



## High Level Meeting on Africa's Development Needs: State of Implementation of Various Commitments, Challenges and the Way Forward"

22 September 2008

### Summary Report Side Events

**Title:** Migration, Population Displacement and Sustainable Development in Africa

**Date and Venue:** Conference Room C

**Organizers:** IOM, UNHCR

**Chair (s):** Mrs. Ndioro Ndiaye, Deputy Director-General, IOM

#### 1. Introduction (Background and Context)

Population movements, be it in the form of migration, or in the form of forced displacement, has been a defining characteristic of much of Africa. Africa's population is one of the most mobile in the world, both within and outside the continent. Though population movement in Africa has occurred for well over 500 years with pastoralists and agriculturalists, more recently Africa's migration has taken on different characteristics. Whether it is in search of a better future or for the purpose of basic survival, population movement in Africa is increasingly responding to globalization with individuals moving beyond traditional countries of destination, including outside the continent itself. Many take to the high seas in an irregular way, some across the Mediterranean to countries in Europe and some, across the Gulf of Aden, to the Middle East, at times with disastrous consequences. Irrespective of the nature of the root causes, population movements within and out of Africa have implications for sustainable development of the continent. This panel discussion was organized to explore in greater depth the potential contribution of migrants to the development of their countries of origin and to identify how solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees can be connected to sustainable development efforts in the many African countries that have been affected by conflict or natural disasters.

#### 2. Organization (Chair, Panelists, Presenters and Participants)

The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Ndioro Ndiaye, IOM's Deputy Director-General. Panelists included H.E. Mr. Augustine P. Mahiga, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations speaking on "The perspective of the United Republic of Tanzania on migration, population displacement and sustainable development"; Mr. Stefano Manservisi, Director General for Development of the

European Commission speaking on “Migrants' contributions to development in the EU-Africa partnership: Challenges and way ahead”; Mr. Jeff Crisp, Head, Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR speaking on “Development, Displacement and Mobility in Africa” and Mr. Peter Van der Auweraert, Senior Legal Officer, Reparations Programmes, IOM speaking on “Development, Displacement and Access to Land and Property in Africa: the Need for an Integrated Approach”. Participants included representatives of Permanent Missions to the UN, UN Secretariat staff, agencies, funds and programmes, and representatives of NGOs and civil society.

### **3. Summary Discussions**

In defining Africa's development needs and the state of implementation of various commitments, their challenges and the way forward, population movements within and out of Africa, whether in the form of migration or in the form of forced displacement are a significant element that cannot be overlooked in the sustainable development of the continent. It is necessary then to explore how the movement of people brings both negative and positive impacts to the attainment of the MDGs and towards development in general. Migration itself should be seen as normal feature of development rather than as pathology and the Joint EU-AU Strategy provides a positive example of a collaborative partnership in the area of migration, mobility and employment that understands the natural intuition for people to move to maximize job opportunities. The Plan of Action of this Joint Strategy looks beyond just fighting irregular migration; it aims at ensuring that labour migration translates into concrete benefits for both countries of origin and destination. By way of filling gaps in several employment sectors, migration into Europe has contributed to European growth while for countries of origin development can be seen by Diaspora contributions through remittances, skills and experience transfer and through circular migration. The Joint Strategy is an example of the EU attempting to take decisions on migration at a regional rather than national level, engaging in a full collaborative partnership with the AU. Effective policy responses taking into consideration the perspectives of countries of origin and destination, as well as the perspectives of the migrants themselves are essential. To this end key policy measures should promote ethical recruitment to prevent exploitation; support circular migration as a tool to counter brain drain and encourage the movement of skilled personnel; and consider measures to facilitate the transfer of remittances. One such response is the upcoming launch of the Center for Migration Assistance in Bamako, established by the EU and Mali. This Center which will open in early October is meant to advise on legal migration channels and offer skills training in labour market demands in the EU. An African Remittance Institute will also be established by the EU & AU in 2009. The Institute will serve as a clearinghouse of remittances, challenging them towards investment and development opportunities in countries of origin. These approaches are examples of best harnessing migration's development potential for countries of origin.

However, when we discuss population movement within or out of Africa, we must also consider refugees and IDPs. Africa has more than a third of the world's refugees and half of the world's IDPs constituting eleven million people in Africa. With seventeen African states having over 50,000 refugees, eight out of twenty countries with the highest ration of refugees to local people are in Africa. Most of the recorded migration in Africa occurs within the region; out of a total of 14.5 million migrants originating in sub-Saharan Africa, 10 million migrants (or 69%) move within the region. This is a significant portion of Africa's population whose rights, needs and productive potential must be considered when discussing sustainable development in Africa. Refugees and IDPs have routinely been the domain of the humanitarian community leaving them outside of any development plans. The relationship between displacement and the right to development must be fully recognized, realizing that the MDGs cannot be achieved without

taking into consideration refugees and IDPs, and promote their safety and dignity. Violations of the rights of the displaced are numerous – such as the limitations to the freedom of movement, the lack of access to land and to the employment market as well as exposure to insecurity, exploitation and violence including sexual or gender-based violence; they hinder the displaced population's ability to ensure its livelihood and to meaningfully contribute to the development of the local community. Current programmes orientated towards long term assistance do not allow for the improvement of standards of living in areas of displacement but rather strain the limited capacity of governments in the region or increase competition over scarce resources including local resources. Refugees and IDPs living in particularly adverse circumstances may migrate irregularly facing devastating consequences and thus it is imperative to reinforce institutions of asylum and refugee protection. Instead, migration should be undertaken out of choice rather than of necessity and displaced populations should be given opportunities to boost the local economy and support national development. Population movements have also taken place in “reversed” fashion, such as the voluntary repatriation over the past years of large numbers of refugees back to their countries of origin with consequences for the sustainability of development in countries emerging from conflict. Capitalising on nation-building founded on rule of law, and lasting peace and security, is an important issue to be examined in the context of sustainable development. Increasing the participation of displaced people in the national reconstruction process upon return is possible for instance by ensuring that new skills which might have been acquired during the displacement period are put to use. In this light it appears crucial to foster greater international solidarity to tackle this global issue; encourage the inclusion of displacement zones into local and national development plans; support investments in education and training of displaced populations; and attack the root causes of displacement often deriving from flawed development policies. It has to finally be understood that short term security and long term development cannot be de-linked.

Internal migration in Africa does have an impact on national policies. Because of Africa's historical movements over the past several centuries, great ethnic and linguistic diversity can be seen since the creation of nation-states in Africa with international boundaries transecting ethnic groups who maintain a stronger linkage to each other rather than to the national government. Competitive modes of production between migrating pastoralists and agriculturalists caused clashes over local resources. Compounded by the adverse effects of climate change and the degradation of natural resources, this has raised serious challenges for governments on national policies concerning movement and production. Regional integration and cooperation offer opportunities for regularizing migration and allowing for the free movement of people. This would be an essential component of national and regional development policies. Rural to urban migration can see some of its root causes in inadequate policies of poor investment in rural agriculture. The situation may be exacerbated by urban areas which are not prepared for this rural-urban migration, fostering instability and leading to migration to other African countries. Thus adequate social and economic policies on rural development are needed to make even international migration more manageable. Domestic politics and economic policies also impact refugees and their potential contribution towards local development. Local politicians may manipulate the public's perception of refugees, either as competitors for local resources and a strain on the local economy or as vital contributors to local development who should be offered citizenship. But in examples given, refugees have proved to be resourceful if given the opportunity to produce and contribute to local development.

In many African countries, disputes and competition over fertile land and natural resources lie at the basis of armed conflict and displacement. This has been the case in contexts where either fertile or usable land was scarce (a situation often exacerbated by an inequitable distribution of the scarce land) or land contains important and potentially lucrative natural resources. In other

cases, armed conflict and internal displacement have themselves caused serious disputes over land and natural resources to arise. The flight of thousands of people from their homes and land give others, who themselves may well have been forcibly displaced from their homes and land, the opportunity to settle in the places that were hastily abandoned because of violence or threat thereof, thus laying the foundations for renewed conflict and strife when the displaced start returning home. In both situations, durable resolution of forced displacement and the sustainable development of the country require addressing and resolving those disputes in a manner that fosters peace and prosperity for the population as a whole. Tackling these two issues together is an urgent task for national and international policy makers alike. Compounded to this, land and property rights often immediately change after a conflict ends when new elites use the opportunity to expand or consolidate their hold over land and resources. As livelihoods depend on subsistence agriculture in many parts of Africa, inequitable distribution of arable land and property needs to be addressed in order to promote sustainable development and to avoid conflict. This is particularly necessary in post-conflict situations to ease existing tensions and focus efforts on poverty eradication. In worse cases, not addressing them can re-ignite conflicts. Durable solutions to displacement must be addressed once violence or unrest ends. Policies of restitution and compensation can also be instrumental to offset human rights violations perpetuated against the displaced populations. Rural development should be encouraged and could benefit from financial and human investments from the diaspora community. Diversifying economic prospects with a view to lessen dependence on land to sustain livelihoods will also be critical. Fostering economic development in the host community and the region of origin will ensure that returns as well as settlements of displaced population in concerned areas are sustainable and devoid of conflicts.

#### **4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Follow-up Actions**

Human beings are an important resource of Africa. Their migration or displacement may have negative consequences for the countries concerned, but as an important resource, the positive outcomes of such movements could be exploited to bring long term benefits for Africa. In searching for innovative ways to overcome the many challenges faced in sustainable development in Africa, it is important to explore the potential contribution of those who migrate or who are displaced, to the development of their countries of origin and their countries of destination. It is also a challenge to harness the positive effects of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons so that their integration or reintegration can help contribute to sustainable development in Africa. Inequitable distribution of arable land and property needs to be addressed in order to promote sustainable development and to avoid conflict. This is particularly necessary in post-conflict situations to ease existing tensions and focus efforts on poverty eradication.. In this regard, must ensure these concerns are integrated into local, national and regional development strategies.

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#### **Annexes: Programme, Opening/Closing Statements and Presentations**