

**TENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division  
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**THE INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS PROJECT: POLICY-RESEARCH ACTIVITIES  
IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION.  
A PAPER CONTRIBUTED TO THE UNITED NATIONS TENTH CO-ORDINATION  
MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION<sup>1</sup>**

*International Metropolis Project<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

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## A. METROPOLIS BASICS

Metropolis is the world's largest network of researchers, government officials, international organizations, and civil society organizations in the field of migration and population diversity. Our aim is to enhance policy through empirical research and thereby to support societies that are managing the many effects of migration. Metropolis is an apolitical organization whose work is rooted in a realistic understanding of the policy process and which seeks to create useful co-operation amongst research, policy, and civil society. Although we do not advocate specific views about how any given society ought to manage migration and diversity, we do believe that no society will succeed if it attempts simply to eradicate migration and the diversity of its population. Our basic position is that successful societies will be those that explicitly manage these phenomena for the mutual benefit of their citizens, their migrants, and their minority communities.

Metropolis puts a premium on empirical research and analysis that is informed by an understanding of the actual process of making policy and implementing it through concrete action. We understand the complexities, intellectual and political, of developing migration and diversity policy and of gaining public support for it, whether locally or nationally.

Metropolis began as a small network in Canada, the United States, and a few western European countries. In 2012, the network includes people from most of Europe, all of North America and Australasia, much of South and East Asia, South Africa, Israel, and Argentina. Its recent initiatives, *Metropolis Asia* and *Metropolis North America*, have deepened its network and enhanced its understanding of global migration phenomena. These initiatives have also allowed us to work more intensively with developing countries, something that we hope to do more of in the future. Metropolis is beginning to engage in discussions with African states, both those that border the Mediterranean and those south of the Sahara, and will work to establish stronger relations with Latin America.

## B. THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE METROPOLIS SECRETARIAT

2012 marks a year of significant transition for the International Metropolis Project. The Government of Canada (through Citizenship and Immigration Canada) has housed and funded the Metropolis Secretariat since 1996. Beginning in April 2012, this will no longer be the case as a pre-planned independence of the Secretariat from government begins. The Secretariat is expected to become self-sustaining financially and to evolve into an independent policy-research institute. This marks not only a shift in its status from government body to independent think tank but will also bring with it a broadening of its mandate. Throughout its history, the Secretariat has been responsible to sustain the Metropolis Project overall. Much of its mandate has been to bring research on migration and diversity to the attention of government officials and others who could benefit. This knowledge transfer role has been conducted through standard print publications, the website, and conferences, seminars, and roundtables. In the future, however, the Secretariat will carry out research and policy analysis of its own, offer policy advice and recommendations, and assess best practices for managing migration and diversity. It will maintain strong relations with academic researchers, government bodies, and NGOs in the field around the globe, retain its supporting role of the Metropolis International Steering Committee and continue the expansion of the international network, the annual conferences, and the provision of analysis and advice throughout the world. It will aim to build co-operation amongst researchers in both developed and developing countries and between researchers and policy officials throughout the world.

The Metropolis International Secretariat operates through three arms, one located in Ottawa, Canada, one in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and the newest in Asia with functions distributed across organizations in the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Philippines, and the Peoples' Republic of China. Each acts on behalf of the Project as a whole, promoting and coordinating activities across the partnership and acting on behalf of the International Steering Committee to manage ongoing activities and to initiate new actions. The Ottawa-based Secretariat assumes the lead for establishing the Project's overall strategic directions and for developing its communications and management infrastructure. The other two are primarily responsible for activities within Europe and Asia respectively. The Secretariat is accountable to the co-chairs of the International Steering Committee and, through them, to the Committee itself.

### C. SOME THEMATIC AREAS TO BE EXPLORED BY METROPOLIS IN THE FUTURE

Planet-wide demographic shifts contemporaneous with very significant shifts in the loci of economic and geo-political power will affect migration, the directions of its flows, the manner in which people move, and the duration of their relocations. Metropolis has begun to look at some of these phenomena and will continue to do so with the hope of informing not only national administrations but of assisting the international community in its quest to have migration managed for the benefit of migrants and the receiving and sending societies alike. Some of Metropolis' interests are:

- The shift in the globe's population centres from the developed to the developing world will eventually bring with it a shift in the locus of the world's GDP and geo-political power. As developed societies age and watch their populations and labour forces shrink or stagnate, they will be motivated to increase immigration levels, accelerating the burgeoning international competition for talent. This competition will expand well beyond the developed countries as some of the world's most rapidly developing regions begin to attract back their émigrés and to recruit international migrants of their own.
- Some developing regions with high fertility will experience difficulty in employing their young people. With a limited supply of entry visas in societies with apparent employment opportunities, it is possible that irregular means of migration will increase, and this will pose a problem for the receiving societies and the international community neither of which is now able to cope with existing irregular migration in an effective and humane fashion.
- Deepening transnationalism and the multiple migration trajectories that manifest it will challenge government integration and citizenship policy thinking. Most citizenship and integration policies remain premised on an outmoded concept of migration as a one-way permanent movement, and they may regard transnationalism and dual or multiple citizenship as a threat to integration, social cohesion, and even national security.
- Transnationalism and multiple migration have long been recognized as contributing to economic and social development in the homeland. Metropolis will want to look at how the oft-noted benefits of remittance and technology transfer will interact with the growing pace of economic development in such regions as Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- Migration has been predominantly treated as an issue of domestic policy and only rarely as foreign policy. The ambitions of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and its predecessors have been hindered by the domestic pre-occupations of participating countries. Metropolis will explore how the discussion could benefit were international migration seen to a greater extent as a matter of foreign policy.

## **D. RECENT AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

### 1. 16<sup>th</sup> International Metropolis Conference, Ponta Delgada, The Azores, September 2011

This conference was premised on the idea that a better understanding of how modern migration and integration take place will help governments worried about migration resist the urge to close ranks in the interests of national self-protection, acts that in the long run may well prove to be self-defeating. Especially with today's confluence of ageing Western societies experiencing demographic and economic stagnation, rising economies and powers in the rapidly developing countries of the world, and growing numbers of well-educated people in countries whose economies are not yet able to employ them, we need to emphasize the advantages of societies that are open to trade in goods, services, and ideas, and to the movement of people. We will all be better off in open than in closed societies. But this openness, especially in countries experiencing economic and even geo-political inertia, requires political courage and courage amongst the citizenry, requires confidence in a society's fundamental values and its ability to retain them even when open to the world's influences, requires confidence in the future. Governments must lead responsibly and with credibility in opening their societies and economies to the world, especially when their electorates are worried. More is at stake than immediate political fortunes. They must earn the trust of their citizens to take difficult and what might even appear to be counterintuitive decisions about migration when their economies are lagging. Our hope at Metropolis is that the information that our conferences offer, the exchanges of views and experiences amongst the people of our countries, will help to bolster this confidence and allow governments to take decisions, some of them difficult, that will serve their people well into the future.

The main themes of the conference were:

- globalization and migration in the south
- ageing and migration
- migration in the context of islands
- international mobility in integrated economic spaces
- the effects of large-scale emigration on homelands
- living in multicultural cities: interethnic relations and daily life
- fostering transnational identities through internet and social networking web sites
- maintaining relations within the diasporas

Migration professionals from over 70 countries were in attendance.

### 2. 17<sup>th</sup> International Metropolis Conference, October 31 – November 4, Beijing, China

For the first time in our history, the International Metropolis Conference will be held in Asia, and this event will consolidate our initiative to establish a network of researchers and officials in this region of the world. From October 31 to November 4, 2012, Beijing will play host to the 17<sup>th</sup> International Metropolis Conference under the theme *Migration, Cultural Diversity, and Urban Development*. Organized in partnership with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, this global

conference will offer insights into the most dynamic migration region in the world today as well as offering high-level commentary on some of the world's most pressing migration issues.

China itself embodies an extraordinary experience with both internal and international migration. Chinese communities are to be found throughout the world. There are well over a million Chinese living in each of the United States and Canada, but this comprises only a small proportion of the Chinese overseas. The Chinese population in Asia is not only much larger, but has a much longer history than that in North America. Long a country of outward migration, China's rapid economic development has begun to reverse the migration flows, with not only migrants from other countries moving to China to take advantage of the jobs and relatively higher wages that it offers, but Chinese émigrés returning in ever larger numbers. This return flow is complex and, for many, takes a fully transnational form, with people working, living, and conducting business in more than one country simultaneously. Chinese migration is increasingly characterized by high mobility and less by one way permanent flows.

Perhaps the most remarkable migration of all is the internal migration that has accompanied China's economic growth. Well over 200 million Chinese, a figure near that of the world's total international migrant stock, have moved within the country since 1982, most from rural communities to urban destinations that offer employment, higher incomes, and, for some, a more appealing lifestyle. The impact this has had on urban development is unprecedented in the history of the world, and managing these effects has been a massive undertaking of public policy. This internal migration has many parallels with international migration and the integration experience that migrants and their receiving societies undertake. Not only are China's cities growing in size, but they are growing in diversity as a great many members of China's 55 minority groups arrive from their rural homes.

Migration throughout Asia is changing character rapidly owing to its economic development, especially in contrast to the relative economic stagnation of the West. But the future of migration will be made yet more complex by the fact of differential population ageing in Asia, with some countries more actively seeking migrants from abroad. The source of these migrants could well include the traditional migrant receiving countries in the West, further intensifying the competition for, especially, skilled workers that is already taking shape. By holding the 17<sup>th</sup> International Metropolis Conference in Beijing, we will offer an environment on the cusp of change that will have effects around the globe.

Plenary sessions will be organized on the following topics:

- The rise of Asia and its implications for international migration
- International competition for talent
- Illegal migration and human smuggling: what are the solutions?
- Managing migration for security, trade, and the movement of people.
- Religion, integration, and social cohesion
- China's experience with development-induced internal migration: lessons to be shared
- The role of transnational migrants in diplomacy
- The global Asian diaspora

### 3. Future annual Metropolis Conferences

The 18<sup>th</sup> International Metropolis conference (2013) has been awarded to the City of Tampere, Finland. Discussions are currently taking place to determine the themes of this event. The City of Milan has indicated a strong interest in hosting the 19<sup>th</sup> International Metropolis Conference (2014).