In collaboration with

Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the
Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

6-8 November 2017
Bangkok

I. Background

The Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration will take place at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand from 6-8 November 2017. It will be organized by ESCAP in collaboration with IOM, ILO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UN Women among other international agencies that participate in the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Societies, comprised of United Nations entities and affiliated organizations.¹

In September 2016, the United Nations held a High-level Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants at the General Assembly in New York. The New York Declaration which was adopted as the outcome of this summit committed member States to “launching … a process of intergovernmental negotiations leading to the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration at an intergovernmental conference to be held in 2018”.

¹ The Asia-Pacific RCM Sustainable Societies comprises ILO, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, UNODC, UNDP, and the WHO. The TWG is co-chaired by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
This commitment built on a decade of international dialogue on migration issues, both within the United Nations framework through the two High-level Dialogues on International Migration and Development held in 2006 and 2013, and through the State-led Global Forum on Migration and Development, held annually since 2007.

It also builds on the unanimous agreement by member States of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which, inter alia, calls for member States to “[f]acilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”, as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda which also commits member States to “cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, with full respect for human rights.” It further builds on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and its recommendations concerning measures to mitigate risks associated with disasters, as well as on the Paris Agreement of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration will help member States to achieve these commitments by setting out “a range of principles, commitments and understandings among Member States regarding international migration in all its dimensions. It would make an important contribution to global governance and enhance coordination on international migration. It would present a framework including actionable commitments, means of implementation and a framework for follow-up to guide comprehensive action and international cooperation on migrants and human mobility. It would deal with all aspects of international migration, including the humanitarian, developmental, human rights-related and other aspects of migration.”

Ensuring that this Global Compact fully-integrates the priority issues of Asia-Pacific countries, and migrants from the Asia-Pacific region, will be critical to ensuring its overall success. Of almost 244 million migrants in the world in 2015, over 60 million resided in countries of Asia and the Pacific, while over 98 million – over 40 per cent of all migrants in the world – were born in countries of the ESCAP region. Most migrants are South-South migrants, remaining within the region, or migrating to nearby countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Research has found that these migrants make major contributions to the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, contributing both to the economies of countries of destination through their work, and countries of origin through their remittances and their role in building bridges between countries of origin and destination. Given the changing demographics and growing
economies of the Asia-Pacific region, the flows of people are likely to remain high into the future, making migration a durable reality in the Asia-Pacific region.

However, migrants, especially migrants engaged in low-skilled occupations and female migrants in vulnerable situations such as domestic work, face significant challenges in migrating in a safe, regular fashion. In many cases, despite the existence of demand for such migrants, there are limited options to migrate regularly, exposing migrants, including children to risks to their health and wellbeing both during their journeys and during their stay in the country of destination. The result is that the human rights of migrants are violated at the hands of actors such as human smugglers and traffickers, unscrupulous recruiters and employers.

Furthermore, migration flows are becoming increasingly complex in their composition, with the emergence of large irregular flows of migrants who face different urgent protection needs but who do not fit clearly into established legal frameworks posing serious protection challenges in many countries of the region which have limited capacities to respond to these needs. For many countries, especially the small, low-lying atoll countries of the Pacific, migration is interacting with ongoing climatic changes, presenting both opportunities for building resilience against these changes, and challenges as changes potentially lead to forms of forced movement.

Member States have identified that the Global Compact should address means of ensuring the protection of the human rights of migrants including through consideration of national and international frameworks to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration and prevent trafficking and smuggling; and enhancing the development benefits of migration, including those related to remittances, skills development and recognition and diaspora contributions. As such, this Regional Preparatory Meeting will serve as a Forum for member States to identify the key obstacles to safe, orderly and regular migration in the Asia-Pacific region, and to consider what inputs to the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration can address these factors.

II. Participation

The Regional Preparatory Meeting is expected to bring together representatives of member governments, international and regional organizations, experts, academia, and civil society organizations from the Asia-Pacific region involved in the formulation and/or implementation of policies related to international migration and development.
III. Objectives

The United Nations General Assembly, in resolution A/RES/71/280 of 17 April 2017, requested, inter alia, “the regional commissions and their sub-regional offices, in collaboration with other relevant entities of the United Nations system, particularly IOM, to organize discussions among Member States and other relevant stakeholders to examine regional aspects of international migration and to provide inputs, in accordance with their respective mandates, to the preparatory process of the global compact”.

The objective of the Regional Preparatory Meeting is to provide a forum to identify key migration issues, challenges and priorities for the Asia-Pacific region; and to identify existing national, bilateral, subregional and regional arrangements in place to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration and to arrive at a consensus on a set of conclusions that can serve as a regional input into the global stocktaking meeting due to be held in Mexico in December 2017. In doing so, this will help to inform the negotiations on the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, to ensure that the final document addresses the situations faced by Governments of the Asia-Pacific region, and migrants from, to and between countries of the Asia-Pacific.

IV. Format of the Regional Preparatory Meeting

The Regional Preparatory Meeting will consist of a general debate and interactive thematic roundtable sessions.

The general debate will focus on a review of member State priorities with regards to ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration, identifying relevant priorities in view of the preparation of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration with particular regard to the thematic areas of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, as follows:

(i) Human rights of all migrants, social inclusion, cohesion and all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance;

(ii) Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures;

(iii) International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions, including at borders, on transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration;
(iv) Contributions of migrants and diasporas to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits;

(v) Addressing drivers of migration, including adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters and human-made crises, through protection and assistance, sustainable development, poverty eradication, conflict prevention and resolution;

(vi) Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, including appropriate identification, protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims;

The roundtable discussions will be based on the following themes:

(i) Legal and orderly labour migration as a contribution towards all dimensions of sustainable development, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures;

(ii) Addressing the drivers of migration, including adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters and human-made crises, through protection and assistance, sustainable development, poverty eradication, and conflict prevention and resolution;

(iii) Smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery, and issues of appropriate identification and protection and assistance to migrants and trafficking victims;

(iv) Regional cooperation and governance with regard to migration in all its dimensions, including at borders and during transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration.

The roundtable discussions will feature expert presentations, followed by interactive discussions. These will be co-led by member governments and supported by TWG-Sustainable Societies members. They will be informed by global debates, but will aim to identify specific regional and subregional priorities in relation to these themes. The TWG-Sustainable Societies members supporting the roundtables will develop the background/supporting documentation for their respective roundtables.
V. Expected outcomes

The Regional Preparatory Meeting is expected to consider a Chair’s Summary highlighting Asia-Pacific priorities and recommendations for the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and a final report which will provide a summary of the key issues and recommendations from the thematic roundtables, to be transmitted as an intergovernmental Asia-Pacific input into the preparatory process of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.