



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

Secretary-General sees UN as site for exchange of views on migration, in new report out today

(UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK, 6 June) In a wide-ranging new UN report on the development impact of international migration, Secretary-General Kofi Annan today proposed a standing forum which governments could use to explore and compare policy approaches.

Such a government-led consultative forum on migration and development would not produce negotiated outcomes or recommendations, the Secretary-General stressed. Rather, it would make new policy ideas more widely known, add value to existing regional consultations, and encourage an integrated approach to migration and development at both the national and international levels.

Mr. Annan described his report -- which he presented today to the General Assembly -- as “an early road map for this new era of mobility”. In it, he says that “the advantages that migration brings are not as well understood as they should be.”

Migrants not only take on necessary jobs seen as less desirable by the established residents of host countries, the report finds, but also stimulate demand and improve economic performance overall. They help to shore up pension systems in countries with aging populations.

For their part, developing countries benefit from an estimated \$167 billion a year sent home by migrant workers. The exodus of talent from poor countries to more prosperous often poses a severe development loss. But in many countries this is at least partially compensated by migrants’ later return to, and/or investment in, their home countries, where profitable new businesses are established.

General Assembly takes up migration in September

Traditionally considered too hot for a global institution to handle, the issue of international migration has recently been moving up the UN agenda.

Last year, the independent Global Commission on International Migration presented a report and recommendations to the UN Secretary-General. In 2005, the International Labour Organization adopted a non-binding Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. And a special representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Peter Sutherland, is now engaged in preliminary talks with governments, leading up to a “high-level dialogue” to be held by the General Assembly on 14-15 September.

The report finds that migration has become a major feature of international life. People living outside their home countries numbered 191 million in 2005 -- 115 million in developed countries, 75 million in the developing world.

One third of all current immigrants in the world have moved from one developing country to another, while about the same number have moved from the developing world to the developed. In other words, “South-South” migration is roughly as common as “South-North”. But migration to countries designated as “high-income” – a category which includes some developing countries, such as the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – has grown much faster than to the rest of the world.

“It is for Governments to decide whether more or less migration is desirable,” the Secretary-General says in his introduction to the report. “Our focus in the international community should be on the quality and safety of the migration experience and on what can be done to maximize its development benefits.”

Benefits at both ends of the voyage

The UN report reviews scores of promising policy developments -- multiple-entry visas that provide more fluid and better regulated access to needed immigrant workers, support for immigrant entrepreneurship and host-country training programmes, international cooperation to increase training of skilled workers in migrant-sending countries to allay brain drain, and country-of-origin outreach to overseas diasporas.

Migration is not a zero-sum game, the report finds. It can benefit both sending and receiving countries at once. Significantly, many countries once known for emigration – Ireland, the Republic of Korea and Spain among them – now boast thriving economies and host large numbers of immigrants.

The UN report recognizes governments’ right to decide who is allowed to enter their territory, subject to international treaty obligations, as well as their capacity to work together to upgrade economic and social benefits at both ends of the migrant voyage, and to promote the well-being of the migrants themselves.

“We find that while countries share people through migration, they often neglect to share knowledge about how to manage the movement of people,” Mr. Annan writes. “We need to learn more systematically from each other.” □

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