

SYNOPSIS

Migration in an interconnected world: Principles for Action

1. The world has been transformed by the process of globalization. States, societies, economies and cultures in different regions of the world are increasingly integrated and interdependent. New technologies enable the rapid transfer of capital, goods, services, information and ideas from one country and continent to another. The global economy is expanding, providing millions of women, men and their children with better opportunities in life. But the impact of globalization has been uneven, and growing disparities are to be found in the standard of living and level of human security available to people in different parts of the world.

2. An important result of these rising differentials has been an increase in the scale and scope of international migration. According to the UN's Population Division, there are now almost 200 million international migrants, a number equivalent to the fifth most populous country on earth, Brazil. It is more than double the figure recorded in 1980, only 25 years ago. Migrants are now to be found in every part of the globe, some of them moving within their own region and others travelling from one part of the world to another. Almost half of all migrants are women, a growing proportion of whom are migrating independently.

Maximizing positive outcomes

3. During the past two years, the Global Commission on International Migration has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the way states and other stakeholders are addressing the issue of international migration. The Commis-

sion has travelled to many parts of the world and met hundreds of people who have an interest and involvement in this issue. It has heard about the lives, the achievements and the hardships of the world's 200 million migrants, as well as the complex issues that confront states and societies when people move in significant numbers from one country to another.

4. In the course of its work, the Commission has listened a lot, learned a great deal and deliberated at length on the evidence it has collected. The Commission has witnessed many examples of good practice in the domain of international migration, both by states and by other stakeholders, including international organizations, the private sector and civil society. It has also heard of many success stories: migrants who have gained new skills while working abroad and who have returned to their own country and established successful businesses; asylum seekers who have escaped from persecution in their own country and who have been able to find safety in another state; migrant communities that have successfully integrated in their adopted country while maintaining their culture and links with their country of origin, and governments and international organizations that have worked closely together in order to protect the victims of human trafficking.

5. The Commission has also encountered the contradictions, constraints and challenges of current migration policies. In some parts of the world, negative attitudes towards migrants persist, despite the fact that entire sectors of the economy depend on foreign labour. States which

have ratified the core UN human rights treaties are not implementing the provisions of those legal instruments, with the result that many migrants continue to experience exploitation, discrimination and abuse. Some governments admit considerable numbers of migrants to their country, but fail to invest in the integration process that is required for those people to realize their potential and make a positive contribution to their new society. At the same time, certain migrants do not respect the law of their host countries, and, as recent events have shown, can also pose a serious threat to public security. Countries that are active supporters of the health and education objectives included in the UN's Millennium Development Goals are nevertheless recruiting personnel from hospitals and schools in low-income countries that are unable to offer basic health and education services to their own citizens.

Capacity, coherence and cooperation

6. The Commission concludes that the international community has failed to capitalize on the opportunities and to meet the challenges associated with international migration. New approaches are required to correct this situation.

7. First, the Commission was struck by the extent to which states and other stakeholders, especially but not exclusively those in less prosperous regions of the world, lack the capacity required to formulate and implement effective migration policies. Officials dealing with the issues of migration, development, the labour market, education and health need access to more timely, accurate and detailed migration data. They require more extensive professional training, a better knowledge of migration issues, institutions and law, as well as an understanding of the

way in which migration and other policies impact on each other. They need resources to monitor and evaluate the impact of their policies and programmes. And they should be able to draw more systematically upon the experience and expertise gained by other countries.

8. A second issue that must be addressed is that of coherence. In meetings with the Commission, government representatives from every part of the world have openly acknowledged the difficulties they encounter in formulating coherent migration policies. In many instances, they are confronted with competing priorities and short-term demands from different ministries within government and from different constituencies outside government. Important decisions taken in areas such as development, trade, aid and the labour market are rarely considered in terms of their impact on international migration.

9. Wider consultation is also required at the national level. While governments remain the primary actors in the domain of international migration, many other stakeholders, including local authorities, the private sector, NGOs, civil society institutions and migrant associations, are well placed to contribute to the formulation and implementation of migration policy. The engagement of these actors is especially needed to ensure that migration policies and programmes are culturally sensitive, take account of local specificities and recognize the importance of gender issues.

10. The establishment of a coherent approach to migration requires states to demonstrate a greater respect for the provisions of the legal and normative framework affecting international migrants, especially the seven core UN human rights treaties. In the course of its consultations, the Commission observed that on too many

occasions, there is a significant gap between the legal commitments that states freely enter into when they ratify such treaties, and the extent to which they implement those commitments in practice. While this problem is related to the question of capacity, it is also often an issue of political will.

11. Third, the Commission underlines the paramount importance of interstate consultation and cooperation as a basis for the formulation and implementation of migration policies. Such policies have traditionally been regarded as the preserve of sovereign states, and the Commission is encouraged by the growing recognition that migration is an inherently transnational issue, requiring cooperation between states at the sub-regional, regional and global levels.

12. Finally, there is a need for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the different multilateral international organizations working in the field of migration. In meetings convened by the Commission, these organizations have acknowledged that they often work in a disconnected manner. While this situation derives in part from the competitive spirit that characterizes inter-agency relations, it is also a result of a lack of coherence at national level within those states that govern and fund these organizations. While steps have been taken to improve cooperation and coordination between the agencies concerned, more must be done to formulate and achieve shared objectives.

Principles for action

13. The Commission concludes that if the benefits of international migration are to be maximized and its adverse consequences minimized, then migration policies should be based on shared objectives and have a common vision. At the same time, the Commission recognizes that there cannot be a single model for action by states and other stakeholders, and acknowledges that there is currently no consensus concerning the introduction of a formal global governance system for international migration, involving the establishment of new international legal instruments or agencies.

14. The Commission concludes that migration policies at the national, regional and global level should be guided by the set of principles for action that are presented below, and which are supported by the conclusions and recommendations set out in the six chapters that follow.

15. These principles have a number of uses. They can be employed by states and the international community as a guide to the formulation of comprehensive, coherent and effective migration policies. They can also be used to monitor and evaluate the impact of those policies. And they provide a framework for action that states and other stakeholders can use in their efforts to capitalize on the opportunities presented by international migration.

Principles for Action

I. Migrating out of choice: Migration and the global economy

Women, men and children should be able to realize their potential, meet their needs, exercise their human rights and fulfil their aspirations in their country of origin, and hence migrate out of choice, rather than necessity. Those women and men who migrate and enter the global labour market should be able to do so in a safe and authorized manner, and because they and their skills are valued and needed by the states and societies that receive them.

II. Reinforcing economic and developmental impact

The role that migrants play in promoting development and poverty reduction in countries of origin, as well as the contribution they make towards the prosperity of destination countries, should be recognized and reinforced. International migration should become an integral part of national, regional and global strategies for economic growth, in both the developing and developed world.

III. Addressing irregular migration

States, exercising their sovereign right to determine who enters and remains on their territory, should fulfil their responsibility and obligation to protect the rights of migrants and to re-admit those citizens who wish or who are obliged to return to their country of origin. In stemming irregular migration, states should actively cooperate with one another, ensuring that their efforts do not jeopardize human rights, including the right of refugees to seek asylum. Governments should consult with employers, trade unions and civil society on this issue.

IV. Strengthening social cohesion through integration

Migrants and citizens of destination countries should respect their legal obligations and benefit from a mutual process of adaptation and integration that accommodates cultural diversity and fosters social cohesion. The integration process should be actively supported by local and national authorities, employers and members of civil society, and should be based on a commitment to non-discrimination and gender equity. It should also be informed by an objective public, political and media discourse on international migration.

V. Protecting the rights of migrants

The legal and normative framework affecting international migrants should be strengthened, implemented more effectively and applied in a non-discriminatory manner, so as to protect the human rights and labour standards that should be enjoyed by all migrant women and men. Respecting the provisions of this legal and normative framework, states and other stakeholders must address migration issues in a more consistent and coherent manner.

VI. Enhancing governance: Coherence, capacity and cooperation

The governance of international migration should be enhanced by improved coherence and strengthened capacity at the national level; greater consultation and cooperation between states at the regional level, and more effective dialogue and cooperation among governments and between international organizations at the global level. Such efforts must be based on a better appreciation of the close linkages that exist between international migration and development and other key policy issues, including trade, aid, state security, human security and human rights.