

COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Population Division

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**OBSERVATORY OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION
IN THE ARAB REGION (OIMAR) ***

League of Arab States **

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OBSERVATORY OF
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION
IN THE ARAB REGION

= OIMAR =

PRU, the Population Research Unit of the League of Arab States, is a unit enjoying regional capacities that was established jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 1984. Its mission is to face population issues relevant to the overall development of the region. In order to fulfill this mission, PRU follows a strategy of supervising projects and promoting research related to population issues, either in theory or applied to the Arab region. The direct objectives stemming from this strategy are mainly:

- i. To broaden population and development knowledge and support and encourage research and specialized databases.
- ii. To enhance the integration of population issues and concerns, mainly RH/FP and gender sensitive issues in Arab regional and national sectorial development policies and strategies.
- iii. To strengthen the mechanism within national and regional institutions for the follow-up and monitoring of the implementation for the Action Programs emanating from the 1994 ICPD and other UN global conferences as well as recommendations of the Arab regional ICPD+5 (Beirut 1998).

OIMAR is a project started in 2000 and is being implemented by the PRU, in cooperation with UNDP, with the aim of exploring, crystallizing, and reinforcing, the role of international migration in improving standard of living,

and specifically its role in poverty alleviation; more specifically, the OIMAR has the following objectives:

- To monitor international migration processes in the Arab region and support and encourage research in the region for better understanding of the processes and roles of migration in the new context of globalization
- Acting as a regional mechanism of dialogue and exchange of knowledge and experience and for creating common understanding and consensus on regional strategies
- Crystallizing policy alternatives to optimize migration returns in terms of regional economic competitiveness and poverty alleviation
- Advocating and empowering national capacities for more efficient migration policies linked to sustainable development issues

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

First: Creation of a regional and international network on international migration of governmental, academic, and non-governmental organizations inside and outside the Arab world, as well as a multitude of independent research centers sharing the same interests.

In this regard, contacts were established with mostly governmental instances in Arab countries to establish the network. 13 Countries have determined their coordinating parties. The network will be launched during the regional conference planned for October 2002. Similar efforts with Arab and international non-governmental bodies are in place.

Second: Creating and regularly updating of a qualitative and quantitative regional database including:

- Statistical database
- Dynamic database on national policies
- Bibliographic database
- Institutional database
- Experts database

Many activities were accomplished for this end, especially:

- Collecting data on migration policies of 13 countries in the region, based on a questionnaire prepared by PRU in three versions (for: a. sending countries; b. hosting countries; c. sending and hosting countries) – attached themes covered by the questionnaires
- A dynamic database was created for the results of this survey and was published on the Internet
- A multitude of other data on other dimensions of the database were collected, entered and diffused

Third: Creating and regularly updating a specific web site www.poplas.org , covering the following items:

- Introduction of the Observatory
- Dynamic database on national policies of international migration
- Abstracts of recent studies on migration
- Regional Conference on the “International Migration of Arab Labor”

- Arab Regional Biannual Report on International Migration
- OIMAR Forum (page for open discussion)
- Regional and International Events

Fourth: The publication of a biannual Regional Report on Migration, aiming to:

- Present an overview of the more recent developments of international migration trends, mechanisms, and policy implications
- Present in more details one priority dimension of regional migration
- Present the results of the most recent surveys of relevance in Arab countries
- Introducing the most recent publications, activities, and policies relevant to international migration on both the Arab and international levels

The first issue of the biannual “Arab Report on International Migration” is now being revised and evaluated by the scientific committee.

Fifth: Organizing regular meetings for exchange and dialogue and to create consensus and commitment on policy alternatives:

In cooperation with IOM and other international organizations, the first OIMAR conference will be held in Cairo in the period 3-5 February 2003. The main themes debated are:

- 1) International migration and the challenges of globalization for the Arab region.
- 2) Arab migration patterns:
 - a- Intra-regional migration
 - b- External migration
- 3) Migration patterns in the Arab sub-regions:
 - a- Maghreb
 - b- Mashreq
 - c- Gulf
- 4) Management and regulation of human resources mobility in the Arab region
- 5) The role of the Arab Diaspora I: Poverty Alleviation
- 6) The role of the Arab Diaspora II: Dialogue of Civilizations
- 7) Agenda for the Arab Observatory for International Migration

Sixth: Other On-going Activities:

- The organization of sub-regional (North Africa, Middle-East, and Gulf) workshops for national planners of international migration policies focusing on mechanisms for utilizing migration returns for poverty alleviation
- Collection, summarization, and translation of recent relevant literature and publishing it on the web site to reinforce Arab research of these issues
- Collection of the most important Arabic and international references on skilled migration and brain drain, and preparing it for the publication of a specialized issue of “Population Abstracts”, in addition to a multitude of abstracts on international migration in general that can be used to publish a general issue about migration issues in general (350 Arabic and English-language abstracts have been selected for the specialized issue).

THEMES COVERED BY THE

QUESTIONNAIRE

ON

MIGRATION POLICIES

With the aim of collecting data on migration policies adopted by Arab countries, the PRU prepared three kinds of questionnaires, according to each country's case (sending countries, hosting countries, and countries that are both sending and hosting), including the following themes:

I. General Aspects of the national policy relevant to international migration:

1. Does the country have a publicized policy dealing with migrants?
 - i. The main goals of this policy
 - ii. The country's strategy in executing this policy and supervising it
 - iii. Instances supervising the execution of this policy
 - iv. The work plan established to execute this policy, if any (if unavailable, what are the main obstacles against establishing it?)
2. The main elements of this plan
3. Is this policy evaluated regularly?

II. Laws and Legislation:

1. Laws and legislation related to international emigration of labor
2. Laws and legislation related to migrant transfers and their investments
3. Laws and legislation related to the conditions of the emigrant and his/her family
4. Emigrant's conditions in host countries
5. Emigration of the emigrant's family members
6. Members of the emigrant's family in the country of origin
7. Laws and legislation related to emigrants returning finally
8. Laws and legislation related to illegal migration

III. Databases on International Migration:

1. Does the country have a database on international migration?
 - i. Sources of the database
 - ii. Contents of the database
 - iii. If a database is not available, did the country undertake steps to establish one?

IV. Studies undertaken about international migration during the 90's:

1. Title of the study
2. Dates of accomplishment and publishing

3. Cooperating instances

V. The State's Vision on Labor Migration:

1. What is the impact of migration?
 - i. Main advantages
 - ii. Main disadvantages
2. The main problems related to migration?

VI. Future Orientation:

1. Current and forecasted magnitude of migration
2. Vision of Arab-Arab migration and within sub-regions
3. Database on policies and dimensions of international migration in the Arab region



Regional Conference on ARAB LABOR MIGRATION

PROJECT SUMMARY

The League of Arab States (LAS) concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in December 2000. In this framework, the Population Research Unit of the League of Arab States (PRU – LAS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM - Cairo) initiated the joint organization of a regional conference that would address the need for renewed information exchange and policy discussion on Arab migration issues, in the context of evolving international relations influenced by the globalization process.

The conference, entitled “Arab Migration in a Globalized World”, is to be held in Cairo at the end of October 2002, at the League of Arab States.

The Conference aims to provide a forum for Arab decision-makers and international experts to discuss their priorities towards the formulation of national policies with regard to migration issues in general and geographical mobility of human resources in particular, at the national as well as the regional level. Participants from the region will be invited to contribute to a dialogue and debate for improved understanding, consensus, and commitment on Arab migration processes and their policy implications. It is estimated that seven months will be required for the preparation of the Conference.

1.0 Background and Justification

Background

In 1992, IOM and the Egyptian Government jointly organized in Cairo a “Seminar on International Migration in Egypt and the Arab World”. In 1996, IOM and UNFPA organized in Geneva a “Policy Workshop on Emigration Dynamics in the Arab Region”. The conference’s final recommendations stated that “Regional policy workshops with similar objectives should be held on a regular basis (...) on topics and issues identified as priority by Arab governments”.

In cooperation with UNDP, LAS-PRU has established in 2000 an Arab Observatory of International Migration aiming to:

In December of the same year, IOM concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with the League of Arab States. The MOU - highlighting “...the importance of coordinating the methods of mutual cooperation in order to secure better life circumstances for migrants...” - establishes that “... both parties may undertake to carry out joint cooperation projects with a view of achieving their common objectives”.

The League of Arab States and IOM propose to renew and further these initiatives after years of scarce discussions on Arab migration issues and in the face of challenges posed by globalization processes.

The Issue

Migratory flows from the Arab region are characterized by two distinctive patterns: a traditional, well established intra-regional migration pattern and a set of more dispersed extra-regional migration flows. Within the region, the complementarity of supply and demand of migrant Arab labors is mostly perceived as a mutually beneficial mechanism. While intra-regional migrants expect to return home after a certain period of time, migrants leaving the region expect to stay permanently in hosting countries. The intra-regional pattern affecting preponderantly low and medium level skills, is characterized by strong links of the migrants with their countries of origin (including through steady flow of remittances). The extra-regional migration patterns concern primarily the highly skilled; and the flow of remittances back home is comparatively more limited. The challenge posed by these phenomena calls for the identification of means to further develop existing mechanisms and to capitalize on external and intra-regional mobility.

Furthermore, certain elements and implications of globalization, such as the transnationalization of firms and the internationalization of higher education, enhance all forms of labor mobility, including Arab mobility, whether professional, sectorial, or geographical, especially when linked with the advance in technological innovation in fields such as communication, transportation, and information systems. The growing mobility of labor in response to the international need for rare or specific skills has developed vast trans-regional ramifications. Added challenges are therefore posed to the Arab region in a globalizing environment at a stage where the region has not developed sufficiently its own firm and clear *modus operandi* as a labor market.

An additional dilemma faced by some countries in the region springs from the fact that sustained transfer of skills, at regional or extra-regional level, takes place in spite of the pressing need within those same countries for skills that could contribute to national development schemes, and notwithstanding the heavy investments these countries have placed in the education of their emigrant citizens. Since the economies of many of the migrant sending Arab countries rely on migrant remittances, a degree of contradiction is thus built in; specifically, development policies may place emphasis on strategic investments in education with a view to better equipping the domestic labor force, while policies encouraging the international migration of own nationals subsequently tend to contribute to loss of those skills at home.

These issues are still in need of further discussion, and questions related to the mobility of human resources are rarely debated as national development priorities. The Conference aims at providing a forum for Arab decision-makers to clarify their priorities towards the formulation of more comprehensive and integrated national policies in regard to migration issues in general and mobility of human resources in particular.

Target Groups

Arab decision-makers and international experts from the region will be invited to contribute to information exchange and policy discussion.

The Conference will benefit governments from the region by engaging them in a dialogue on migration matters of common concern. It is expected that the outcome and recommendations of the Conference will also benefit governments outside the region interested in Arab migration issues.

The Conference aims to draw on the expertise and examples of best practices provided by the following groups of participants:

- Decision-makers in Arab countries who are involved in international migration issues and particularly in the management and regulation of human resources mobility
- Arab and international experts in the fields of international migration
- Representatives and active members of formal and informal institutions dealing with the Arab Diaspora
- Representatives of Arab and international organizations

1.1 Project Description

The three day conference will be prepared and organized over a period of seven months. Activities will include the preparation of the background documents and the carrying out of the Arab Regional Conference.

Four main areas have been identified as core issues of Arab international migration to be addressed by the Conference:

- I. Explore, in the new context of globalization and unprecedented openness of labor and commercial markets as well as freedom of movement for individuals and information, the mechanisms related to the process of migration of Arab human resources. Review recent developments in Arab migration trends, including an overview of the magnitude of the fluxes and characteristics of the populations involved.
- II. Elaborate mechanisms to optimize Arab human resources mobility, and provide the instruments to advance the potential of Arab human resources at national, sub-regional and regional level. The challenge lies in enabling Arab migrants to actively participate in the development of the economy and society of both countries of emigration as well as of those of origin.
- III. Highlight the role of the Observatory of International Migration in the Arab Region (OIMAR) - Population Research Unit, League of Arab States (PRU-LAS) - as one of the major regional instruments for the exchange of knowledge, fostering of dialogue and understanding as well as provision of support to decision-makers in the Arab region. The objective of OIMAR is to maximize the positive effects of Arab migration at national, sub-regional, and regional level.
- IV. Identify mechanisms to activate the Arab Diaspora in the inter-cultural dialogue and in the introduction and diffusion of the cultural concept of “complementarity of civilizations”.

Institutional Framework

IOM and the LAS will participate in the preparation and organization of the activities related to the Conference and will share jointly agreed upon tasks as outlined below:

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee will be formed and will include the following members:

1. The Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League, Directorate General for Social and Cultural Affairs
2. The Director of the Population Research Unit of the League of Arab States
3. The IOM Chief of Mission, MRF Cairo.

The Steering Committee will:

- أ) Provide policy guidance
- ب) Formulate the broad lines of action for the Conference;
- ج) Advise on protocol aspects;
- د) Supervise the status and advancement of the Conference preparation;
- هـ) Supervise content of media material;
- و) Approve financial commitments;
- ز) Approve content of Conference final report.

Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee will be composed of two IOM representatives, two PRU-LAS representatives and one external consultant with strong expertise in the field of migration. The Scientific Committee will meet twice a month and more frequently during the month of October.

The Scientific Committee will have the following responsibilities :

- ا) Review and finalize the joint IOM/LAS Conference Concept paper ;
- ب) Identify subjects for the research papers that will provide the framework for discussion during the Conference ;
- ج) Select international experts to produce the research papers ;
- د) Prepare a call for research papers and contributions;
- هـ) Receive and evaluate research papers and contributions;
- و) Finalize Conference working documents;
- ز) Prepare Conference final report;
- ح) Supervise content of Conference publications;
- ط) Coordinate media relations (in coordination with LAS Public Relations Unit and under the supervision of the Steering Committee).

Service Support Team

PRU-LAS will be responsible for administrative and other support tasks through a Service Support Team. The number of staff that will compose the team will increase from 4 to 7 members according to the need as the target date set for the Conference approaches.

The Service Support Team will have the following responsibilities:

- ا) Draft Conference correspondence;
- ب) Contact selected international experts and following up with deadlines for submission of contributions;
- ج) Send invitations;
- د) Distribute advertising material and Conference publications;
- هـ) Arrange travel and accommodation;
- و) Conference logistics and preparation of conference hall;
- ز) Arrange for translation of documents and simultaneous translation.

2.0 Overall Objective

The Conference aims to contribute to the on-going dialogue on Arab international migration.

3.0 Project Purposes

- i) **To explore the current dynamics of Arab human resources migration**, and the current and potential effects of globalization; including the description of

recent developments in the magnitude, fluxes, and characteristics of the populations in question.

- ii) **To explore possible mechanisms to rationalize Arab human resources migration** on national, regional, and sub-regional levels, in order to fulfill its potential in developing the Arab region in the new context of globalization with its opportunities and challenges, stemming from its implications of openness of borders and freedom of movement.

4.0 Expected achievements

The joint IOM-LAS Conference aims to:

Advance migration research focusing on mechanisms that would capitalize on Arab human resources mobility.

Identify modalities to improve the efficiency of the Arab labor market and to achieve the best use of existing and potential Arab migration.

Encourage discussion among Arab decision-makers on requirements for an integrated labor market and regional cooperation on migration issues.

Define the economic, political, social, and other prerequisites of such a market and explore the potential role of the League of Arab States, IOM, and other Organizations as well as a possible need for a new institutional framework.

Reinforce ties with the Arab Diaspora; explore historical links between Maghreb, Mashrek, and GCC countries with their respective diasporas to the benefit of the region.

Gauge the impact that a newly enforced Arab identity within an integrated labor market would have on existing ties with other regions.

Examine methods to activate the Arab Diaspora in improving inter-Arab and Arab-West dialogue in a framework of interactivity and complementarity.

5.0 Activities

Organize the logistics of the conference.

Invite and commit participation of governments from the region at the appropriate level.

Stimulate the production and dissemination of research papers that will provide the framework for discussion. The following themes have been identified as bearing relevance for the goals of the Conference:

- 1) International migration and the challenges of globalization for the Arab region.
- 2) Arab migration patterns:

- a- Intra-regional migration
 - b- External migration
- 3) Migration patterns in the Arab sub-regions:
 - a- Maghreb
 - b- Mashreq
 - c- Gulf
- 4) Management and regulation of human resources mobility in the Arab region.
- 5) The role of the Arab Diaspora.
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