

International Forum for Social Development
International Migrants and Development

Open Informal Debate in the Context of the 58th Session of the General Assembly

8 October 2003, 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.
Conference Room 2, United Nations

AGENDA

Theme: ***BUILDING AN ORDERLY REGIME FOR INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS: THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION***

Topics: *Assessing the prospects and limits of national policies, bilateral agreements, and regional processes*

Reflecting on the objectives, instruments and modalities of a strengthened international cooperation

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Opening remarks:

- Chairman of the Panel: Amb. Jean-Jacques Elmiger, Chairman, 42nd session of the Commission for Social Development

Introductions:

- Mr. Gerónimo Gutiérrez, Vice-Minister for North America at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico
- Ms. Susan F. Martin, Director, Institute for the Study of International Migration, USA
- Mr Muhammad Iman Santoso, Director-General of Immigration, Department of Justice and Human Rights, Indonesia
- Mr. Michael D. Tlhomelang, Director, Ministry of Home Affairs, South Africa
- Ms. Nadine Alvergue de Molina, Director General for Immigration, El Salvador
- Mr. Per Sjögren, Director General for Migration and Asylum Policy, Sweden

4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Debate

5:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Concluding remarks

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The International Forum for Social Development is an initiative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. It brings together participants from governments, international and regional organisations and the civil society for an informal dialogue on global issues of development and social progress. Placed under the overall theme of *Open Societies, Open Economies: Challenges and Opportunities*, its aim is to promote the social development of developing countries and their participation in the building of a harmonious world community. The Forum seeks to contribute to the steering of the process of global interdependence towards the common good.

A first meeting of the Forum was convened in February 2002 to debate *Financing Global Social Development*. A second meeting, in October 2002, considered *Cooperation for Social Development: The International Dimension*. Both meetings took place in New York and brought together about thirty participants from different regions and experience for a two-days discussion in a seminar and open debate within the premises of the United Nations. The Commission for Social Development, meeting once a year in New York is apprised of the results of these gatherings. The report of the first meeting of the Forum was issued in June 2002. A summary report of the second meeting was issued in January 2003. The Forum is financed through voluntary contributions of Member States of the United Nations.

The selected subject for the Third Forum is ***International Migrants and Development***. In September 2002, the Secretary-General in his report on “Strengthening the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Changes”, indicated that migration was one of the issues “on which the United Nations must deepen its knowledge, sharpen its focus and act upon more effectively”. He stated the following: “I also believe that it is time to take a more comprehensive look at the various dimensions of the migration issues, which now involves hundreds of millions of people and affect countries of origin, transit and destination. We need to understand better the causes of international flows and their complex interrelationships with development(…)”. The Secretary-General reiterated at the beginning of this year that greater international attention ought to be given to the issue of migration. In its Programme Management Plan 2003 the Department of Economic and Social Affairs included among new and emerging issues “advancing work on international migration and development”.

The ***main objective*** of the Forum will be to contribute to the emergence of a global dialogue on international migration and international migrants. Such a dialogue needs a political and intellectual foundation. It calls for an identification of issues that could be usefully addressed at the global level. It calls also for reflection on the processes, institutions and partners that ought to be involved in such identification of priority issues that could benefit from discussions in a global forum. A global dialogue is a necessary prelude to an international cooperation that is, at this point, practically non-existent.

A ***related objective*** is to assess the possibility, in the context of a division of responsibilities within the United Nations and the United Nations system, of treating issues pertaining to international migrants and development from a ***social perspective***, in the appropriate intergovernmental body and with the appropriate participation of the actors involved, notably governments of “sending”, “receiving” and “transit” countries, non-governmental organizations and representatives of the international migrants themselves.

International Migrants and Development will first be discussed on Tuesday 7 October and Wednesday morning, 8 October, at a **SEMINAR** to be held at United Nations Headquarters. Approximately twenty participants from different regions and walks of life will debate two themes. Under the first theme, ***The Current Situation of International Migrants***, two topics will be explored: *Addressing the public perceptions of international migration and international migrants*, and *Ascertaining the social conditions of international migrants*. Under the second theme, ***Building an Orderly Regime for International Migrants: the Role of International Cooperation***, the two topics to be discussed are: *Assessing the prospects and limits of national policies, bilateral agreements, and regional processes*, and *Reflecting on the objectives, instruments and modalities of a strengthened international cooperation*.

The **OPEN INFORMAL DEBATE** will primarily address the second theme, *Building an Orderly Regime for International Migrants: the Role of International Cooperation*. Related questions illustrating the topics to be considered are:

First topic: Assessing the prospects and limits of national policies, bilateral agreements, and regional processes

- What are the accomplishments and shortcomings of the current migration policies of affluent countries that are sought by international migrants? This broad question might be addressed from the viewpoint of these receiving countries themselves, from the perspective of countries of emigration, and from the perspective of the United Nations.
- Which lessons can be derived from the attempts at linking policies on international migration and development policies?
- In which aspects of the regulation of international migration and the protection of international migrants have bilateral agreements an indispensable role?
- What are the reasons for the generally recognized usefulness and increasing use of informal regional consultative processes?
- Taking together coherent national policies and bilateral and regional consultations and agreements launched when and where interested countries would deem them to be necessary, would a world regime for international migration and international migrants reasonably satisfying for all concerned have a chance to emerge?

Second topic: Reflecting on the objectives, instruments and modalities of a strengthened international cooperation

- Is the normative framework of the United Nations an ideal that could orient international cooperation and be used as a yardstick to assess the validity of ideas and policies concerning the movement of people across borders?
 - Would an orderly regime for international migrants follow the principle of subsidiarity whereby international and global organizations would perform only the functions that could not be assumed at the regional, local and national levels?
 - Could international cooperation have a role, direct or indirect, in the fostering of communities and nations that would be cohesive and open to international migrants? How does the notion of social integration of the migrants in their countries of destination fit with the objective of an open and diverse world community? And with the objective of cultural diversity?
 - What are the reasons for the difficulties encountered by the human rights approach to the improvement of the situation of international migrants? What conclusions can be derived from these difficulties for the future of international cooperation in this domain?
 - How could an effective participation of organizations of the civil society, including representatives of the international migrants themselves, be secured in the forums and agencies that would debate and implement international cooperation in this domain?
 - What are the types of reflections and policies - among others and in addition to the issue of remittances, on the concepts and practices of nationality, naturalization, citizenship, rights and obligations of short-term and long-term immigrants, systems of social protection and pension benefits in countries of origin, destination and return - that could benefit from an international exposure and framework?
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