

REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP TO THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: AN ESCAP PERSPECTIVE

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In recognition of the growing importance of international migration issues and the need to better understand its relationship to development, the General Assembly convened a High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in New York from 14 to 15 September 2006. This note summarizes: (1) the activities that ESCAP carried out to prepare for the High-level Dialogue; (2) its participation in the event; and (3) the follow-up actions to the High-level Dialogue that ESCAP would pursue.

A. ACTIVITIES OF ESCAP IN ADVANCE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

In its resolution 60/227 of 23 December 2005, the General Assembly invited the Regional Commissions of the United Nations to contribute to and coordinate dialogue at the regional level in preparation for the High-level Dialogue, and also invited appropriate regional consultative processes and other major initiatives undertaken by Member States in the field of international migration.

Complementing international deliberations, ESCAP has conducted several activities dealing with international migration, taking into account the regional specificities of migration issues. These activities were undertaken as part of its programme of work in the area of emerging social issues and in anticipation of the High-level Dialogue, with a view to contributing to regional preparations.

In August 2005, ESCAP, jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, convened the Regional Seminar on the Social Implications of International Migration. Participants in the Seminar agreed that migration should be viewed as an important, positive, contributing factor to development and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Regional Seminar adopted recommendations that called for, inter alia, the establishment of a regional consultative process on labour migration and development, coherence of national migration policies with broader development goals and systematic regional studies and research on international migration and development.

In September 2005, in recognition of the growing importance of regional cooperation in managing international migration, ESCAP, together with 14 other United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations working in the Asia and the Pacific Region established the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration, including Human Trafficking, which is aimed at contributing to a better understanding of and developing a common approach to the migration phenomena in the region by strengthening the mechanism of coordination and information sharing among concerned agencies. The Group is currently co-chaired by ESCAP and the IOM Regional Office in Bangkok.

The Committee on Emerging Social Issues (CESI) of ESCAP, at its second session held in Bangkok in November 2005, considered the issue of international migration under the agenda item on socially vulnerable groups. The secretariat of the Committee prepared and presented a report, examining the nexus between international migration and development and, in particular, the social implications of migration in the region. The Committee invited Mr. Rolf Jenny, Executive Director of the Global Commission for International Migration (GCIM) to present the report of the GCIM

Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action which became an official input to the High-level Dialogue.

During the sixty-second session of the Commission, held in Jakarta in April 2006, ESCAP, jointly with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment of Indonesia, organized a side event entitled "Gender Dimensions of International Migration and Regional Preparations for the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development". The event provided an opportunity for discussing various aspects of migration, and reaffirmed the relevance of a regional approach in enhancing the developmental impacts of migration. The positive and negative experiences of women in the migration process, as well as strategic interventions to reduce gender-based rights violations, received significant attention. The perspectives of both origin and destination countries, as well as those of IOM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), was discussed.

In June 2006, ESCAP participated in the International Symposium on International Migration and Development, held in Turin, Italy. The Symposium was convened within the framework of the preparatory work of the United Nations Secretariat for the High-level Dialogue. The Symposium debated, at the substantive level, key issues which Governments, international organizations and civil society face in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by international migration. During the Symposium, ESCAP chaired a session on international migration in the Asia and the Pacific region, focusing on the key migration issues and challenges in the region, the role of remittances in contributing to development, and regional policy developments.

B. PARTICIPATION OF ESCAP IN THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

The Executive Secretary of ESCAP attended the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and participated in one of the round tables on "The effects of international migration on economic and social development".

In addition, ESCAP participated in two side events focusing on regional perspectives of international migration and development, namely, (a) a round table, entitled "Regional Dimension of International Migration and Development", co-hosted by the Regional Commissions New York Office and IOM, on 13 September 2006; and (b) a panel discussion, entitled "Seizing the Opportunities that International Migration Brings: A Regional Perspective", organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Regional Commissions New York Office on 15 September 2006. On both occasions, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP presented the Asian and Pacific perspectives.

The side events helped to elucidate the regional specificities of migration and their different developmental impacts. Hence, while international migration can be characterized by its global dimension, the regional perspectives of migration also warrant attention. For instance, intraregional migratory patterns, some of which are long-standing while others more recent, vary from region to region. Panelists frequently stressed the need for the sound management of international migration, which required greater collaboration between countries and regions. To this end, the value of the regional consultative processes was reaffirmed.

C. REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP TO THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

ESCAP has recognized that international migration is one of the key emerging issues which will challenge the region for the coming decades, economically, socially and culturally. Thus, following the deliberations at the High-level Dialogue, ESCAP will continue to emphasize the migration issue in planning its future activities and programmes.

In November 2006, ESCAP organized a regional seminar on “Strengthening the Capacity of National Machineries for Gender Equality to Shape Migration Policies and Protect Migrant Women”. The seminar enabled participants to better understand the gender dimensions of both regular and irregular migration, international and internal migration, including migration triggered by conflicts. In the same month, an Expert Group Meeting on ESCAP’s Regional Census Programme identified international migration statistics as one of the priority areas for enhanced collaboration in preparing the 2010 round of population censuses. The meeting focused on the measurement, dissemination, data sharing on international migration statistics. In May 2007, the ESCAP’s Special Body Meeting on Least Developed and Land Locked Developing Countries will discuss the issue of international migration and its impacts on development in those countries.

ESCAP will also work to strengthen mechanisms of collaboration among concerned institutions and synergize their activities at the regional level, primarily through the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration, including Human Trafficking. Members of the Group decided to jointly publish a report on international migration in Eastern and South-eastern Asia in 2007, with a view to producing comprehensive reference material, enhancing understanding of migration issues, identifying knowledge gaps and generating policy recommendations.

ESCAP will convene the third session of the Committee for Emerging Social Issues in Bangkok, Thailand, from 12 to 14 December 2006. The regional follow-up to the High-level Dialogue will be one of the agenda items that this intergovernmental body will consider.

ESCAP, based on its decades-long experience of leading the development of economic and social policies in the region, will continue to strengthen its policy-oriented analyses of key trends and emerging issues on international migration in the Asia-Pacific region. It will also provide support, upon the request of members and associate members of ESCAP, in capacity-building through, inter alia, organizing training workshop and disseminating best practices on migration management.

ESCAP is well suited to promote the exchange of information, experiences, best practices and policies among its members and associate members in the region on the issue of migration. ESCAP will seek, in collaboration with relevant international and intergovernmental organizations, to provide a forum for regional dialogue to facilitate the discussion on the multidimensional aspects of international migration and its linkages with development. ESCAP is planning to organize a regional meeting on international migration and development during the first half of 2007, so that the outcome of the meeting can contribute to the first meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, scheduled to be held in Belgium in July 2007.

