

THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT AND BEYOND

A. THE WAY TO THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

1. Intergovernmental process

The High-Level Dialogue has been the culmination of years of debate in the General Assembly about how to address international migration and its interrelations with development. The Second Committee of the General Assembly began consideration of this issue in 1994, in reaction to difficulties arising during the negotiations on international migration and development at the International Conference on Population and Development.

The first resolution on the topic (49/127) requested the Secretary-General to prepare “a report on international migration and development, including aspects related to the objectives and modalities of the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development” (para. 2). The report prepared in response to this request showed that there was not sufficient support among Member States for convening an international conference on the topic and that there was considerable opposition to it (E/1995/69).

After 1995, the Second Committee would request four more reports relating to the possibility of holding a conference, all of which reiterated the general findings of the first. The 2001 report (A/56/167) presented the most comprehensive set of views on whether to convene a conference: 47 Governments were generally in favour of convening a conference on international migration and development, 26 expressed reservations about doing so, five expressed only partial support and 110 did not express a view. The subsequent report (A/58/98) showed a drop in the number of Governments expressing a favourable view about convening a conference.

In view of these results, in 2003 the Second Committee decided that the General Assembly would, in 2006, devote a High-level Dialogue to the task of identifying appropriate ways and means to maximize the development benefits of migration and minimize its negative impacts (resolution 58/209 of 23 December 2003). The output of the Dialogue would be a Chairman’s summary and the Second Committee would consider international migration and development as one of its agenda items also in 2006.

2. The Global Commission on International Migration

In 2003, the Governments of Sweden and Switzerland took the initiative to launch the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). The Commission, composed of 19 expert commissioners serving in their personal capacity was supported by over 30 Governments and operated as an independent group from January 2004 to the end of 2005. It produced a report containing a series of principles and recommendations to strengthen the national, regional and global governance of international migration. The

report was presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in October 2005. Recommendation 33 of the report was directed to the Secretary-General and it called for the immediate establishment of a high-level inter-institutional group to define the functions and modalities of, and pave the way for, an Inter-agency Global Migration Facility which would ensure a more coherent and effective institutional response to the opportunities and challenges presented by international migration.

3. The Global Migration Group

In response to this recommendation, the Secretary-General held consultations with the heads of the major United Nations entities involved in international migration and with the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at a meeting held on 27 October 2005. As a result of these consultations, it was decided to expand the Geneva Migration Group¹ to create a new mechanism for coordination and cooperation among key United Nations entities and the IOM. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour, in her capacity as Chair of the Geneva Migration Group at the time, was requested to prepare, in consultation with other members, the terms of reference for the expanded group. Mrs. Arbour transmitted the terms of reference to the Secretary-General in February 2006.

The Secretary-General approved the terms of reference and proceeded to establish the Global Migration Group (GMG) with the following members: ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNODC and the World Bank. Since its establishment, the GMG has held three meetings at the level of executive heads. The members of GMG commented on the draft of the Secretary-General's report for the High-level Dialogue and provided input for its revision. They were key actors in the preparatory activities for the Dialogue and participated in the round tables organized during the Dialogue itself.

4. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration and Development

In January 2006, the Secretary-General, in order to promote participation of Member States in the High-level Dialogue at the highest possible level and to consult Member States regarding the way forward, appointed Mr. Peter Sutherland as his Special Representative on International Migration and Development.

5. A Global Migration Forum

The report of the Secretary-General for the high-level dialogue presented, as requested by Member States, "a comprehensive overview of studies and analyses on the multidimensional aspects of migration and development". It also provided recommendations for further action and proposed the establishment of a consultative Forum—led by and open to all the 191 Member States of the United Nations—that would

¹ The Geneva Migration Group had been started in April 2003 as a periodic meeting of the heads of ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNHCR and UNODC.

offer Governments a venue to discuss issues related to international migration and development in a systematic, comprehensive way. The proposed Forum would not produce negotiated outcomes. It would provide Governments timely exposure to promising policy ideas, as analyzed by the most relevant, qualified bodies from both inside and outside the United Nations system. The Forum would complement, and add value to, the activities of the regional consultative processes.

B. THE DEBATE DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

The High-level Dialogue of the General Assembly on International Migration and Development was held from 14 to 15 September 2006 at United Nations Headquarters, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/227 of 23 December 2005.

During the Dialogue, high-level officials of 127 Governments made statements. Other orators included representatives of one Observer State and of 10 intergovernmental entities and organizations having received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly.

The Dialogue consisted of six plenary sessions and four interactive round tables. Participants in the round tables included 162 high-level representatives of Governments, officials of 16 relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the Executive Secretaries of two United Nations regional commissions, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and representatives of 12 civil society and private sector entities.

The debates and deliberations during the Dialogue, including its round tables, were rich and touched on all key topics relative to international migration and development. A summary of the main points made relative to each topic is presented below.

1. International migration and development

Participants agreed that international migration could be a positive force for development. They underscored that the High-level Dialogue had contributed to improve the international community's understanding of the synergies between international migration and development. International migration was recognized as a persistent phenomenon in human history whose dynamism, intensity and complexity had increased as people gained greater access to information about opportunities abroad and as improvements in transportation made possible and affordable their movement over long distances. The global character of international migration was stressed.

International migration was described as a dynamic human link between cultures, economies and societies. It contributed to the free commerce of ideas and experiences and in many instances had been a key engine of material and intellectual progress.

Participants stressed that migration's benefits were most likely to accrue when it occurred in a safe, legal and fair manner. Migrants, by satisfying unmet labour demand at destination, made the economy of receiving countries more productive. Their remittances provided stable incomes for their families and could be leveraged to produce other beneficial development outcomes. Migration could change attitudes, empower people, contribute to the transfer of skills and know-how.

There was widespread support for addressing international migration as part of the international development agenda and to integrate international migration issues into national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies. It was suggested that, supported by the right policies, international migration could contribute to the achievement of some of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, remittances could contribute to the reduction of poverty.

Participants recognized that international migration could also have detrimental effects. Furthermore, they warned that international migration by itself was not a long-term development strategy. They agreed that international cooperation based on a spirit of solidarity could make a major contribution in addressing the issues raised by international migration. They thought desirable to adopt a realistic and pragmatic approach to migration issues, integrating the imperatives of development and ensuring that international migration was addressed holistically at all levels, national, regional and global.

2. Co-development

Several participants endorsed the concept of co-development, that is, the concerted improvement of economic and social conditions at both origin and destination through the active involvement of migrant communities. Countries that were supporting co-development projects noted that engaging migrants in their design and implementation was yielding beneficial results in the form of local job creation and practical solutions to development problems. Co-development projects strengthened partnerships between migration associations and authorities in countries of origin. They could support the integrated development and prevent the marginalization of poor regions with high migration potential.

Participants noted that strategies based on co-development could mitigate some of the negative impacts of international migration. For instance, co-development strategies could be used to support the formation and retention of skilled personnel in countries where the emigration of highly skilled persons, particularly health-care professionals and teachers, was causing shortages that compromised the delivery of crucial services.

Participants recalled that a number of international conferences had adopted outcome documents calling for the expansion of financial mechanisms to support co-development projects. The European Union was considering the establishment of a co-development fund.

3. The root causes of international migration

Participants recognized the importance of addressing the root causes of international migration. They stressed that combating poverty and fostering human development through the universal provision of health care and education remained the main priorities. It was important to place developing countries on the path to sustainable development by addressing key development issues such as foreign direct investment, foreign aid, debt relief and trade. Access to decent work in both countries of origin and destination was considered critical in ensuring that international migration was voluntary and beneficial for all.

Participants stressed that people had the right to live in peace, free from fear and want. That is, human security had to be assured. It was also important to ensure that the benefits of globalization were distributed more equitably and to create sufficient jobs with decent wages in developing countries. It was recognized that, too often, migrants were forced to seek employment abroad because of poverty, conflict or violations of human rights. The promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law and the protection of human rights were all considered necessary to ensure that people migrated out of choice and not because of necessity. Examples were offered of projects to improve livelihoods in rural areas so as to reduce migration out of need. It was emphasized that providing opportunities for all people to forge sustainable livelihoods in their own countries could go a long way in reducing migration pressures. Elimination of discriminatory trade regimes and subsidies was mentioned as a key measure in this regard.

4. Remittances as a tool of development

Participants agreed that migrants' remittances, estimated at \$US 232 billion in 2005, were the most tangible benefit of international migration and called for greater efforts to maximize their development impact, especially by enhancing their multiplier effects. In several countries remittances constituted a sizable percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP). Because remittances went directly to the families of migrants, they improved the lives of millions and had beneficial effects on the health of families receiving them and on the educational attainment of their children. In some countries, remittances had helped to reduce inequality in the income distribution. It was in these ways that international migration contributed to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. However, some participants thought that better evidence and more analysis were necessary to establish how international migration could best contribute to that end.

Many participants stressed the need to promote the cheaper, faster and safer transfer of remittances and several indicated that they had taken steps to reduce transfer fees by, for instance, negotiating with money transfer companies and banking institutions, fostering competition among them, and improving the access of migrants and their families to banking services, including those provided by microfinance institutions. Furthermore, several participants recognized that countries of origin could enhance the development

impact of remittances and migrants' savings by collaborating with the private sector in extending access to financial products and services to migrants and their families. Developing creative synergies between banks and microfinance institutions was also recommended, especially in contexts where it was necessary to develop the financial literacy of the population. Of particular relevance was the provision of credit for the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises and the availability of attractive investment options for migrants, so that those investments could have development impacts on the broader community. To reap the full benefits of these measures, countries of origin should endeavour to create an environment conducive to asset building, entrepreneurship and investment.

There was agreement that remittances were private funds and that they should not be viewed as a substitute for official development assistance, foreign direct investment or debt relief. Several donor countries expressed their commitment to working with countries of origin and the private sector in reducing the transfer costs of remittances and supporting their productive use. Examples of good practices included the creation of tax exempt "savings for development" accounts in host countries where migrants could save funds to invest eventually in the country of origin.

Some participants warned about the potentially negative consequences of remittances, including the culture of dependency that they might foster both at the household and at the national levels. It was also noted that the remittances expected from skilled workers often did not compensate for the loss of needed skilled personnel. Participants remarked that much remained to be understood about the effect of remittances on development, and that it was important to improve the measurement of remittances. They also noted the important work carried out in this regard by the multilateral development banks and bilateral development agencies and invited them to exchange best practices.

5. Engaging migrant communities abroad

Participants focused on strategies to realize the benefits of migration by strengthening ties between migrant communities abroad and the communities of origin. It was recognized that in many contexts international migrants had contributed to the development of their countries of origin. They had helped in expanding trade, tourism and telecommunications between countries of origin and those of destination. They had assisted in the transfer of knowledge, technology and skills. Migrants also engaged in entrepreneurship both at destination and at origin, particularly if they returned. They had thus spawned businesses, generating wealth and jobs.

It was suggested that countries of origin and countries of destination could increase support for migrant-led transnational enterprises, thereby creating jobs at both origin and destination through co-development projects. A number of donor countries were actively engaging the migrant communities in their midst in the formulation and implementation of development projects in countries of origin under co-development strategies.

Participants noted that the engagement of migrant communities with countries of origin could be facilitated by the recognition of dual citizenship or by granting voting rights to citizens abroad. Several participants reported that their laws had been changed recently to allow dual citizenship or an “overseas citizenship”. Mention was also made of the creation of special government units working to promote closer ties with migrant communities abroad. Through those units, Governments were providing support for the creation or consolidation of migrant associations and promoting their active engagement with the society of origin. Those units were also designing and implementing policies promoting the attachment of citizens abroad to the country of origin. In one country, biennial conferences were being held to maintain the engagement of citizens abroad. The importance of involving not only the migrants themselves but also the second and third generations was underscored.

Participants also noted the importance of providing consular services and consular protection to their citizens abroad. Some countries had carried out censuses of citizens abroad through their consular facilities and others were focusing on identifying highly skilled emigrants to engage them in development projects at home. Some participants called for the participation of established migrant communities in the political life of host countries. Others expressed concern about the engagement of migrant communities abroad in activities that could destabilize the societies of origin.

6. Return migration

Participants considered that migrants who returned to their home countries could be agents of development, provided that policies in countries of origin facilitated the transfer of funds, access to loans and the establishment of small or medium-sized businesses. Governments were urged to cooperate with the private sector in establishing reintegration programmes, including job placement, for returning migrants. A number of participants reported that their countries had programmes to facilitate the return and reintegration of migrants by, for instance, providing training and financing for the establishment of small businesses or by promoting the return of persons with needed skills, particularly nurses and medical doctors. Some countries were trying to attract back citizens who could invest in specific sectors of the economy, particularly in agriculture. Incentives offered included access to land and credit. Participants noted that return was more likely when stable institutions supporting the involvement of migrants in the development of countries of origin existed.

Some participants reported that their countries had benefited from the temporary return of expatriates with needed skills that was being supported by international programmes such as TOKTEN run by UNDP or the MIDA programme (Migration for Development in Africa) of IOM. Often, those returning temporarily would train or teach others in the home country, thus contributing to the transfer of skills and knowledge even if their return was not permanent.

Some participants noted that those returning for good were often elderly migrants who could not find jobs easily. They called for the collaboration of countries of destination to

help defray the costs of supporting those returnees. Participants also called for measures to ensure the portability of pensions.

7. Migration of the highly-skilled

Participants recognized that the demand for skilled personnel was growing in many countries. Hence, it was important for all countries to make an assessment of their immediate and long-term needs and devise plans to meet them through training. Some participants suggested that, given the global scale of the problem, it might be useful to address it also at the global level. The migration of specialists was needed to maintain or enhance international competitiveness and to facilitate the transfer of technology, know-how and skills. In order to ensure that sufficient skilled personnel remained in developing countries, it was suggested that donor countries might support increased training opportunities in developing countries by, for instance, promoting the creation of centres of excellence in regions highly affected by the emigration of skilled personnel, such as Africa or the Caribbean. Some donor countries were already supporting the training of teachers and medical staff specialized in combating AIDS.

Several participants reported on the efforts of their countries to retain or attract back skilled emigrants, including by developing joint research projects between expatriate scientists and those remaining in the country, improving working conditions or salaries, or actively recruiting students who completed their training abroad. Some donor countries reported on the support they provided for the return of skilled expatriates to countries of origin, whether return was on a temporary or a permanent basis. A number of countries reported benefiting from such schemes and from the temporary return of skilled migrants through the programmes run by UNDP or IOM.

Of special concern was the outflow of skilled personnel in the health and education sectors of low-income countries, since their departure compromised both the quality and quantity of services in those countries. Insufficient government funding for those sectors was recognized as contributing to this emigration. Support in upgrading the working conditions in the health and education sectors was recommended. It was also recognized that developed countries had the responsibility of curtailing recruitment from countries where skilled human resources were scarce. Several countries mentioned adopting codes of conduct to stop the active recruitment of skilled workers, particularly medical personnel, from low-income countries. Noting the lack of coherence between policies supporting the universal access to health care and primary education and the recruitment of nurses and teachers from low-income countries, some participants suggested that other measures might be necessary to counter the negative effects of excessive skilled emigration, including support for the formation of skilled personnel in the most affected countries or some other mechanism of compensation.

Some participants remarked that, because of the non-recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, the skills of some migrants remained underutilized. To avoid this waste of human resources, they called for international cooperation to improve the recognition of degrees, certificates and qualifications obtained abroad.

8. Labour migration

Participants remarked that labour migration was crucial for the world economy. In some countries, the labour market was highly dependent on foreign workers. In others, temporary labour migration allowed to fill specific labour needs. Often, labour migration was regulated under bilateral agreements and migrants were hired under temporary contracts certified by the official authorities of both, the country of origin and that of destination, to prevent abuse.

Several countries of origin and some of destination reported having official orientation programmes to ensure that migrants knew their rights and responsibilities before departure or just after arrival, and to familiarize migrants with the culture of the host society. Some countries also reported having reintegration programmes for returning migrant workers. Through their consular services, countries of origin provided protection to their citizens while abroad. In most instances, official recruitment agencies were licensed to place migrant workers abroad and several countries reported having strict regulations on the functioning of recruitment agencies.

Participants noted that the relatively high participation of women in labour migration had prompted some Governments to re-examine their labour migration regulations and procedures to ensure that they were gender sensitive and that they offered adequate protections to female migrants. Some countries reported that they were expanding markets for migrant labour, particularly for female workers.

Interest was expressed in completing the GATS negotiations on Mode 4, the international provision of services by natural persons, and thus opening new markets for international service providers. One participant suggested that countries of origin might wish to constitute a negotiating forum to promote the movement of service providers.

9. Migrant integration

The integration of migrants was considered essential to maximize their beneficial impact on host societies. Participants underscored that the social aspects of international migration deserved urgent attention. The integration of migrants in receiving countries required mutual adaptation and acceptance by both the host society and the migrants themselves. A crucial factor in promoting migrant integration was to ensure access to the labour market. It was therefore important to reduce unemployment among both migrants and their children, provide training if necessary, and be vigilant to prevent exploitative practices.

The integration of migrants depended also on the ability to communicate in the local language and access to decent housing, health care and education. The possibility of naturalization and family reunification were also factors facilitating integration. Some countries, especially those with a long history of immigration, promoted migrant integration actively. An open dialogue with civil society organizations, including migrant

organizations, trade unions and employers, was thought useful in developing strategies to promote social cohesion.

Participants stressed that racism, discrimination, xenophobia and abuse should not be tolerated. They thought that the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance between host societies and migrant communities was crucial. Information campaigns to raise awareness about the positive contributions that migrants made to the host society, as well as about their rights and responsibilities, were deemed useful. Participants warned against politicizing migration issues.

Noting that international migrants tended to settle in urban areas, participants recognized that migrant communities could help rejuvenate and add dynamism to cities. City authorities, being at the front line in addressing the needs of migrant communities, required support in providing services and implementing measures to promote integration.

Some participants focused on the impact of international migration on the demand for services, including health care, education and housing. In some countries, there was concern about the increasing incidence of infectious diseases related to the presence of migrants. In countries affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, migrants might be at heightened risk of infection, especially if they were subject to discriminatory practices in access to information and services. It was acknowledged that the provision of health services to all migrants, irrespective of legal status, could help prevent the spread of contagious disease both among migrants and in society at large. Accordingly, some participants argued that all migrants should have access to health, education and other basic social services on the same basis as citizens.

10. Migrant women

It was observed that about half of all international migrants were female and that women increasingly migrated as breadwinners. Women, just as men, migrated in order to improve their livelihoods. Furthermore, for many women migration was a means of empowerment. However, migration also entailed risks that were often more serious for women than for men, especially when women were relegated to undesirable low-paying jobs. It was important, therefore, to adopt policies that addressed the particular circumstances and experiences of female migrants and reduced their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Women and girls who were victims of trafficking were entitled to special protection.

The entrepreneurial potential of female migrants deserved support and the contribution of migrant women to development in both countries of origin and those of destination had to be recognized. For instance, female migrants often remitted a larger proportion of their income than male migrants. Responding to women's economic needs, particularly by ensuring their equitable treatment in financial and business matters, was considered crucial.

11. Irregular migration

Participants noted with concern the rise of irregular migration, both in countries of destination and in countries of transit. It was thought that a holistic approach was needed to address irregular migration. To the extent that irregular movements resulted from the lack of legal channels for admission where there was an unsatisfied labour demand, part of the response was to permit the legal entry or the regularization of the migrants involved. Several countries reported that they had opted for regularization and some noted that its economic impact had been positive. Yet others reported that a policy of zero tolerance for irregular migration accompanied by realistic admission policies had been successful in maintaining irregular flows under control.

In accordance with a holistic approach, other measures that had to be considered to reduce irregular migration related to the return, re-admission and re-integration of migrants in their countries of origin. A number of participants noted that readmission agreements had been useful in reducing irregular migration, but some countries, particularly those used as transit points, were facing obstacles in ensuring the safe return of migrants in an irregular situation.

Several participants reported that their Governments had been improving the efficiency and effectiveness of border management, which included ensuring that officials in charge of border control were mindful of their duty to safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons involved, including the right to seek protection from persecution. Some participants expressed concern that the recent emphasis on national security was focusing on border control at the expense of the obligation of States to protect vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors and persons seeking asylum. Participants also stressed that migrants in an irregular situation were particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and that in combating those crimes it was important not to criminalize the migrant. Some participants argued that national security would be enhanced by regularizing migrants since it was not possible to stop all irregular migration. Others noted that measures to improve border control, particularly the surveillance of maritime borders, were bearing fruit, although migrants were still taking inordinate risks to reach countries that were not prepared to admit them. Some participants noted that campaigns alerting potential migrants of the risks involved could help reduce the flows.

Participants also remarked that migrants in an irregular situation imposed a burden on the social, health and educational services in countries of destination, particularly developing countries which were ill prepared to host them. Others noted that irregular migration, if uncontrolled, could make citizens feel threatened and see their economic, social and cultural interests at risk, thus fuelling social tensions. Concern was also expressed about the possibility that, if migrants in irregular situations could not access regular employment, they might engage instead in illicit activities.

12. Trafficking in persons

Participants agreed that it was urgent to take strong and concerted action in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and prosecuting those who perpetrated this crime. They concurred that victims deserved support and protection. Most participants described the specific measures that their respective Governments had taken to prevent or combat trafficking and to protect or assist its victims, particularly women and children. Several participants reported that their Governments were parties to the relevant international instruments² and urged those who were not yet parties, to sign, ratify and implement them.

A number of participants remarked that trafficking in persons would not be eradicated as long as there was demand for the services its victims provided. It was therefore important to combat all types of bonded labour. Participants also noted that poverty, social alienation and exclusion, entrenched discrimination against women and children, and lack of equal opportunities were important underlying causes of trafficking. The growth of transnational criminal networks benefiting from such activities was a major concern.

Participants stressed that a coordinated and consensual approach was necessary to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. Mention was made of consultative processes in different parts of the world that were promoting intra-regional coordination and the sharing of information to trace and apprehend traffickers. Important advances had been made in criminalizing the exploitation of migrants through trafficking or smuggling in the domestic law of many countries.

13. The centrality of human rights

Noting that migrants were at the core of the migration debate, participants emphasized the human dimension of international migration. The obligation of all States to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all migrants, regardless of legal status, was considered an essential prerequisite to realize the full benefits of international migration. Countries of destination and countries of origin had a shared responsibility to uphold the human rights of all migrants. The importance of ratifying and implementing the core human rights conventions and other relevant international instruments was emphasized and, in particular, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Mention was also made of the relevant ILO Conventions. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants had a vital role to play in raising awareness about the detrimental effects of human rights violations affecting migrants, especially for women and children.

Participants underscored that the protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and their families was a core component of a comprehensive and balanced

² The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

system to manage migration. Neither the facilitation of international migration nor the enforcement of migration laws should compromise the rights and dignity of migrants. The economic, social and cultural rights of migrants were recognized as crucial for the benefits of international migration to accrue. In particular, some participants indicated that migrants should have access to basic services, including health care and education.

The need to combat racism, xenophobia, discrimination and the social exclusion of international migrants was emphasized. Intolerance in all its forms should be eradicated. Any exploitative, inhuman or degrading treatment of international migrants should not be tolerated. Some participants suggested that, by emphasizing the need to ensure human security, the focus of debates on irregular migration might shift from national security, that is, the protection of a State's territory, to the protection of all people in that territory, regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity or citizenship. Some participants argued that legal migrants should be granted the same rights and enjoined to have the same obligations as citizens

There was widespread recognition that irregular migration posed a challenge for the effective protection of international migrants given that migrants in an irregular situation, because of the fear of being deported, were particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Participants also cautioned that measures to curb irregular migration might prevent people in need of protection to seek it. It was important, therefore, to uphold the right to seek asylum and to allow refugees to integrate into host societies.

14. International migration policies

Participants noted that migration trends could change quickly and that countries should review their migration laws and regulations to ensure that they were adequate to manage existing flows. A number of participants reported that their Governments had adopted new legislation in recent years and that some were establishing new national machinery to formulate, implement and evaluate policies on international migration.

Participants recognized that governing migration fairly and efficiently while maximizing its benefits for all stakeholders posed a challenge. They noted that effective migration management implied easing legal migration, enforcing border control fairly, safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of the persons involved, and having adequate administrative capacity to enforce laws efficiently. They stressed that migration policies should cover admission, support upon arrival, integration and, when appropriate, reintegration upon return to the country of origin.

In formulating migration policy, Governments had to take account of the multidimensional aspects of international migration and its interrelations to development. To be effective migration policy and management had to be coherent with policies in other spheres, especially those relating to development, labour and trade. The involvement of key stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, at all stages of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation was suggested. Adopting a "whole of government" approach was thought necessary to ensure coherence.

Some participants considered that temporary and circular migration could produce beneficial synergies for migrants, countries of origin and countries of destination. To be beneficial, temporary migration should be safe and legal, and occur as a result of informed choice. Participants stressed the need to provide migrants with clear and unbiased information about the procedures involved in being admitted legally and underscored the importance of applying regulations strictly to ensure that migrants did not overstay in violation of the terms of admission.

There was recognition that the benefits of international migration were more likely to accrue if it was managed properly. Cooperation between countries of origin, destination and transit could contribute to improve migration's benefits and reduce its negative impacts. Several participants noted the beneficial aspects of freer movement of people in the context of efforts to achieve economic and labour market integration at the regional or sub-regional level. They also underscored that current demographic and labour force imbalances provided an opportunity to promote legal migration that would be beneficial to all.

Participants remarked that, in some contexts, receiving countries were ill prepared to manage international migration and its consequences appropriately. Countries with longer experiences as destinations of international migrants were ready to share their experiences with others and provide guidance in policy formulation, although they recognized that policy responses ought to be tailored to each context.

15. Partnerships and capacity-building

There was widespread support for capacity-building initiatives and those aimed at improving the development impact of international migration, both bilaterally and through multilateral cooperation. Participants stressed that such initiatives ought to be developed and implemented in partnership with non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector. Participants cited specific programmes to improve the institutional capacity to formulate and implement migration policies and to strengthen the protection of vulnerable groups. Partnerships to strengthen ties between countries of origin and their citizens abroad, especially with highly skilled migrants, were thought useful. Participants felt that more resources were needed to bring together Member States and experts to discuss how partnerships could contribute to enhance the benefits of international migration, improve the management of migration, increase the efficiency of border controls or disseminate information among migrants and potential migrants. Civil society organizations could be invaluable partners in raising awareness, promoting integration, preventing discrimination and assisting victims of abuse.

Governments and the private sector recognized the urgency of addressing labour market asymmetries given that the gap between the demand for workers outstripped the supply of labour in ageing populations while the reverse was happening in the populations of most developing countries. The increasing demand for migrant workers to fill those gaps called for a growing involvement of the business community in the discourse on

international migration and development. Some participants suggested that Governments cooperate with the private sector in developing reintegration programmes and promoting employment and investment opportunities for returning migrants. In some countries, the private sector had played a key role in encouraging highly-skilled migrants to return. Both civil society and the private sector could cooperate in facilitating the transfer of remittances and promoting access to and the use of financial institutions.

Participants welcomed the creation of the Global Migration Group, stressing that it was important to strengthen coordination and collaboration both among the entities of the United Nations system working on international migration and with the IOM. Participants recognized that the United Nations system played an important role in building partnerships and in supporting capacity building. They also acknowledged the key role IOM was playing in building capacity at the national and regional level. It was suggested that the regional commissions could do more in this regard.

Participants stressed the need to improve the evidence-base on the interrelations between international migration and development by supporting research and taking measures to improve the availability and quality of data on international migration and remittances. Participants recognized that sound policy could only result from sound evidence. They supported the improvement of data collection and its timely dissemination. They thought that developing a compendium of legislation on international migration and promoting the exchange of information among Member States would be useful. A few issues were highlighted as needing immediate attention by the research community, including how best to integrate international migration issues into development plans, including poverty reduction strategies, and how donors could best assist in achieving desirable outcomes; the role of transnational communities in fostering development; ways to enhance the developmental impact of remittances, and the relationship between international migration and health. The need for information on likely levels and trends of irregular migration and its economic impact was also expressed.

16. Intergovernmental cooperation

Participants thought that national endeavours to address international migration and development should be complemented by strengthened bilateral, regional and multilateral collaboration. Such cooperation was needed to promote legal, safe and orderly international migration, reduce irregular migration, and improve the chances of reaping the full benefits of international migration.

Participants considered that the best way to promote understanding and cooperation was to focus on shared goals and practical cooperative activities. Cooperation among Governments should proceed on the basis of mutual respect, equality and the search for shared benefits. Several countries, noting the relevance of attaining the internationally agreed development goals to ensure that international migration resulted from choice and not from necessity, reported on their efforts to increase official development assistance.

The proliferation of regional consultative processes proved that cooperation was particularly effective at the regional level. Most participants reported that their countries were active in at least one and often in several consultative processes. Regional integration processes were also mentioned. The issues considered by regional processes ranged from the promotion of free movement between Member States of regional integration groups to combating human trafficking. Some regional initiatives had promoted the sharing of data, information and best practices in migration policy and management. In the run up to the High-level Dialogue, a number of international meetings, some of a regional or inter-regional nature, had been convened to prepare positions for the Dialogue (see Annex). The declarations or conclusions from these meetings were mentioned by speakers as relevant documents complementing the Dialogue's discussion.

Many participants reported on the bilateral migration agreements that their countries had concluded. Bilateral agreements covered a wide range of issues, including labour migration, readmission of nationals, the fight against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, pension portability, or cooperation programmes.

Participants considered that bilateral and regional cooperation had to be complemented by initiatives at the global level, noting that the United Nations was a natural venue for such initiatives, as the High-level Dialogue showed. Participants also mentioned the work of the Global Commission on International Migration whose report provided useful guidance; the Agenda for International Management produced by the Berne Initiative, and the annual dialogue on migration policy sponsored by IOM.

17. Follow-up to the High-level Dialogue

Nearly all Member States expressed an interest in continuing the multilateral dialogue on international migration and development which had started with the High-level Dialogue. There was widespread support for the proposal of the Secretary-General to create a Global Forum as a venue to discuss issues related to international migration and development in a systematic and comprehensive way. Participants felt that a Forum could be a useful arrangement in achieving greater coherence and in promoting coordination among the various United Nations entities working on international migration, the IOM, other international organizations and regional initiatives.

Participants stressed that, if established, the Forum should foster practical, evidence-based measures to enhance the benefits of international migration and minimize its negative impacts. The Forum should be informal, voluntary, and led by Member States operating in a transparent and open manner. It would not produce negotiated outcomes or normative decisions, but it would promote closer cooperation among Governments.

The Government of Belgium offered to host the first meeting of the Forum in 2007.

C. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

On 19 October 2006, the Second Committee of the General Assembly considered item 55(b) of its agenda, which focused on international migration and development. The Chair's summary of the High-level Dialogue had been issued prior to that meeting. On the whole, speakers at the meetings of the Second Committee reiterated the usefulness of the Dialogue and called for focusing attention on the way forward.

On 25 October 2006, a draft resolution on international migration and development was presented for consideration of the Second Committee (A/C.2/61/L.12). According to the draft resolution, the General Assembly took note of the offer of the Government of Belgium to convene a global consultative forum and decided to consider in 2008 (at the sixty-third session) possible options for an appropriate follow-up to the Dialogue within the United Nations. At the time of writing, the draft resolution was being discussed through the normal intergovernmental process.

ANNEX

List of intergovernmental conferences organized to provide input to the High-level Dialogue

Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries on Migrants' Remittances

Date: 9-10 February 2006

Venue: Cotonou, Benin

Organizers: the United Nations Office for the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Developing Landlocked Countries and Small Island Developing States; International Organization for Migration (IOM); Government of Benin

Outcome Document: Ministerial Declaration

Letter dated 31 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/61/230)

Conference on Migration and Development

Date: 15-16 March 2006

Venue: Brussels, Belgium

Organizers: Government of Belgium; International Organization for Migration; European Commission; World Bank

Outcome Document: Conference Conclusions

Letter dated 13 April 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/61/73)

South American Conference on Migration

Date: 4 - 5 May 2006

Venue: Asunción, Paraguay

Organizers: Government of Paraguay

Outcome Document: Asunción Declaration

Letter dated 18 May 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/61/86)

Special International Conference at Ministerial Level of Developing Countries with Substantial International Migrant Flows

Date: 15-16 May 2006

Venue: Lima, Peru

Organizers: Government of Peru; International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Outcome Document: Lima Declaration

Letter dated 7 June 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/61/91)

Ministerial Euro-African Conference on Migration and Development

Date: 10-11 July 2006

Venue: Rabat, Morocco

Organizers: Governments of Morocco, Spain and France; European Commission

Outcome Document: Plan of Action, Rabat Declaration

Letter dated 19 July 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/61/170)

Informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector

Date: 12 July 2006

Venue: New York, United States of America

Organizers: President of the General Assembly

Outcome document: Summary of the Informal interactive hearings of the General Assembly with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector

Note dated 27 July 2006 by the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly (A/61/187)

Iberoamerican Conference on Migration

Date: 18-19 July 2006

Venue: Madrid, Spain

Organizers: Iberoamerican Secretariat; International Organization for Migration (IOM); Latin American Demographics Study Centre (CELADE); Carolina Foundation of Spain

Outcome Document: Conclusions

Helsinki Process Meeting on International Migration

Date: 25-26 July 2006

Venue: Mexico City, Mexico

Organizers: Government of Mexico

Outcome document: Report of the Helsinki Process meeting on international migration

Letter dated 5 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/61/506)

Executive Council of the African Union

Date: 25-29 July 2006

Venue: Banjul, the Gambia

Organizer: African Union

Outcome documents: The Migration Policy Framework for Africa; African Common Position on Migration and Development

Letter dated 7 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General-Assembly (A/61/345)

Regional Consultation on Migration, Remittances and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Date: 27-28 July 2006

Venue: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Organizers: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Government of the Dominican Republic; the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development; the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation

Outcome Document: Declaration

Letter dated 30 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/61/343)

Discussion of the Issue of Migration at the meeting of Ministers of the Interior of MERCOSUR and the Associated States, prepared by the 14th meeting of the Specialized Forum on Migration of the meeting of Ministers of the Interior of Mercosur and associated States

Date: 22-24 August 2006

Venue: Fortaleza, Brazil

Organizers: Government of Brazil

Outcome document: Discussion of the Issue of Migration at the meeting of Ministers of the Interior of MERCOSUR and the Associated States

Letter dated 5 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/61/321)