



GFMD Event in Switzerland in 2011

The fifth meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) was held in Geneva from 29 November to 2 December 2011. The theme for this flagship event was *'Taking Action on Migration and Development – Coherence, Capacity and Cooperation'*. The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) is a state-led, voluntary process dedicated to informal, non-binding and outcome-oriented dialogue. Over the past four years, the GFMD has sought to contribute to more policy *coherence* on migration and development at the national, regional and global levels, to strengthen the *capacity* of states to address migration and development opportunities and challenges more effectively, and to promote international *cooperation* between states and other actors. As a result of its inclusive approach, ongoing consultations and follow-on activities the GFMD has transformed into more than just an annual conference.

Each year, the GFMD event is organized in two phases. The first phase is the civil society days (CSD) convened for a period of two days. This is followed by the second phase, a two-day meeting of governments. In 2011, the Director of the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC), Awil Mohamoud, was once again asked to be a member of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) tasked to support the preparation of the civil society days for the event. Mohamoud was also a member of the International Advisory Committee that oversaw the CSD of the 3rd Global Forum on Migration and Development held in Athens on 2-3 November 2009.

During these civil society days, ADPC participated in a number of different workshops. More, specifically, the ADPC Director was a member of a panel for a workshop devoted to 'diaspora, employment and development'. The goal of the workshop was to highlight concrete diaspora-driven projects and programmes that have been contributing to job creation and development in the home countries. The meeting was successful. The panel members and the audience shared useful practical experiences and exchanged new innovative ideas, which have the potential to spur on the contribution of the diaspora to other sectors of the homeland domestic economy and efforts underway to create jobs locally. A good example is the innovative private sector scheme launched by the Mexican diaspora in the US. In this case, diaspora entrepreneurs in the US have initiated a 3x1 formula private sector programme to establish businesses in Mexico or to collaborate with local business people. Unlike previous local development oriented programmes, the contribution migrant entrepreneurs receive from this private sector scheme is provided in the form of a loan from various tiers of government. This loan must be repaid after five years. Subsequently, the money paid back to the different government administrations is then channelled into improving public provisions at the local level.

During the GFMD event a number of participants raised concerns regarding the marginal attention paid to the critical role of the nexus between migration and development. Indeed, compared with previous years, the development role of diasporas and migrants hardly featured on the GFMD agenda this year. Instead, the main focus of the event was labour migration, migrant domestic care workers and development in a general sense.

Furthermore, discussions during the GFMD event this year – particularly those that took place during the Civil Society Days – were dominated by advocacy-oriented speeches and focused less on sharing concrete practical actions on the ground. A number of participants observed that most of the speakers at the workshops were activists rather than development practitioners in the field. They suggested that it would be imperative to increase the participation of development practitioners in the forthcoming GFMD event next year.

Since its launch in 2006, GFMD events have been rotating between countries and continents. In the last five years, the GFMD meetings have been held in Europe, Asia and Latin America. More precisely, the events were organised in Belgium, Greece, Mexico and the Philippines. In 2012, the sixth GFMD meeting will be held in Africa for the first time as Mauritius has agreed to host the event. Consequently, we can expect that issues specific to the continent of Africa (challenges, aspirations and priorities) regarding the nexus between migration and development to guide the overall theme of the GFMD event in 2012. These are the issues that would considerably increase the contribution of African migrants and diasporas to the overall development of the continent in a sustainable and a systematic manner.

For more information about the Global Forum on Migration and Development see: www.gfmd.org.