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SUMMARY REPORT

Migration and Development Series 2009

Seminar on

ALIGNING MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

organized jointly with IOM, UNFPA and the MacArthur Foundation

23-24 March 2009

United Nations Headquarters, New York

BACKGROUND

The seminar on *Aligning Migration and Development Goals* was designed to support Member States in their preparations for the third Global Forum on Migration and Development, which will take place on 4-5 November 2009 in Athens on the topic of “Integrating Migration Policies in Development Strategies for the Benefit of All.” The seminar reviewed policy objectives in the areas of migration and development with a view to identifying opportunities for integrating migration in national policy instruments such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the international policy-framework of the Millennium Development Goals; as well as exploring opportunities for development to be a primary focus of migration policy formulation. The seminar looked at potentially competing but cross-cutting policy agendas in the migration, development, labour, trade, and health fields both within and among governments. It also discussed some of the challenges of enhancing consultation and cooperation between stakeholders within Governments – in different ministries and agencies – as well as with non-governmental constituents, including the private sector and migrant associations.

OBJECTIVES

The seminar aimed to: facilitate awareness and a better understanding of the – sometimes conflicting – objectives that shape migration and development policies in developed and developing countries; present promising policies and strategies designed to reconcile migration and development priorities; examine the institutional mechanisms and partnership arrangements underpinning such measures; examine diverging and converging policy goals and strategies between countries; discuss challenges and opportunities involved in engaging non-governmental stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of coherent policies.

Information on the seminar and the *Migration and Development Series* is available at:

<http://www.unitar.org/ny/international-law-and-policy/migration-and-development-series>

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SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

i) Key observations

The seminar revisited the goals, actors and rationales that drive policymaking in the areas of migration and development as a starting point for discussing policy coherence between these areas and among different stakeholders.

A key message was that policy coherence is not a goal in itself. Rather, the formulation of political priorities and objectives that are beneficial for all stakeholders, including migrants, should precede and initiate increased cooperation and coherence. Also, while most countries serve as countries of origin, transit and destination, few have deliberate and coordinated policies of immigration and emigration. Integrating both responsibilities into a coherent national migration policy remains a challenge.

A second central observation was that the focus of the current discussion must not be limited to migration's interlinkages with development in developing countries alone. This imbalance in scope tends to obscure the development contributions that migrants have made and continue to make in industrialized countries. Migration considerations should be integrated in development frameworks, planning and cooperation for the benefit of developing countries. However, it was deemed equally vital to recognize migration as a factor in stimulating and maintaining economic and social progress and prosperity in all countries, including developed nations. Especially in the context of the current economic crisis, domestic political actors such as parliamentarians and party leaders were called upon to refrain from negative and often short-sighted discourse on migration and migrants.

ii) Policy coherence at the Third Global Forum on Migration and Development

With a view to the upcoming third Global Forum on Migration and Development to be held in Athens, Greece on 4-5 November 2009 on the topic of "Integrating Migration Policies into Development Strategies for the Benefit of All", Ambassador John Mourikis, Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations, outlined the Greek Government's plans for the Forum, including its ambition to "reinforce the practical orientation" of the discussions. Thus, under the GFMD's thematic focus on integrating migration policies in development strategies, a number of concrete examples of national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers will be presented at the Forum. As in previous years, the GFMD 3 will also feature three roundtable discussions, focusing on the topics of 1) How to make the migration and development nexus work for development? 2) Migrant integration and circulation for development; 3) Policy coherence, data and research, and regional and inter-regional consultations.

On the topic of policy coherence, Ambassador Mourikis distinguished four institutional and structural levels of coherence: 1) within Government; 2) between and among Governments; 3) between Governments and the private sector and civil society; 4) between Governments and multilateral agencies. He also pointed out a number of challenges that remain to be addressed in pursuit of greater coherence, stating that it is critical to mobilize political will and, consequently, sufficient resources for coherent migration and development strategies. In addition to financial means, capacity-development is needed. Diasporas, civil society organizations, and the private sector should be included as partners. Furthermore, progress needs to be made in the systematic assessment of programmes. Ambassador Mourikis cautioned that a "one-size-fits-all" approach will not work; each country must find its own way of balancing various interests and fostering policy coherence.



I) Coherence within Government

I.I Reconciling migration and development priorities

A discussion on policy goals among migration and development specialists revealed the differences in rationale and time frame governing both fields. While development policies have evolved so as to be increasingly principled and guided by long-term objectives, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), migration policies, especially in the case of labour migration, tend to be market-oriented, and thus need to be flexible and time sensitive. Long-term policy objectives in the field of migration are often less well defined.

Ms. Eveline Herfkens, former development minister of the Netherlands, emphasized the priority of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and the commitment to the poorest of the poor enshrined therein. Especially in the context of the current economic crisis, Ms. Herfkens stressed the need to “fence off” development budgets to ensure that scarce development resources are not diverted to serve other policy aims, including attempts to stem or limit immigration. Indeed, she posited that migrants are usually not among the poorest, but rather represent the more educated and entrepreneurial parts of society. Consequently, remittances, often hailed for their development benefits, have the potential to exacerbate inequalities, as they usually do not reach the poorest. This is all the more likely in the case of skilled migrants, who tend to come from the more well-off layers of society in the countries of origin.

This perspective was nuanced by the account of the representative of Bangladesh, who highlighted both negative and positive development effects of migration. He echoed the assessment that remittances create inflationary pressures in rural areas, and often do not reach the bottom of society, because the poorest do not move. However, the positive effects seem to outweigh these downsides: most prominently, migration helps to tackle unemployment, which is still high in the country, both through the outflow of workers, but also through the inflow of remittances, which is supporting entrepreneurship and job creation back home.

Indeed, given its large population and high unemployment rate, Bangladesh considers migration to be a “window of opportunity”, which the country is trying to use through a proactive strategy that rests on two pillars: 1) Enhancing the competitiveness of its manpower in the global labour market and opening opportunities through bilateral agreements and international norm-setting processes such as the WTO negotiations on GATS Mode 4. 2) Mainstreaming migration in national policy instruments, most importantly the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

I.II Institutional coherence

The implementation of coherent objectives and strategies often hinges on institutional arrangements that facilitate coherence. A number of examples of such institutional mechanisms were mentioned, including inter-ministerial or departmental task forces and working groups, and designated focal points. Few countries have attempted thus far to gather various migration-related responsibilities under one roof. The creation of an integrated umbrella ministry in France was seen as a potential model for other countries in this regard. In the case of Bangladesh, two dedicated institutions, the Ministry for Expatriates Welfare, and the Bureau of Manpower, provide a “one-stop service” for migrant workers, both at home – through pre-departure orientations, return assistance and saving opportunities - and abroad, through consular outreach and legal assistance. They also serve to evaluate and better match demand and supply, by projecting needs in receiving markets, and publishing information on available manpower.



Some of the challenges to institutional coherence were seen in conflicting mandates of different actors involved in the migration and development fields, and in the risk of being limited to the smallest common denominator, if no one department or agency has overruling and decision-making power. It was reiterated that policy and institutional coherence should serve to achieve a more effective pursuit of the objectives of both migration and development policies. In order to ensure that that is the case, improving the assessment and evaluation of policies should be a priority.

II) Coherence among Governments

II.I Creating common regulatory frameworks

It emerged from the discussions that developed and developing countries may come to the issue of policy coherence from different entry points: Whereas it seemed that developing countries pursue efforts towards greater coherence in light of their development priorities, developed countries seemed to seek coherence primarily to address migration concerns. Ms. Herfkens stressed the need for migration policies in destination countries to take development into account, rather than vice versa. Furthermore, she posited that increasing the compatibility of migration policies and development objectives requires that other policy areas such as health and trade also be part of the analysis. With regards to trade, several experts highlighted the yet unfulfilled potential of the WTO GATS Mode 4 negotiations to produce a first multilateral agreement on human mobility, with large potential benefits for developing countries.

Moreover, experts stressed the need for a multilateral framework on labour migration that would go beyond the GATS focus on service providers to remedy the lack of legal migration avenues and address power imbalances between migrant origin and destination countries. Experiences in Asia showed that bilateral labour migration agreements often leave countries of origin in a relatively weak bargaining position because of the intense competition among them. Given that this situation is detrimental to improving the protection and working conditions of migrant workers, it was suggested that countries pursue a common regulatory framework. Also, in the area of health worker migration, bilateral agreements, originally designed to tackle brain drain from one country of origin, often result in brain drain from neighbouring states by providing incentives for migration among origin countries. Ms. Herfkens therefore underlined the fact that “Bilateral is just not good enough.”

This was echoed by several, very critical assessments of temporary labour migration programmes as being disadvantageous for migrants and countries of origin alike. In the context of global demographic imbalances, Prof. Binod Khadria described what he called a net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries in a global “talent war”. He observed the tendency to promote the turnover of migrants in order to get a younger, mobile work force, and to reduce the costs for countries of destination in terms of wages and pensions. At the same time, remittances to countries of origin are likely to be lower, and limited professional development perspectives for temporary migrants erode the advantages of return migration for the country of origin.

II.II Enabling and sharing the benefits of human development

In order to create win-win situations, Prof. Khadria asked policymakers to undertake what he called an “Equitable Adversary Analysis”, whereby migration policy considerations in countries of destination would be open to assessment by the stakeholders in countries of origin, and vice versa. He and others saw win-win-win potential in temporary returns on the basis of permanent migration, rather than in temporary migration. A representative of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad explained that, while it may not be possible to provide the jobs and working conditions



necessary to create return incentives for Mexican migrants, the Mexican Government has a strong interest in establishing transnational networks with expatriate professionals who are permanently abroad to facilitate the sharing of expertise and ideas.

Indeed, it was argued that enabling migrants to stay permanently and to eventually acquire dual citizenship generates greater development benefits than temporary migration programmes. The latter keep migrants in a position of dependency and do not allow them to develop professionally, or reunite with their family. The benefits of permanence are all the more evident if development impacts are measured in terms of human development, based on a capabilities approach, which is concerned with the choices and agency of people.

Well-integrated migrants, who become involved in collective efforts towards home country development, underscore this argument for permanent status. The representative of the German development cooperation agency, GTZ, stressed that integration in the country of residence and contributions to the country of origin are not contradictory, but rather mutually reinforcing. She also observed that migrants who contribute back to their home countries tend to have greater confidence and enjoy enhanced regard in both their countries of origin and residence.

Policy objectives of countries of origin and destination pertaining to diaspora engagement can therefore be founded on ample grounds of mutual compatibility. In fact, institutional support strategies by each category of countries can carry benefits for the other as well. A case in point is Mexico's promotion of civic education and leadership skills among Mexicans in the United States. Nevertheless, cooperation between home and host countries often remains limited, while, increasingly, countries of origin are beginning to exchange experiences and learn from each other, e.g. in the area of consular outreach. Also, development agencies in the EU are coordinating on the issue of migration and diasporas, but still pursue different models of engagement. There is a joint tendency, however, to link up diaspora initiatives and support with existing development cooperation projects in partner countries.

III) Coherence with civil society and the private sector

Similarly, the private sector can play an enabling and facilitating role by contributing to creating an environment that provides migrants and diaspora actors with incentives to return and invest in their homelands. For example, a host of initiatives is currently underway to stimulate business and investments in African countries, many of them using information and communication technology to inform about opportunities and improve the functioning of markets. One such initiative that was presented at the seminar is zebrajobs.com, an online job market designed to attract back African professionals in the diaspora. It was also emphasized, however, that the private sector has a responsibility to protect migrants especially in the context of the current economic crisis.

These different perspectives on the role of the private sector reflect the diverging experiences, approaches and interests that civil society actors bring to the discussions on international migration and development. In fact, the notion of civil society was discussed with some controversy given that the term covers a vast range of actors. The GFMD experience shows that forging a broad-based coalition among different stakeholder groups, between migrant rights organizations and diaspora groups for example, poses a major challenge. The fact that they are often subject to or targeted by different kinds of policies and incentives makes rallying these groups around a common cause all the more difficult. It was stressed that migrants themselves should be at the centre of civil society participation in political fora such as the GFMD. Also,



greater transparency and accountability of the inter-governmental process, i.e. with regard to the selection of CSO participants in the Global Forum, was deemed important.

IV) Coherence with multilateral agencies

Comments by representatives of developing country Governments hinted at the role that international assistance and multilateral agencies play in supporting the formulation and implementation of policies and planning instruments that would support coherence between the areas of migration and development. UN and international organizations, as well as development cooperation agencies thus face the responsibility to ensure coherence in their own approaches and engagement with governments. A philosophy of “delivering as one” may best serve to advance the integration of migration concerns into development strategies, and vice versa. It was stressed that further efforts are needed to develop common criteria for the assessment of migration and development interventions by governments and international organizations. In order to promote greater UN system-wide and inter-agency coherence, Governments were asked to ensure that their positions and mandates are coherent across different policy fora and governing bodies.

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