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Cover photo: The second session of the 2023 International Dialogue on Migration, which took place on 5–6 October in Geneva, built on the outcomes of the Kampala Declaration and the SDG Summit and provided input to discussions at the Twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28). © IOM 2023

Required citation: Milan, A., A. Bisong and P. Siyanga Knudsen (2024). Towards a global governance of migration? From the 2005 Global Commission on International Migration to the 2022 International Migration Review Forum and beyond. In: *World Migration Report 2024* (M. McAuliffe and L.A. Oucho, eds.). International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.

ISBN 978-92-9268-700-7 (PDF)

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TOWARDS A GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF MIGRATION? FROM THE 2005 GLOBAL COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION TO THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION REVIEW FORUM AND BEYOND¹

Introduction

With its foundations dating back to the early 2000s and grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was a groundbreaking milestone in the history of global migration governance.² As the Secretary-General of the United Nations noted, two years after its adoption, “the implementation of the Global Compact is not an even process and will mean different things to different States”;³ in fact, the recognition of different capacities and priorities is one of the main strengths of the Global Compact for Migration. The 2022 International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) was another milestone, as, for the first time, United Nations Member States and stakeholders discussed progress towards the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration, ending with a unanimous adoption of a Progress Declaration.⁴

This chapter builds on chapters in two previous World Migration Reports that chronicled the story of migration governance as the last big multilateral issue being included in the work of the United Nations. A chapter of the *World Migration Report 2018* on global migration governance provided a definition of migration governance and outlined key aspects of the architecture relevant to the global governance of migration. It also described key dialogues and initiatives from the beginning of the century that were instrumental to the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 and to subsequent intergovernmental negotiations. The *World Migration Report 2020* offered a procedural and substantive analysis of the development and adoption of the Global Compact for Migration, as well as of the Global Compact on Refugees, including complementarity, coherence and gaps between the two compacts. It also outlined the implications of the compacts and of the establishment of the United Nations Network on Migration for global migration governance.⁵ These chapters, together with the first chapter of the *World Migration Report 2022*, outlining the key technological, geopolitical and environmental transformations that have shaped migration governance particularly since the start of the pandemic, offer a comprehensive overview of how migration evolved until 2021.⁶

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² Guild, 2021; Klein Solomon and Sheldon, 2019; Newland et al., 2019.

³ United Nations, 2020.

⁴ United Nations, 2022a.

⁵ Martin and Weerasinghe, 2017; Newland et al., 2019.

⁶ McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021.

This chapter picks up where the chapter of the *World Migration Report 2020* that focused on global migration governance left off: specifically, the implications of this new architecture on the subsequent development of international cooperation on migration. It focuses on the 2022 IMRF, while adding historical depth by investigating the extent to which recommendations from the 2005 report of the Global Commission for International Migration (GCIM) – the most important United Nations report on international migration prior to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants – are reflected in current international cooperation around migration governance. This chapter also highlights remaining limitations of the current architecture in responding to the complexities and realities of migration in the current geopolitical climate, complemented by some reflections on migration governance at the regional level, without discussing migration governance at either national or local levels.⁷

After a framing section, the third part of this chapter looks at the evolution of international cooperation on migration in the fifteen years between the GCIM launch (2003) and the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration by Member States (2018), highlighting key events and processes, including the centrality of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and the impact of systemic crises and geopolitical changes. The fourth section takes a critical look at the outcomes of the IMRF. It is followed by a section that digs deeper into selected contentious issues and key tensions in policy discussions on global migration governance that emerged at the forum. The chapter ends with a reflection on expectations, challenges and opportunities from the first IMRF to the year 2030.

Migration governance at the global level: A multi-stakeholder regime

Global migration governance has evolved from international cooperation on migration towards its current multi-stakeholder regime under the guidance of the United Nations.⁸ Member States reiterated throughout the negotiations for the Global Compact for Migration that migration governance is a core element of national sovereignty, and emphasized the role of international cooperation on migration under the framework of the Global Compact for Migration.⁹

Defining migration governance

According to the GCIM, “in the domain of international migration, governance assumes a variety of forms, including the migration policies and programmes of individual countries, inter-State discussions and agreements, multilateral [forums] and consultative processes, the activities of international organizations, as well as relevant laws and norms”.^a More recently, and building also on subsequent definitions,^b IOM defined migration governance as: “The combined frameworks of legal norms, laws and regulations, policies and traditions as well as organizational structures (subnational, national, regional and international) and the

⁷ For an overview of recent national migration governance trends worldwide in relation to the Global Compact for Migration, please refer to IOM, 2022. Through the Migration Governance Indicators Initiative, IOM has assessed migration governance in dozens of countries and local authorities worldwide: see IOM, n.d.a.

⁸ Thouez, 2019.

⁹ The Global Compact for Migration starts with “We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, meeting in Morocco on 10 and 11 December 2018, reaffirming the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and determined to make an important contribution to enhanced cooperation on international migration in all its dimensions, have adopted this Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”.

relevant processes that shape and regulate States' approaches with regard to migration in all its forms, addressing rights and responsibilities, and promoting international cooperation".^c

^a GCIM, 2005:65.

^b Such as in Betts, 2011.

^c IOM, 2019.

Unlike other areas of globalization – such as trade, for instance – there is no single regime governing human mobility at the global level.¹⁰ Global discussions around the governance of migration take place in different global and regional forums concurrently, and global governance of migration has been described as unstable, flexible, changing, fragmented and weak at best or non-existent in some areas.¹¹ Nevertheless, the United Nations General Assembly's New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, the subsequent elaboration of the Global Compact for Migration in 2018 and the unanimous approval of the IMRF Progress Declaration four years later represent key milestones on the path towards global migration governance.¹² These milestones reflect the progress made by States and other actors in working towards a more integrated approach to migration governance, building on years of collaboration outside formal United Nations processes, particularly through the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The flexibility and the non-binding legal nature of the global migration governance regime arise from the desire of States to agree on a global framework for international cooperation on migration without legally binding commitments that could have presented political challenges at the national level. The flexibility of global migration governance also reflects the centrality of regional dialogue and consultations that have played a vital role in the establishment of today's global migration institutions after the Second World War and that have continued to play a central role since then.¹³

In the last two decades, the number and range of actors involved in shaping global migration governance has been increasing, as reflected in the participation of significant numbers of non-State actors in the IMRF.¹⁴ These stakeholders were already present, vocal and visible in the process leading up to the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, advocating for rights and protection, including the human rights of migrants.¹⁵ Migrant groups and migrant-led organizations were pivotal to the inclusion of the voices of migrants in global dialogues, thanks to their advocacy for the importance of inclusive governance.¹⁶ Additionally, the private sector has promoted innovative and practical solutions to challenges faced by migrants, through groups such as the Tent partnership for refugees, Concordia, the Global Skills Partnership and the GFMD business mechanism. Actions led by the private sector at the global level have spearheaded policy changes implemented in line with key objectives of the Global Compact for Migration. These actors have contributed to building the current multi-stakeholder

¹⁰ Sykes, 2013.

¹¹ Kainz and Betts, 2021; Sahin-Mencutek et al., 2022.

¹² Duncan, 2019; McAdam, 2019.

¹³ Lavenex and Piper, 2022; Martin and Weerasinghe, 2017.

¹⁴ These non-State actors include non-governmental organizations, academic, scientific and knowledge-based institutions, the private sector, trade unions, faith-based, migrant and youth organizations, diaspora communities and other relevant stakeholders. See IOM, n.d.b.

¹⁵ Rother, 2022.

¹⁶ Piper, 2015.

architecture of migration governance at the global level, increasing the demand for transparency, a rights-centred approach and adopting innovative policy measures in collaboration with States and international agencies.¹⁷

Within States, local and regional governments are increasingly influential in shaping the global migration agenda, collaborating to create the narratives that sustain it.¹⁸ Cities have become central actors in the global discussions on migration, which reflects the fact that their cooperation and activities directly affect the lives of migrants who live in urban areas.¹⁹ For example, the Mayors Migration Council has played a central role in discussions around climate governance, reception and integration. In addition to global, national and local migration governance, transgovernance across levels is emerging in many States, where actors move from one level of governance to another in order to push for their interests or ensure that their interests are protected.²⁰

From the Global Commission on International Migration to the Global Compact for Migration

The Global Commission on International Migration: Lead-up and outcome

Building on international cooperation that can be traced back to the end of the First World War, the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo devoted a chapter to international migration. Among other things, that chapter encouraged more cooperation and dialogue between countries.²¹ Following up on the chapter, three surveys were sent by the United Nations to its Member States in 1995, 1997 and 1999, to gather views on a possible international conference on international migration; however, a number of governments expressed serious reservations about convening such a conference.²²

Several dialogues and initiatives were instrumental in building momentum and confidence towards greater action at the global level in the 2000s and early 2010s, including the Global Migration Group (GMG) as a key United Nations interagency mechanism.²³ The beginning of the century marked a turning point in the attitude of States towards international cooperation on migration, resulting in a remarkable acceleration of progress: the first Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants was appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 1999; the Berne Initiative and the regular IOM forum called the International Dialogue on Migration were launched in 2001; in his 2002 report on strengthening the United Nations, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan identified migration as a United Nations priority;²⁴ and in May 2003 the final report of the United Nations Commission on Human Security stated that “a high-level and broad-based commission should explore available options and areas of consensus, including alternative institutional arrangements” in relation to global migration

¹⁷ Appleby, 2020.

¹⁸ Stürner-Siovitz, 2022.

¹⁹ Schweiger, 2023.

²⁰ Thouez, 2019. Also reflected in the increasing number of countries participating in Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) assessments at multiple governance levels. See IOM, n.d.a.

²¹ Betts and Kainz, 2017; Lebon-McGregor, 2020.

²² United Nations, 2001.

²³ Martin and Weerasinghe, 2017.

²⁴ United Nations, 2002.

governance.²⁵ These changes happened at a time when economists and international financial institutions shed light on the previously underestimated positive effect of migration and remittances on development.²⁶

In December 2003, together with a number of governments, the Secretary-General launched the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). While the Commission carried out its tasks in full independence, and commissioners and co-chairs acted in their personal capacity, Member State involvement was important to its success and impact, including through Regional Consultative Processes on migration (RCPs).²⁷

The GCIM was composed of 19 members, drawn from all regions and bringing together a wide range of migration perspectives and expertise. Its three-fold mandate outlined three objectives.²⁸ First, as the first-ever global panel on international migration, it aimed to place international migration on the global agenda. Second, it was tasked with analysing gaps in current policy approaches to migration. Third, it was asked to present recommendations on how to strengthen national, regional and global governance of international migration, translating the complex reality and politics of international migration into principles for action that would reflect shared objectives and a common vision for all United Nations Member States.

The commission adopted a broad consultative approach to carry out its tasks, organizing five regional hearings, and commissioning 8 regional and 13 thematic reports as well as 56 papers.²⁹ The final report of the Global Commission, called “Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action”, included six principles of action, supported by a set of recommendations. Each principle had a dedicated chapter elaborating its importance and key recommendations (see Table 1). The governance chapter of the GCIM report highlighted that good migration governance at the national level is a basis for more effective bilateral and multilateral cooperation between States, and it identified four key challenges associated with migration governance at the national level: policy coherence; interministerial coordination; capacity and resources; and cooperation with other States. As we will see in the following sections, these remain key challenges for many States worldwide.

²⁵ Commission on Human Security, 2003:45.


²⁶ For example, De Haan, 1999; Ratha, 2003.


²⁷ Lavenex and Piper, 2022.

²⁸ IOM, n.d.b.

²⁹ Ibid.

Table 1. Key Global Commission on International Migration recommendations and Global Compact for Migration objectives

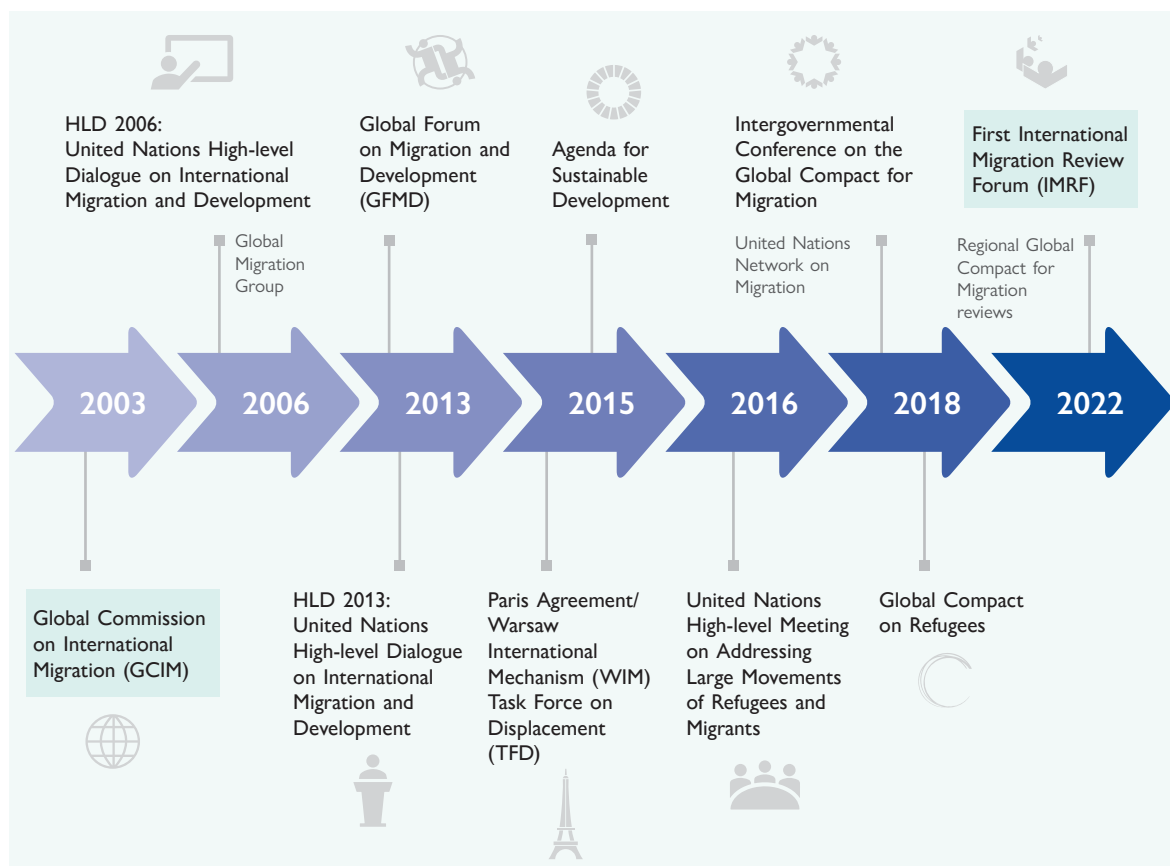
GCIM principle for action	Summary of recommendations	Aligned Global Compact for Migration objectives
<p>1 Migrating out of choice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Account for increasing migration in the formulation of migration policies. Pursue realistic and flexible approaches to international migration pathways, including temporary migration and labour migration pathways. Create jobs with decent work conditions and sustainable livelihoods. 	
<p>2 Reinforcing economic and developmental impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote human capital formation and cooperate to provide appropriate pay, working conditions and career prospects to the global pool of professionals. Encourage the transfer and investment of remittances through formal systems conducive to growth and competitiveness. Leverage the developmental impacts of return migration and circular migration. 	
<p>3 Addressing irregular migration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in an objective debate about the negative consequences of irregular migration and its prevention. Address the conditions that promote irregular migration and take actions to resolve the situation of migrants with irregular status. Strengthen efforts to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking. 	

GCIM principle for action	Summary of recommendations	Aligned Global Compact for Migration objectives
<p>4 Strengthening social cohesion through integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully respect the rights of migrants; ensure compliance with minimum labour standards; protect migrants against exploitation and abuse. • Promote the full integration of migrants into society, paying special attention to empowering, and protecting the rights of migrant women and children. • Address international migration in an objective and responsible manner. 	 <p>4 LEGAL IDENTITY AND DOCUMENTATION, 6 RECRUITMENT AND DECENT WORK, 7 REDUCE VULNERABILITIES, 16 INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION, 17 ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION</p>
<p>5 Protecting the rights of migrants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure State responsibility to protect those on its territory is practised, reducing the pressures that induce people to migrate, protecting migrants in transit and safeguarding human rights in destination countries. • Ensure that all migrants can benefit from decent work and are protected from exploitation and abuse. • Strengthen the normative framework of international migration and ensure that the provisions of that framework are applied in a non-discriminatory manner. 	 <p>2 MINIMIZE DRIVERS, 6 RECRUITMENT AND DECENT WORK, 7 REDUCE VULNERABILITIES</p>
<p>6 Enhancing governance: coherence, capacity and cooperation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish coherent national migration policies based on agreed objectives that are consistent with international law, including human rights law. • Cooperate with other States and with regional and international organizations to formulate national migration policies, including through bilateral agreements and contributions of resources and expertise. • Ensure that RCPs on migration have worldwide coverage, engage civil society and the private sector, and are not focused solely on migration control. 	 <p>11 MANAGE BORDERS, 14 CONSULAR PROTECTION, 23 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION</p>

Migration governance after the Global Commission on International Migration

About fifteen years passed between the launch of the GCIM in 2003 and the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration in 2018, and almost two decades between the launch of the GCIM and that of the IMRF in 2022. During this period, several global processes contributed to current global migration governance. Figure 1 presents a timeline of some key events and frameworks, though it should be noted that not all international frameworks gathered universal support, and that the figure does not represent key processes such as international dialogues on migration, RCPs and IOM Councils that prepared the way for, and fed into, the events shown.³⁰ Whether within the United Nations system or outside of it, these key processes played an instrumental role in setting the agenda on migration at the global level.³¹ Migration and its governance has also been shaped by a number of technological (“fourth industrial revolution”), geopolitical and environmental transformations.³²

Figure 1. Key international events and processes 2003–2022



³⁰ Klein Solomon, 2005.

³¹ See for instance the contribution from the GFMD at GFMD, n.d.a.

³² For a discussion of the effect of these transformations on migration and on migration governance, see McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021.

Impact of the Global Commission on International Migration

The work of the GCIM set the basis for other processes that followed after the publication of the GCIM report in December 2005. From the three-fold mandate of the GCIM to the report recommendations, its wide implications for migration governance are visible in the Global Compact for Migration and IMRF processes. Nevertheless, States were and remain reluctant to delegate formal regulatory authority over migration to a global supranational authority, and some have observed that “discussions about international governance of migration thus have tended to focus on institutional architecture for cooperation and/or common underlying principles.”³³ Others have identified four key limits to national migration governance – minimal intergovernmental cooperation; insufficient policymaking coordination; lack of capacity to maximize migration benefits (especially in lower income States); a lack of international policy coherence – and have argued for GCIM implementation in place of national governance systems.³⁴

The Global Commission on International Migration and its results

The GCIM 2005 report, “Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action”, highlighted the Commission’s key issues regarding migration and development: migration, economic growth and the labour market, irregular migration, migrants in society; migrant protection, as well as migration governance. Some proposals were also outlined alongside key conclusions, with a clear stance and emphasis on migration policies.

The Commission’s principal conclusion was that migration policies must be based on shared objectives and have a common vision. It therefore proposed a comprehensive, coherent and global framework based on six principles for action and 33 related recommendations.

The GCIM report concluded that “the international community has failed to realize the full potential of international migration and has not risen to the opportunities and challenges of migration”. The Commission recommended that “greater coherence, cooperation and capacity are required for the more effective governance of migration, at the national, regional and global levels”.^a

The sixth action from the GCIM report – “Creating coherence: The governance of international migration” – remains relevant today. This action was centred on three pillars: strengthened capacity at the national level, improved engagement between States at the regional level, and more robust cooperation between States and international actors at the global level. The six recommendations under this principle consider the intersection between international migration and development within the wider policy arenas of trade, aid, State security, human security and human rights.

^a UN DESA, 2005:2–3.

³³ Newland, 2005:6.

³⁴ Süßmuth and Morehouse, 2012.

The GCIM report highlighted that human security concerns associated with international migration need to be addressed more fully, particularly in light of other key policy issues, including State security, aid, trade and human rights. The emphasis on human security has had an impact on leveraging political momentum at the global level to address migration challenges and to provide protection to vulnerable migrants.

The report also provided a strong basis for global cooperation to which States – and the international community in general – responded in different ways: some have upheld the ideas of the report, and engaged in clusters to address migration challenges; others have not taken up GCIM recommendations, or depart from those recommendations with regard to contentious issues (such as the migrants’ rights perspective). It is well recognized that the GCIM set the agenda for the first United Nations General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, influencing the chair’s conclusions and thus setting the agenda for subsequent work on global governance. The GCIM also stimulated the debate on global governance of migration among States; however, it did not result in a formal, coherent, multilateral framework governing migration.³⁵

The Global Forum on Migration and Development and its importance

Established upon the proposal of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the 2006 HLD, the GFMD is a State-led, informal and non-binding process that helps shape the global debate on migration and development. The GFMD was created as a space for constructive dialogue on international migration between States, and it also provides a whole-of-government and whole-of-society platform that enables governments to engage with a wide range of actors: civil society, the private sector, youth, migrants and diaspora, the United Nations system, academia and municipalities, among others. Its main aim is to inform and influence policy and practice through informal dialogue – including on sensitive issues – while generating consensus among actors and seeking innovative solutions. Its three core mechanisms for stakeholder engagement (that is, the business mechanism, the civil society mechanism and the mayors mechanism) have played a pivotal role in ensuring that these perspectives informed the Global Compact for Migration negotiations and of the discussions on its implementation. Over the years, it has helped build multi-stakeholder international cooperation by facilitating the building of trust between States and non-State actors.

A glimpse at migration governance and the 2030 Agenda

Through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, migration was recognized, for the first time in a major international document on development, as a powerful driver for sustainable development for migrants and communities. Migration was highlighted as a cross-cutting issue across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with one particular target (10.7) under SDG 10 aiming to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. In addition, other SDG targets and indicators show the importance of specific aspects of migration, which are embedded in their scope and implementation.

³⁵ Ibid.

The GFMD was instrumental in getting migration included in the 2030 Agenda, including through a dedicated ad hoc working group on the 2030 Agenda (which later became the GFMD Working Group on Sustainable Development and International Migration, covering both the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration). GFMD engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is evident through its annual reports, since 2017, to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), with inputs in the form of analysis and recommendations on the implementation of the SDGs and respective targets.

The emphasis on migration in the SDGs was a wake-up call for governments to be more inclusive, and to integrate migration into development, but also to identify gaps and challenges in data, policy, responses and practical measures in addressing development challenges. Over the years, this emphasis on migration has required capacity-building in terms of guidance at the national and subnational levels in migration mainstreaming at local and national level planning, where links between migration and development in the context of the SDGs had to be better understood for implementation. It has also meant looking at migration beyond its policy and across governance sectors.

Despite not being a formal United Nations forum, the GFMD played an instrumental part in the lead-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through a position that was communicated to the United Nations Secretary-General. It also played a critical role in the lead-up to the Global Compact for Migration, hosting a range of dialogues and thematic workshops. This was achieved through its work on developing ideas and generating consensus to support the creation of that compact, including workshops, roundtables and, most importantly, a thematic recollection of the GFMD outcome documents from 2007 to 2017.

In fact, as recognized in the preamble of the Global Compact for Migration, the contributions of the GFMD paved the way for its elaboration.³⁶ Comparing the GFMD thematic recollection 2007 to 2017 (the GFMD contribution to the Global Compact for Migration process) with the final text of the Global Compact for Migration shows that over 50 policy options and practical actions proposed by the GFMD were echoed in the Global Compact for Migration objectives. A detailed analysis shows that the language of the Global Compact for Migration text is often similar to that of GFMD thematic reflections, especially in the case of practical actions (such as pathways for regular migration and the fight against human trafficking).³⁷ Furthermore, the Global Compact for Migration is explicit in calling on the GFMD to host an annual informal exchange on implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.³⁸

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: A closer look

The discourse around the global governance of migration has come a long way, in the face of some resistance to a fully contextualized understanding of migration. The Global Compact for Migration represents a monumental step forward towards a whole-of-society, multilateral approach to migration governance that integrates migration policymaking and analysis into a broader context. For the first time, Member States have a common framework to discuss progress on migration governance. The Compact encourages concerted and coordinated efforts towards

³⁶ United Nations, 2018a.

³⁷ GFMD, n.d.b.

³⁸ Ibid.

a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, emphasizing that migration is a global issue. Before 2018, scholars had described the need for a more organic process for international cooperation on migration governance, stemming “from strategic deliberations around improving existing policies and practices rather than through a top-down, institutional approach at the global level”;³⁹ the consultations and process towards the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration in 2018 were an organic process of this type.

The United Nations Network on Migration

To support the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, the United Nations Secretary-General established in 2018 a Network on Migration that is mandated to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States (Global Compact for Migration, paragraph 45). The Global Compact for Migration prescribes the objectives of the network, which prioritizes the rights and well-being of migrants and their communities of destination, origin and transit. It is guided by working principles including inclusivity, an orientation to results and accountability; as well, it prescribes a human rights-based, gender-responsive and child-sensitive approach. It replaces the Global Migration Coalition of 2006.

With IOM as its coordinator and secretariat, the Network comprises an executive committee, members (that is, United Nations system entities: currently 39 organizations) and workstreams. The workstreams provide technical advice to the Network, focusing on specific issues and facilitating joint action at the regional and country levels. In the current workplan (2022–2024), there are 14 workstreams, including 5 new ones introduced in 2022 following recommendations from the Progress Declaration of the IMRF. The workstreams and the Migration Multi-partner Trust Fund also have members from civil society, academia, diaspora organizations, private sector representatives and trade unions.

The United Nations Network on Migration also supports country- and regional-level United Nations migration coordination mechanisms, national plans to implement the Global Compact for Migration, national development plans and sectoral plans. The Network also tracks State commitments on Global Compact for Migration implementation through the Pledging Dashboard.

Nevertheless, there are some challenges to its universal implementation. First, the Global Compact for Migration is non-binding, and not all Member States voted in favour of the adoption of the Compact. There are a number of countries that are central to the migration landscape that are still reluctant to implement the Global Compact for Migration, while other countries that did not vote in favour of its adoption at the General Assembly are now engaged in its follow-up process. Second, this country-led process rightly positions States as the leaders of the implementation process, putting the Global Compact for Migration into practice through national implementation plans. States were encouraged to engage in inclusive and participatory processes based on whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches; however, the approach is left to the national process of each country, and differs among States. At the regional level, support for implementation of the Global Compact for Migration is expected from formal regional mechanisms, regional economic communities and RCPs. Through the quadrennial regional reviews to inform the IMRF, both States and regional forums inform the global process by sharing their reports on

³⁹ Süßmuth and Morehouse, 2012.

the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, following the guidelines provided by the United Nations Network on Migration.⁴⁰

Since the GCIM, the global architecture of migration governance has changed, largely due to the institutionalization of international cooperation through formal United Nations channels. The existence of the Global Compact for Migration, despite its limitations, is without question critical for a global approach to migration challenges. The implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, and the institutional structures around it, have borrowed from various processes and forums stretching back to the HLD, GFMD and GCIM recommendations. Special emphasis has been placed throughout on the exchange of practices and peer learning, with emerging efforts to support the development of State-led frameworks.

While the current setup has its challenges, it also embeds opportunities within the structure of the Global Compact for Migration to sustain momentum in terms of addressing migration challenges at the global level. These challenges (and opportunities) mainly relate to dedicated financing for national plans to implement the Global Compact, and blended financing options,⁴¹ engagement of non-governmental agencies as well as non-State actors in agenda setting and implementation through national, regional and global discussions,⁴² and robust monitoring and review processes in the form of regional reviews and the IMRF.

Where do we stand today? The lead-up to, and lessons learned from, the International Migration Review Forum

As the first ever intergovernmentally negotiated United Nations agreement on managing international migration, the Global Compact for Migration establishes a blueprint for international cooperation on migration. In 2021, the first series of quadrennial preparatory regional reviews preceding the IMRF covered five regions: Africa, the Arab States, Asia, Europe and the Americas. These regional reviews were hosted, with the support of the United Nations Network on Migration, by United Nations regional commissions in the case of Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC); in the case of Africa, Morocco hosted the meeting for UNECA Member States. The reviews were attended by government representatives and other stakeholders, and focused on national, subregional and continental progress towards the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. Undertaken during a period when parts of the world were still under COVID-19 restrictions, the IMRF roundtables and regional reviews were hybrid or virtual. While this allowed a wider audience to connect to the important gatherings, they followed standard United Nations procedures that do not always allow for an open and constructive debate, as they are centred on statements being read out by representatives of Member States. Furthermore, the context of the pandemic highlighted new priorities and emerging challenges for migration governance.

⁴⁰ For more information on the Global Compact for Migration regional reviews, see United Nations Network on Migration, n.d.a.

⁴¹ For more information on pooled financing for the Global Compact for Migration, see United Nations Network on Migration, n.d.b.

⁴² For more information on regional and national chapters see United Nations Network on Migration, n.d.c.

Stakeholder contributions in the lead-up to the International Migration Review Forum

Between 2020 and 2021, 86 Member States, regional mechanisms and other actors submitted voluntary reports reviewing the status of their implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. An analysis of these 86 reports revealed the difficulty in tracking the implementation of a non-binding agreement lacking a formal, systematic mechanism for review.^a It also underscored the importance of data and evidence for policy processes, as well as the centrality of issues such as return, trafficking, decent work and vulnerable migrants. Despite the limitations of voluntary reporting, an analysis of these reports is useful to assess the overall focus of Member States' monitoring and reporting, including those objectives that have received less attention (e.g. missing migrants, discrimination, remittances). The analysis also highlights the need for clearer monitoring framework and process.

In November 2021, the GFMD held a stakeholders' hybrid forum with 180 delegates from 81 GFMD Member States, three GFMD mechanisms, youth groups and 25 organizations in attendance, because the Global Compact for Migration calls on the GFMD to report on the findings, best practices and innovative approaches to the IMRF.^b This forum provided the basis for the GFMD report on the Global Compact for Migration (published May 2022).

^a Lebon-McGregor, 2022.

^b GFMD, n.d.a.

In January 2022, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a report on Global Compact for Migration implementation, to inform the IMRF, as required by the United Nations General Assembly.⁴³ In addition to inputs from Member States, stakeholder consultations and discussions with groups within the United Nations system, the Secretary-General's report also drew on the outcomes from the Global Compact for Migration regional reviews.

The inclusive process in the lead-up to the IMRF also involved multiple stakeholders providing inputs, comments and responses to various versions of the Progress Declaration.⁴⁴ Non-State actors called for a critical look at the progress, challenges and gaps in the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, citing the need for both a more dynamic and progressive dialogue with all stakeholders and a robust monitoring framework, in order to achieve a more meaningful review of the full Global Compact for Migration. This seemed especially important because of the limitations of voluntary reporting without an agreed framework, and without means of independent verification.⁴⁵

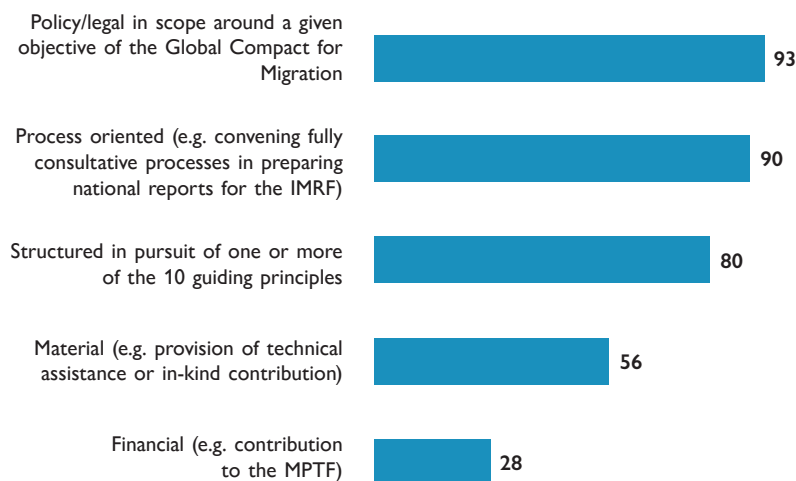
Furthermore, analyses by scholars and other stakeholders including representatives of civil society and the GFMD articulated contributions to the Progress Declaration and outlined the lessons to be drawn from the IMRF process, including the need for a stronger voice for migrants.

⁴³ United Nations, 2021a.

⁴⁴ Civil Society Action Committee, n.d.

⁴⁵ Rajah et al., 2022.

Figure 2. International Migration Review Forum pledges by type



Source: United Nations Network on Migration, n.d.d.

The Pledging Initiative was conceived to help build momentum for the review and implementation of the Global Compact for Migration in the context of the IMRF.⁴⁶ Pledges are measurable commitments made by Member States and other stakeholders, such as local authorities and civil society organizations, with the purpose of advancing the implementation of one or more of the guiding principles, objectives, or actions of the Global Compact for Migration. As of January 2023, 233 pledges had been received and displayed on the online dashboard.⁴⁷ Objective 7 of the Global Compact for Migration, focused on reducing vulnerabilities, has had the highest number of pledges towards its achievement (133 pledges).

The first IMRF resulted in an intergovernmentally unanimously agreed Progress Declaration that outlines progress, challenges and gaps in the implementation of the Global Compact, as well as a set of recommended actions.⁴⁸

As part of the IMRF, in May 2022, the President of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly hosted an informal multi-stakeholder hearing with over 250 representatives from non-State actors covering all regions.⁴⁹ The focus was on assessing progress, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, as well as cementing commitments and recommendations to advance the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. The forum also proposed concrete recommendations for action, and it emphasized the “nothing about us without us” inclusive approach that puts migrant voices at the core of migration governance.

Among other things, the IMRF showed a growing recognition of the importance of RCPs, in line with earlier discussions at the GFMD. Through the GFMD and other forums, there has been multi-stakeholder discussions to clarify and advance the role of RCPs in realizing the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration, bringing Global Compact for Migration stakeholders closer to RCPs. The Secretary-General’s 2022 report highlights the

⁴⁶ See United Nations Network on Migration, n.d.d.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ United Nations, 2022a.

⁴⁹ Rajah et al., 2022.

IMRF as an opportunity to harness the power of multilateralism to provide concrete guidance on the promotion of inclusive societies, enhanced diversified pathways, opportunities for regularization and sustainable reintegration as well as reducing vulnerabilities. All these issues are within the scope of RCPs and their role in supporting efforts that ensure participation of and measures at national and subnational levels.

Key tensions in policy discussions on global migration governance

The Global Compact for Migration and the IMRF Progress Declaration reflect both advancement and a compromise between States. Pre-existing migration governance indicators introduced improvements towards measuring global migration governance in a more systematic way:⁵⁰ even without an agreed reporting framework, 15 countries referred to information collected through the IOM Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) initiative in their Global Compact for Migration reviews.⁵¹ Nevertheless, global migration governance is often characterized by agreements breaking down, exclusions and exemptions for particular situations and States, international conventions and norms not being applied, and roles being suspended.⁵² Tensions still exist between States and other actors on priorities and steps to be taken towards advancing global governance.⁵³ The fluidity of concepts and policy categories that do not necessarily reflect the reality and needs of migrants pose a challenge when generating solutions. The difficulty of agreeing, at the global level, on concrete measures to implement the Global Compact for Migration in a gender-responsive way – despite the availability of best practices and guidance material⁵⁴ – is also a reflection of different priorities among Member States.

From a civil society perspective, in an effort to reduce barriers to civil society engagement in IMRF processes, the Action Committee IMRF assessment paper identified eleven commitments and action points that call for more receptive and more inclusive measures to be taken by Member States, international organizations, and other stakeholders.⁵⁵

Another tension relates to the ways that countries of destination, origin and transit are separated and treated differently in policy discussions.⁵⁶ In fact, all regions of the world include States that are simultaneously countries of destination, origin and transit for migrants, and have to deal with the challenges and opportunities associated with all directions of migration flow.

Achieving a compromise or revisiting some of the current policy categories of migrant populations is difficult given the current geopolitics. This is especially so with regard to the protection of persons on the move or internally displaced persons (see text box below). Rather than revisiting or updating existing regimes such as the international protection regime, States are seeking ways to create new approaches to govern emerging challenges. This is

⁵⁰ For example, through SDG indicator 10.7.2 on “Number of countries with policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people” as well as the Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) initiative. See also Mosler Vidal and Laczko, 2022; IOM, 2022.

⁵¹ IOM, n.d.a.

⁵² van Riemsdijk et al., 2021; Pécoud, 2021b.

⁵³ Ricorda, 2022.

⁵⁴ See Gender + Migration Hub, n.d.; IOM, 2023.

⁵⁵ Civil Society Action Committee, 2023.

⁵⁶ Triandafyllidou, 2022.

the case in the area of climate-related displacement, large movements of persons due to displacement or even conflict-related displacements.⁵⁷

Some of the tensions emerging at the regional and national level disrupt cooperation at the global level. Regional responses or the priorities of hegemony (that is, politically and economically dominant countries within regions) often spill over to the global scene and, in effect, determine the direction of the global governance of migration or the emphasis placed on cooperation between States on migration. Regional responses have been central to States' reactions to displacement and large movements, but innovation observed in specific regions has not been reflected in global action. For example, in response to the Venezuelan crisis, countries in South America and the Caribbean adopted measures to protect the rights of migrants and refugees, including measures aimed at regularizing their stay and access to the labour market. However, efforts to include regularization of stay or access to labour markets in global agreements have not been successful. Thus, cooperation at the regional level is fuelled by crisis management and common interests to resolve regional challenges, but there is still reluctance at the global level when it comes to including such approaches in global agreements.

Annual global figures published by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) show that approximately two thirds of the world's displaced people are internally displaced persons (IDPs). Despite calls for the inclusion of IDPs in both compacts,⁵⁸ the Global Compact for Migration does not include a reference to IDPs, and the Global Compact on Refugees only makes minor references to the issue of internal displacement, making IDPs "a troubling gap".⁵⁹ In this context, the Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement was established in 2022 to mobilize action on protracted displacement, and to bring about a change in how the United Nations system and other actors engage on this issue (see text box below).

Steps towards the protection of internally displaced persons

There were 59.1 million internally displaced people – 53.2 million because of conflict and violence, and 5.9 million as a result of disasters – throughout the world at the end of 2021, across 141 countries and territories.^a IDPs include persons who are forced to move or leave their homes to avoid the effects of armed conflict or violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.^b IDPs are often stuck in situations of "protracted displacement".

The United Nations has taken several measures towards addressing the plight and situation of IDPs. Recognizing the growing number of persons displaced within national borders and the need for urgent action, in 1992 the Secretary-General appointed a representative on IDPs to evaluate existing legal protections and the institutional mechanism for IDPs. Continuous discussions on the situation of IDPs led to a set of guiding principles on internal displacement in 1998, and their subsequent adoption into national and regional legal instruments.

⁵⁷ Martin and Weerasinghe, 2017.

⁵⁸ On IDPs and the Global Compact for Migration, see Jimenez-Damary, 2018. On the Global Compact on Refugees and IDPs, see Rushing and Clarey, 2017.

⁵⁹ Aleinikoff, 2018:617.

Tensions around addressing internal displacement partly arise from governments underestimating the consequences of inaction. Even when the importance of action is recognized and political will on the part of States exists, capacity gaps and operational constraints frequently stymie progress. In addition, State responsibility to their displaced citizens is often sidelined as a result of competing domestic priorities, and also because of the limited accountability and transparency of State actors that fail to respond to, or even in some cases cause, internal displacement.^c As a result, there are as yet no concrete solutions to the problem of providing protection and assistance to IDPs.^d

The 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants mentioned “the need for reflection on effective strategies to ensure adequate protection and assistance for internally displaced persons and to prevent and reduce such displacement.” But this was not further developed in either the Global Compact for Migration or the Global Compact on Refugees, apart from a discussion of displacement as part of the commitment of States to minimize the drivers compelling people to move (objective 2 of the Global Compact for Migration). In the Global Compact on Refugees, displacement is only referenced with regard to implementing the comprehensive refugee response framework.

Encouraging signs of increasing political focus at the global level towards the plight of IDPs include the establishment of a United Nations Secretary General’s High-level Panel on Internal Displacement in 2019, to find concrete solutions to internal displacement, and the subsequent launch of the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. The panel’s report identified 10 innovative and concrete recommendations aimed at preventing, responding to, and achieving solutions to internal displacement. The recommendations underscore the need to share responsibility across States and among all actors, including the private sector and civil society organizations, in underpinning solutions to end displacement.^e Acknowledging the complexities of displacement requires that international actors move beyond a humanitarian model towards an approach based on a humanitarian–peace–development nexus that strengthens public systems and services as a whole, targeting displaced persons and their destination communities. In addition, the recommendations emphasize the need for displaced persons to be part of the dialogue and engaged in jointly designing solutions to ending displacement. The need for international solidarity at the global level is essential to addressing the challenges faced by displaced persons.

In 2022, following up on the report of the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, the United Nations Secretary-General launched an Action Agenda on internal displacement with three goals: “to support internally displaced people to find durable solutions to their displacement; to better prevent new displacement crises from emerging; and to ensure those facing displacement receive effective protection and assistance”.^f

^a IDMC, 2022.

^b United Nations, 1998.

^c Desai et al., 2021.

^d United Nations, 2021b; IDMC, 2022.

^e United Nations, 2021b.

^f United Nations, 2022b.

Labour migration governance is another area of contestation and fragmentation. While most States acknowledge the need for migrant labour given labour shortages, they fall short of taking steps to protect migrant workers or provide necessary pathways to facilitate their recruitment, entry and stay in countries where their skills are needed, particularly in “low skill” sectors. Globally, migrant workers at all skill levels face impediments and challenges because of gaps in or non-existent regulation and lack of cooperation between States; a limited number of bilateral labour agreements between countries include the kinds of worker protections advocated by activists, scholars and non-governmental organizations.⁶⁰ Migrant workers in the informal sector are subject to exploitation by employers and recruiters; this is especially true for women and girls, who face multiple and intersecting layers of discrimination. Several objectives of the Global Compact for Migration (2, 5, 6, 16, 18 and 21) commit States to promoting the global governance of labour mobility, yet insufficient measures by some States still undermine the welfare and human rights of migrant workers.

As international migration continues to play a prominent role in shaping political agendas and geopolitics in States and regions, polarizing political discussions often focus on simplistic, binary options, without considering flexible solutions for all parties including migrants. In response, current approaches to migration governance, including at the global level, need to be reconsidered in order to address these tensions.⁶¹

The way forward: Expectations, challenges and opportunities for future editions of the International Migration Review Forum

Paragraph 102 of the Global Compact on Refugees states that indicators to measure its success would be developed ahead of the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019. In contrast, the Global Compact for Migration, as a “collective commitment to improving cooperation on international migration” (paragraph 8), only included eight paragraphs on implementation (40–47), with no information on how its implementation or success would be monitored. This left the Global Compact for Migration implementation monitoring question to the 2022 IMRF.

The IMRF reminded the international community that the Global Compact for Migration will be the blueprint for much stronger international cooperation in the 2020s, especially compared to what existed before the 2010s, based on common understanding, shared responsibility and unity of purpose among the vast majority of United Nations Member States. Moving forward, three aspects of the IMRF Progress Declaration can lay the ground for a further strengthening of international cooperation on migration, in the lead-up to the next IMRF in 2026, and towards the third IMRF in 2030 that will take place in a crucial year for the United Nations and the international community.

First, paragraph 70 of the Progress Declaration requests “the Secretary-General, in his next biennial report, to propose, for the consideration of Member States, a limited set of indicators, drawing on the global indicator framework for the SDGs and targets of the 2030 Agenda as contained in General Assembly resolution 71/313 of 6 July 2017 and other relevant frameworks, to assist Member States, upon their request, in conducting inclusive reviews of progress related to the implementation of the Global Compact”. This request opens up the possibility for a clearer and more systematic approach towards reporting on implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, starting from the next IMRF. The United Nations Network on Migration has already activated a new dedicated workstream with the difficult task of creating a limited set of indicators for a global framework that

⁶⁰ Chilton and Woda, 2022.

⁶¹ Pécoud, 2021a and 2021b.

includes 10 guiding principles and 23 objectives, possibly drawing on the methodology used to track progress on SDG indicator 10.7.2. No official baseline has been set; as a consequence, Member States may look, during the IMRF in 2026, for the international community to build a baseline against which progress will be assessed from 2030, a year that will also mark the end of the SDG era. The development of indicators remains a critical element that is watched closely by the international community – particularly from civil society – to support Member States in effectively implementing the Global Compact for Migration.

Second, the latter part of the same paragraph requests that the Secretary-General “include a comprehensive strategy for improving disaggregated migration data at the local, national, regional and global levels”. Such a strategy can build on several years of work in this space, especially by IOM and the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics.⁶²

Third, in paragraph 76, Member States also requested “the Secretary-General, with the support of the Network and other relevant actors, to include actionable recommendations on strengthening cooperation on missing migrants and providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress, including by collaborating with humanitarian actors, in his next biennial report, with the aim of preventing loss of life in transit”. The United Nations Network on Migration has already set up a workstream to develop such recommendations in a participatory way.

In upcoming years, the international community is expected to work towards a post-2030 United Nations framework for international cooperation and action. The incremental progress towards global migration governance since the turn of the century, and its acceleration since 2015, are paving the ground for human mobility to become a more central issue for the post-2030 United Nations framework. Throughout the 2020s and beyond, the Global Compact for Migration is expected to be an enabling framework for countries to work together on migration governance, solve some of the tensions outlined in this chapter, and navigate global challenges.

The reality of migration is that it requires a truly whole-of-government, whole-of-society governance approach. Developments in global migration governance will only benefit all persons on the move if the emerging architecture accommodates this reality.

⁶² See United Nations, 2018b; Mosler-Vidal, 2021.

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