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Migration in an interconnected world: New Directions for Action

'Commission calls for greater coherence in migration policies'

New York/Geneva 5 October 2005 - The Global Commission on International Migration, which presents its Report to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and UN member states today, says that the international community has failed to realize the full potential of international migration and has not risen to the many opportunities and challenges it presents. Greater coherence, cooperation and capacity are required for a more effective governance of migration, at national, regional and global levels.

In its report, the Commission provides a concise and yet wide-ranging analysis of key migration issues and stresses that migration and related policies must be based on shared objectives and a common vision. The Commission proposes a comprehensive, coherent and global action framework based on six broad principles for action and a number of related recommendations covering the role of migrants in a globalizing labour market, migration and development, irregular migration, migrants in society, the human rights of migrants, and the governance of migration.

The Commission's Report explains that the number of international migrants has increased from 75 million to some 200 million in the past 30 years, and that migrants are now to be found in every part of the world.

This expansion in the scale and scope of migration seems certain to continue for the foreseeable future and may well accelerate, due to the growing developmental, demographic and democratic disparities that exist between different regions of the world. Migration is driven by some powerful economic, social and political forces, and states must acknowledge this reality.

In essence, the six broad principles state that:

- *people should be able to migrate out of choice rather than necessity, in a safe and authorized manner and because their skills are valued and needed;*
- *the role of migrants in promoting economic growth, development and poverty reduction should be recognized and reinforced; migration must become an integral part of global development strategies;*
- *states, exercising their sovereign right to decide who enters their territory, should cooperate with each other in an effort to stem irregular migration, while fully respecting the rights of migrants and refugees and re-admitting those citizens who return to their home country;*
- *long-term and authorized migrants should be effectively integrated in the societies where they settle, so as to accommodate social diversity and foster social cohesion; migrants must be aware of their rights and respect their legal obligations;*
- *the human rights framework affecting international migrants should be implemented more effectively, so as to improve the protection and labour standards available to migrants;*
- *migration policies should be enhanced by improved coherence and strengthened capacity at the national level, by greater cooperation at the regional level, and more effective dialogue and consultation among governments and between international organizations.*

Some highlights of the Report

Migration and the economy

Migration makes a large but largely unrecognized contribution to the global economy, and the continued expansion of that economy is dependent on human mobility. In developing countries, the remittances provided by migrants living abroad amounts to some \$150 billion a year, three times the value of official development assistance. Certain sectors of the economy in many industrialized states have become highly dependent on migrant labour and would rapidly collapse if that labour were to be withdrawn.

Irregular migration

Irregular migration, especially human trafficking and migrant smuggling, has many negative consequences, not least for migrants themselves. Stemming irregular migration requires that states recognize their shared interest and responsibilities in this matter. In seeking appropriate responses to this situation, states must exercise their sovereign right to defend their borders, prevent unauthorized entry and protect the security and welfare of their citizens. But a purely restrictive approach to irregular migration is neither desirable nor feasible, and may jeopardize the rights of migrants and refugees.

Migrants in society

The report recognizes that some societies have become fearful of migrants, and that such fears have in certain instances been exacerbated by politicians and the media. The danger of this situation is that migrants will become marginalized and alienated, unable to fulfil their own potential or to maximize the contribution that they are able to make to their adopted country. Concerted efforts are required to ensure that migrants and other members of society are able to benefit from a mutual process of adaptation and integration, and this effort must combine the efforts of national and local authorities, civil society and the private sector.

An interconnected world

As the title of the Report suggests, we live in a world where states, societies and global policy issues are increasingly connected to each other. While more effective migration policies are required, such policies are unlikely to prove effective unless they are supported by complementary action in relation to other issues. The Report consequently underlines the need to ensure the full implementation of the commitments that states have made in the Millennium Declaration and Monterrey Consensus. It calls on the international community to use the Doha round of negotiations to maximize the welfare gains of the multilateral trading system, and to support regional initiatives such as the New African Partnership for African Development.

The Commission

The Global Commission on International Migration was established in 2003 and is composed of 19 independent eminent persons chosen for their international experience in migration and related issues. The Co-Chairs of the Commission are Jan O.Karlsson, Sweden's former Minister for Migration and Development and Dr Mamphela Ramphele, former Managing Director of the World Bank from South Africa. The Secretariat is located in Geneva, headed by Dr. Rolf K. Jenny from Switzerland.

A Core Group of States, led by Switzerland and Sweden, Brazil, Morocco and the Philippines, had established the Commission in December 2003, at the suggestion of the UN Secretary-General. The group, which at present includes 32 States, acted as an informal consultative body to the Commission. The Commission and Secretariat undertook broad ranging consultations with all concerned stakeholders, including five regional hearings, a series of thematic seminars and ran an extensive policy analysis programme.

For more on the Commission see www.gcim.org

Media enquiries to:

Tony Murdoch amurdoch@gcim.org
Cell Phone +41 79 200 8917

Jonathan Capehart jonathan.capehart@hillandknowlton.com
Cell Phone +1 (917) 859-1134