

INPUT TO THE EIGHTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)

A. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE CITY

Worldwide, people are on the move, whether fleeing conflict and disasters, or seeking a better life somewhere else, and the number of people on the move today is greater than ever before. According to figures provided by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), it is estimated that in mid-2010 there will be 214 million international migrants in the world.

Underlying the increase in scale and diversity of migration is the fact that migration is a multi-dimensional and cross-cutting issue and its impact on the changing urban landscape is a critical part of the process of globalization. Raising complex and often conflicting sets of policy challenges, it is increasingly at the forefront of local, national, regional and international agendas. It has demographic, economic, legal and social facets and has a strong regional dimension, notably when regions have embarked on processes of cooperation and integration such as countries in the European Union (EU). Moreover, international migration is an inherent and critical aspect of the current process of interdependence and globalization.

As the scale, scope and complexity of international migration flows have grown, States and other stakeholders have become aware of the challenges and opportunities presented by international migration—at the local, national, regional and global levels. It is almost a cliché to say that in every part of the world, there is now an understanding that the economic, social and cultural benefits of international migration must be more effectively realized, and that the negative consequences could be better addressed.

B. URBANIZATION AND MIGRATION INTERFACE

Urbanization as well as international migration continue all over the world. As cities are viewed as a “territory and experiential texture for half the global population,” the twin processes of urbanization and migration are closely linked. Migration is a predominantly urban phenomenon and the impact of migration on urbanization and sustainable urban development is important to understand. Urbanization is also an important part of the process of globalization—urban areas continue to be the essential sites of destination and settlement for migrant populations across the globe and the dynamics of urban growth and urbanization are often closely related to the dynamics of migration. Demographic change is contributing to rapid urbanization, reurbanisation and metropolitansation. Given the inexorability of urbanization and migration dynamics and the recognition that poverty is shifting from rural areas to cities, it is important to address these challenges.

C. IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

For the past two decades cities have exhibited vibrancy and dynamism—serving as “engines of growth” in terms of attracting investment and creating wealth. This has resulted in unprecedented gains in productivity and competitiveness in cities. A number of cities in the

world, more so in the North but also in the South, have emerged as hubs of development thus becoming magnets for transnational migration. It is estimated that there are approximately 214 million international migrants in 2010— South to South migrants are as numerous as South to North migrants. Almost one in ten persons living in more developed regions represents a migrant, compared to one in 70 people living in developing regions (United Nations, 2009). From 2005 to 2010, the number of international migrants worldwide is projected to increase by 10 per cent, and almost 50 per cent of all international migrants are women. It is expected that the number of international migrants globally will increase further in the future.

The dynamism of cities and their attractiveness as destinations for international migrants has been negatively affected by the current economic and financial crisis. The crisis has led to the reduction of credit and a decline in investment, consumption and urban employment. This has led to a further reduction in aggregate demand, resulting in a contraction of urban economies. In many cities of developing countries urban poverty has worsened and the distribution of the population by income has become more unequal. Furthermore, the reduction in commodity prices and development assistance has fuelled transnational migration, including in some parts of the world youths travelling on rafts to cross the ocean. There is also a noticeable increase in squatter settlements in the peripheries of cities.

In terms of governance, urban authorities have had to confront the challenge of diminished levels of investment, limited partnerships with the private sector, strained fiscal systems and budgets and in some cases even insolvency. The reduction in industrial production and loss of jobs has negatively affected migrants. In cities with social protection systems, the crisis has led to an increased burden of social caring for the victims of the crisis. One therefore sees a complex situation arising from the economic and financial crisis —whereby on one hand, more people are forced to move to regions and cities that are believed to offer more economic prospects. On the other hand, these cities find themselves constrained in accommodating and catering to the needs of more migrants. It has not been uncommon for this tension to generate a rise in xenophobia, riots, and for international migration to become a highly contested issue in the politics of urban and national governance.

D. RECENT INITIATIVE TO STRENGTHEN THE EVIDENCE BASE

In 2005, UN-HABITAT undertook a study jointly with the University of Venice to document how cities are responding to the challenge of South to South migration. In 2008, the organization also commissioned a major review of the policy implications of international migration for cities, with a view to identify areas of intervention for its various programmes. UN-HABITAT also participated in a joint study examining the linkage in international migration between countries of origin and destination. Some of the findings were presented at a joint meeting with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and the EU that took place in June 2009. Furthermore, UN-HABITAT's 2010 global report entitled *State of the World Cities* is focusing on the urban divide and factors that inhibit full access to the city.

E. CURRENT AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Among the planned activities are a programme initiated together with the European Forum for Urban Safety (EFUS) and the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Côte d'Ivoire. This planned initiative, which is still in the process of negotiation, is aimed at enabling cities of origin, transit and destination to respond effectively to the process of

protecting and integrating international migrants at different stages of their migration process. More specifically, it aims at (a) improving information to potential migrants in countries and cities of origin; (b) reducing the vulnerability of migrants in selected cities of departure; (c) strengthening protection for migrants in countries of transit, in particular by improving the identification and management of vulnerable migrants, and (d) strengthening the protection of migrants when they arrive in the host country and its cities, and the integration and coexistence in host cities.

UN-HABITAT with the support of the Government of Italy, is planning to organize an international conference on policies and best practices for migrant integration in the fall of 2010.

REFERENCE

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2009). *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision*. POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2008.