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TO THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Globalization and Interdependence

Item 22(c): International Migration and Development

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Mme. Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

I have the honour to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on International Migration and Development (A/65/203). The report focuses, among other things, on the effects of the financial and economic crises on international migration, Its main findings are the following:

International migration trends

There are today 214 million international migrants worldwide, of whom 128 million live in developed countries, and out of these, 58 per cent originate in developing countries.

In developed countries, the growth in the number of international migrants has been slowing, passing from a gain of 13 million migrants in 2000-2005 to 11 million in 2005-2010.

Most of the decline in flows began after 2007, and involve almost all types of migration, including irregular migration.

Migration to developing countries has also been affected by the crises but, because the number of refugees began rising around 2005, the number of international migrants in developing countries has risen more rapidly recently than earlier in the decade (by 8 million in 2005-2010 compared to 4 million in 2000-2005).

Despite the crisis, the global number of international migrants continues to increase and, since the majority are already settled in the countries of destination, increases in return flows have been rare.

Remittances

The crisis has resulted in a reduction of remittances to low- and middle-income countries: from a peak of \$336 billion dollars in 2008 to an estimated \$316 billion dollars in 2009, the first reduction since 1980.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as Latin America and the Caribbean are the regions most affected by the reduction of remittances.

Migrant employment

Rising unemployment in the countries most affected by the crises has disproportionately impacted international migrants.

Migrant men have been particularly vulnerable to increases in unemployment because they are concentrated in the sectors most affected, namely, construction, manufacturing and finance.

As a result of layoffs of migrant men, more migrant women have joined the labour force in a number of countries.

In virtually all major receiving countries for which employment data are available, unemployment among the foreign-born is higher than among natives. Youth unemployment among migrants is of particular concern, since their long-term unemployment might lead to long-term marginalization which can be prevented by language training, mentoring and apprenticeships.

In response to these developments, Governments have tried to adjust the inflows of migrants by reducing quotas, adopting more stringent labour-market tests, not renewing work permits, and facilitating return migration.

Despite the crises, there remains an unmet demand for migrants with special skills. Therefore, measures to attract skilled migrants are evolving and continue to have government support in many countries.

Migration and development for countries of origin

As for countries of origin, they have continued, often in partnership with other stakeholders, to pursue strategies to leverage the beneficial contribution of international migration to development.

A growing number of countries are developing innovative ways of engaging their expatriate communities, including by facilitating or leveraging the transfer of collective remittances or by issuing “diaspora bonds” to raise capital.

According to an analysis of poverty reduction strategies, the main focus of countries of origin are activities related to their expatriate communities, including support of labour migration, improved protection while abroad, as well as assistance for returning migrants and facilitating the transfer of remittances.

The reduction of remittance transfer costs has been the focus of several multilateral initiatives, including those of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Donor countries have been funding programmes to engage expatriates in supporting the development process in countries of origin by becoming entrepreneurs or volunteering to provide advice or services in their home countries.

To prevent the loss of health personnel from countries experiencing severe shortages, WHO adopted in May 2010 a non-binding global code of practice on the international recruitment of health personnel.

Rights of migrants

Governments are increasingly committed to upholding the rights of migrant workers, as demonstrated by the growing number of ratifications of key international instruments on migrant workers' rights. By June 2010, 82 Member States, hosting one third of all international migrants, had ratified at least one of those instruments.

Key actors in the United Nations system, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ILO, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the former UNIFEM, continue to raise awareness regarding the rights of migrants, including migrant women, and to provide advice about how to close gaps in the enforcement of existing standards.

Reducing the prevalence of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants is a particular concern, evident in the high levels of ratification of the international instruments addressing these crimes. UNODC in collaboration with partners in the Global Migration Group has been providing technical assistance to combat trafficking.

UNHCR continues to work to safeguard the lives of refugees and to prevent refoulement of refugees and other human rights violations that endanger the lives of vulnerable people.

Migration and development projects

Multilateral assistance directed to projects on international migration and development has reached about a quarter of a billion dollars. Major donors include the European Commission, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Increasingly, projects are being implemented via joint activities of members of the United Nations system. Other important actors are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the

African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP).

The Global Forum on Migration and Development has held three meetings since 2007 and will hold its fourth next month in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Participation in the Forum has been strong, with representation of about 160 Members States. The Forum has helped maintain a focus on the contributions of international migration to development and fostered better understanding and collaboration among countries linked by migration, a collaboration that has been maintained despite the effects of the economic crisis.

Although the Forum's recommendations are non-binding, a number of meeting outcomes have been subsequently implemented by Governments, international organizations or research institutes. In particular, members of the Global Migration Group, which brings together 14 United Nations entities plus the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration, have been actively engaged in following up or implementing the recommendations of the annual meetings of the Global Forum. Since 2007, 27 of the 114 Forum outcomes have been followed-up by one member of the GMG and another 75 by two or more members. Furthermore, the number of GMG activities per outcome has risen from an average of 2.4 in 2007 to 3.4 in 2009.

Conclusion

To conclude, Mme. Chair, let me point out that, despite the detrimental effects of the financial and economic crises on international migrants and migration, the crises hit when the international community was already seriously committed to developing a realistic and balanced understanding of the role that international migration can play in the development process. As that understanding has grown, it has fostered collaboration in the pursuit of initiatives that are beneficial for both migrants and development. The effectiveness of responses to the crises hinges on the willingness of Governments to act cooperatively and keep the channels of communication open in regard to shared problems in order to devise common solutions. Maintaining this spirit of cooperation is essential to ensure that the economic crisis and its lingering effects does not derail what has already been achieved and will be crucial in ensuring the success of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development that the General Assembly will hold in 2013.

Thank you, Mme. Chair.