to deepening engagement and discussion among Member States on this question.
- 5.6. The Concept Note therefore called for the production of two documents: first, a literature review to provide “an evidence-based approach to addressing Future of Work-associated challenges in ADD corridors and identify potential areas for collaboration among Member States”; and, second, by the ILO, “a report on best practices relating to the incorporation of Future of Work initiatives into national employment policies, both within the region, and more broadly.”
- 5.7. Since then, both studies have been produced. The first, by Dr Steffen Hertog, Associate Professor of Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics; the second under the oversight of the ILO's Department of



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Employment Policy. Both these reports are contained within the literature circulated in advance of the Fifth Ministerial Consultation.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

- 5.8. In line with the recommendations of the Concept Note, a High Level Panel is being organised during the Fifth Ministerial Consultation on 17<sup>th</sup> October. The discussion will be informed by the content of the two reports, and the aim is to produce recommendations for collaborative action by ADD Member States. Ministers will be invited to deliberate and establish appropriate next steps for the incorporation of Future of Work-related programming into the thematic agenda of the next cycle of the ADD.

### **DEVELOPING DEMAND-DRIVEN COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR DOMESTIC OCCUPATIONS**

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- 6.1. In 2018, the ADD commissioned a study into the [Future of Domestic Work in the Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council](#). The report identified an important change in the needs of employers, with the trend away from housekeeping and towards homecare.
- 6.2. Employers expressed a preference for hiring skilled domestic workers. Vocational skills (technical know-how, particularly in the area of child care), transversal skills (e.g. the ability to read and write English) and skills reducing the transaction costs of recruitment and the emotional costs of parting company with workers (e.g. the ability to work with different age groups and meet changing needs) are increasingly valued among employers.
- 6.3. At the same time, workers acknowledge that skills deficits are linked to certain employment arrangements (like on-demand work) and can cause tension due to a lack of experience and knowledge relating to the use of modern technology, cooking styles, working with different household beneficiaries, and managing household conflicts.
- 6.4. The report recommended that governments in region begin to look at the development of national benchmarks and occupation standards that capture the segmentation in the sector, and can meet the needs of both workers and employers alike.



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- 6.5. To that end, the Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (ADQCC) has started work on the development of a series of competency standards for domestic workers in the UAE.
- 6.6. This process began with the formation of a technical working group, consisting of ADQCC, MOHRE, and Tadbeer Service Centres (public-private partnership agencies with exclusive oversight over the recruitment of domestic workers into the UAE).
- 6.7. The Working Group identified four main occupations in the domestic work sector to prioritise: head housekeeper; housekeeper, child carer; and home cook.
- 6.8. For each of these four occupations, the Working Group conducted benchmarking evaluations and, in addition to examining current requirements stipulated by Tadbeer Service Centres, reviewed best practices and occupational standards in a number of other countries. Consequently, standards are intended to be benchmarked against international best practice, while, at the same time, ensuring that they account for local requirements.
- 6.9. Occupational terms (the professional standards that specialist personnel must meet in order to perform the jobs they are assigned) have now been developed for all four identified occupations. The occupational terms set out a complete framework for vocational and transversal skills in each occupation.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- 6.10. Given the regulatory convergence between many Gulf countries in the domestic work sector, competency standards adopted in one country can likely be adopted and implemented in others with few key changes to the occupational terms. Countries of destination may wish to partner with ADQCC to better understand how competency standards have been developed and what standards they set, with a view to further examination of their appropriateness to their own labour markets.

### **ADD INTER-REGIONAL AND GLOBAL COOPERATION**

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- 7.1. The Abu Dhabi Dialogue today is one of the most active state-led, voluntary Regional Consultative Processes (RCP). However, over the years, a number of other RCPs have been founded in many regions of the world. Some of these



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cover a single geographic region, like southern Africa, while others are inter-regional and link countries along migration corridors: for example, between West Africa and Europe.

- 7.2. These RCPs offer a platform for consultation among Member States of a particular region for discussion of, and deliberation on, how they can jointly improve the governance of human mobility, and amplify the development returns of human mobility.
- 7.3. Meanwhile, platforms for the global discussion of mobility governance have come to recognise that a lot of what transpires in terms of collaborative action and discussion of lessons-learned takes place at a regional level. The Global Forum for Migration and Development, for example, has recognised that.
- 7.4. Vertical integration of RCPs into the global conversation has not, however, been matched by horizontal integration: RCPs, with their various rich experiences, do not engage among themselves in an inter-regional dialogue. Other than the biannual IOM-convened Global RCP day, there is no meaningful structural exchange of experiences between state-led RCPs. There remains an opportunity to leverage their work in an inter-regional context.
- 7.5. A second shortcoming is that, while global dialogues have recognised the role of RCPs, RCP participation in them is uneven and there is no collective contribution to global dialogues.

#### **STRENGTHENING INTER-REGIONAL COOPERATION**

- 7.6. Although each region is faced with unique contexts and specific challenges, and the nature and structure of the various RCPs vary, experiences in one region can be highly relevant to those of another region.
- 7.7. For example, the Bali Process's focus on irregular migration and, in particular, human trafficking, people smuggling and transnational crime has led to attention being paid to the importance of recruitment practices: an issue of critical importance to the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, with its focus on labour mobility.
- 7.8. Likewise, the Prague Process's recent focus on skilling or the Budapest Process exchanges on Migrant Resources Centres and regional law enforcement cooperation are complimentary with the work of other RCPs.



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7.9. Strengthened engagement between RCPs at an inter-regional level would help RCPs to draw on the experiences of other regions and bridge knowledge gaps. Initiatives that would help to ameliorate this might include:

- Granting mutual observer status to other RCPs
- Inviting presentations from other regions at RCP meetings
- More frequent meetings of RCPs at both inter-regional and global levels
- The development of digital knowledge-sharing platforms

### **CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL PROCESSES**

7.10. It is widely recognised that over 30 years RCPs have played a significant role in shaping international mobility governance at a national and regional level, building the foundation for enhanced cooperation at a global level. They have contributed to alignment of concepts and language used, and shared good practices, new developments and opportunities. Their informal, state-led nature allows for discussions on sensitive matters and has helped create numerous networks between government officials. As such, dialogues function as the oil in a very complicated global mobility regime.

7.11. At the same time, however, both long standing and more recent global platforms have rarely facilitated real opportunities for RCPs to elaborate on what is happening within their regions.

7.12. Strengthening collective RCP contributions to global dialogues would yield dividends for their Member States. Firstly, global fora would have a 360-degree view of what is happening in global governance, improving multilateral decision-making. Secondly, it could also lessen the burden on Member States, as global platforms proliferate, increasing the frequency of reporting requirements.

7.13. This need not require a burdensome, top-down approach: the key is to strengthen existing mechanisms that can enable RCPs to interact with global platforms. For example, RCP's could seek to coordinate their participation in and contributions prior to global meetings, like the GFMD, the International Dialogue on Migration and, for those RCP's whose Member States have signed on to the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, in the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF).

### **NEXT STEPS:**



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- 7.14. The Abu Dhabi Dialogue is holding a special meeting of Regional Consultative Processes on the margins of the Fifth Ministerial Consultation, to discuss the key issues raised above. The results of the meeting will be opened to discussion by stakeholders during a High Level Panel Discussion on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019.