

**TWELFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat
New York, 20-21 February 2014

**LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION AND
DEVELOPMENT¹**

*League of Arab States
Population Policies, Expatriates and Migration Department (PPEMD)*

¹ The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

A. INTRODUCTION

Migration is a constant and dynamic phenomenon increasingly requiring diversified policy intervention in order to maximize its potential benefits and minimize related costs for both countries of origin and destination as well as migrants themselves.

Since its establishment, the League of Arab States (LAS) has been focusing on the issue of international migration and Arab expatriates, in an effort to develop more effective policies for utilizing migration in favor of Arab regional development, integration and international cooperation; and to communicate with its expatriates and build bridges of dialogue and cooperation with them for the benefit of both parties. This has been reflected in many resolutions at both the summit level and the ministerial level in this regard since 1955, when the Arab League's council at the ministerial level issued its decision concerning teaching the children of Arab expatriates, followed by the Arab Economic Council Resolution No. 77 (March 1965) on the freedom of movement, residence, and labor as stipulated in the Agreement on Arab Economic Unity.

With the increasing interest in international migration, the work of LAS in this field has been based on an array of resolutions, declarations, and recommendations. The 10th Arab Summit, held in Tunis in 1979, was the first at this level to adopt a resolution concerning strengthening the relationship with Arab expatriates. In the past decade, the Arab summits' declarations always included some paragraphs concerning international migration and Arab Expatriates, among them: the declaration issued by the Tunis summit in 2004 on the process of development and modernization in the Arab world, the Brasilia declaration issued by the Summit of Arab States and the countries of South America in 2005, the Khartoum declaration in 2006 and Doha declaration issued by the second Summit of Arab States and the countries of South America in 2009. Moreover, the declaration of the Arab Economic Summit 2009 asserted securing migrants' rights, paying attention to skilled Arab migrants outside the Arab region, strengthening their connection with their homeland, and working on providing a proper environment to utilize their skills in economic and social development in the Arab countries.

The First and the Second Meetings of the Arab Ministers in charge of Migration Affairs and Arab Expatriates, convened in Cairo at LAS headquarters in February 2008 and November 2009, recommended strengthening the role of Arab expatriates in Arab development, supporting the rights of Arab expatriates, and encouraging coordination among Arab countries on migration. In line with this, the declaration of the First Arab Expatriates Conference, held in Cairo at LAS headquarters in December 2010, reconfirmed the interrelationships between migration and development in the Arab region and called for strengthening the role of Arab expatriates' NGOs, utilizing expatriates' skills and experience through specific programs to attract and invite them to contribute to the development efforts in the Arab world and linking them to institutions and Arab scientific entities that operate in the same areas of specialization. As a result this declaration has been considered as a milestone towards utilizing migration for development.

In the framework of the restructuring of LAS general secretariat, which was put into action in January 2014, Population Policies, Expatriates and Migration were merged together in one department (PPEMD). The merging aims at smoothing the work in this field and enabling LAS to coordinate its activities more effectively.

B. LAS CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECOND HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. *The Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) on Migration and Development in the Arab Region*

A Regional Consultative Meeting (RCM) on Migration and Development in the Arab Region, in preparation for the Second United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, was organized by LAS at the general secretariat headquarters on 4-5 June 2013, in partnership with UN-ESCWA and IOM. The RCM aimed to prepare Arab countries to maximize the benefits of their participation in the Second High-level Dialogue by taking stock of progress in relation to migration and development in the Arab region since 2006, with particular focus on the High-Level Dialogue roundtable themes, and by assisting representatives in the development of a common understanding of the next steps to be taken to maximize the contributions of migration to development in the Arab region and to minimize the potential negative impacts for countries of destination and countries of origin, as well as for migrants themselves and their families.

The meeting adopted a final declaration on “International Migration and Development in the Arab Region”, which was addressed as a background document in the High-level Dialogue. Key issues in the declaration were highlighted in the statement delivered by the LAS representative in the plenary session of the High-Level Dialogue.

LAS prepared an information paper on the second High-Level Dialogue and distributed it to the permanent delegates of its Member States, attaching the Declaration that came out of the High-Level Dialogue.

2. *Coordination Meeting for the Arab Group in New York*

LAS held a meeting for the Arab Group in New York on 2 October 2013 in coordination with LAS mission in New York, in order to brief participants from the Arab countries on the key international migration and development issues in the region. The meeting aimed at coordination between Member States and unification of the Arab position on themes of the Second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. Participants were informed of the final declaration of the above-mentioned RCM.

C. LAS ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2013-JANUARY 2014

1. *Reports and publications*

a. *The "Arab Expatriate" non-periodic newsletter (December 2013)*

The third issue of the LAS non-periodic newsletter was issued in December 2013. It included the latest events and activities organized by LAS in the field of migration and Arab expatriates, as well as the activities it participated in that were organized by other entities; LAS initiatives in the field of migration; news on Arab communities living abroad; information on Senator Pierre De Bane as the featured Arab expatriate of the edition; and information about Syrian refugees and LAS efforts in this regard.

b. *Third report on Arab migration: "International Migration and Development" 2014*

A report on Arab migration titled "International Migration and Development" is currently being developed with the participation of a group of experts in the field of migration. The report will cover the following topics: international migration and development, migration streams, remittances and their impact on development, Arab communities abroad and development, and return migration and development. The report will be distributed in a launch event at the general secretariat headquarters in April 2014 and will be sent to all LAS member States and LAS permanent missions abroad.

2. *Meetings, seminars and events*

a. *International Migration in the Middle East and North Africa after the Arab Uprising: A Long Term Perspective*

LAS in collaboration with the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) - the American University in Cairo (AUC), UKAID, held a seminar in Cairo, Egypt on 22-23 April 2013, with the aim to investigate the long term impact of political and economic change in the region after the Arab uprisings on the migration system.

The seminar was attended by academics and researchers from various Arab and foreign countries, and discussed the following topics: assessment of the current situation of international migration in the Arab region, the impact of the Arab revolutions on migration in the region, the impact of return and temporary migration, statistics on international migration in the Arab region, integration of return migrants, the involvement of communities in the development process in the Arab world, and lessons learned from neighboring countries.

b. *Third meeting of the Afro-Arab migration working group October 2013:*

LAS and the permanent delegate of the African Union to the League of Arab States held the third meeting of the Afro-Arab migration working group in October 2013, in response to the recommendations of a strategic Afro-Arab cooperation emanating from the Second Arab African summit in Sirte, Libyan Arab Republic, in 2010. The meeting discussed the terms of reference of the Africa-Arab Centre for Migration, as well as the terms of reference of the Africa-Arab Technical and Coordination Committee on Migration (TCCM). The outcomes of this meeting were submitted to the Third Africa-Arab Summit held in Kuwait in November 2013.

c. *Arab Expatriates Day 2013*

On the occasion of "The Arab Expatriates Day" on 4 December, LAS organized three ceremonies in its missions in the capital cities of China, Spain and the United States of America, as an acknowledgement of the important role played by Arab immigrants in support of scientific and practical efforts and achievements in those countries and the keenness to establish channels of communication with them. Prominent Arab expatriates were honored during these ceremonies.

3. *Capacity-Building Programmes*

- LAS organized a training workshop for government officials of LAS member States in areas of international migration, refugees, and human displacement in December 2013, in collaboration with IOM and UNHCR. The workshop aimed to build the capacity of member States in the promotion of the rights of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people. The participants in the workshop

represented ministries of migration and Arab expatriates, ministries of interior, and national human rights institutions from eight Arab Countries. The second round of the workshop is expected to take place in May 2014 to cover the rest of LAS member States.

- LAS, UN-ESCWA and IOM are planning to carry out a series of capacity-building workshops for selected member States in the first half of 2014, using tools based on the handbook prepared by GMG for policymakers and practitioners titled "Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies" and the training manual prepared by IOM on "International Migration and Development". These modules were translated into Arabic in order to increase their accessibility to policymakers and practitioners in the Arab region.

4. *Data Collection*

a. *MED-HIMS Programme:*

LAS is participating in the implementation of the programme of regionally coordinated Household International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean Countries (MED-HIMS Programme), in cooperation with the European Union (EU), World Bank, UNFPA and UNHCR. The programme aims to collect data in the Mediterranean countries on out-migration, return migration, forced migration, intention to migrate, circular migration, migration of highly-skilled persons, irregular migration, type and use of remittances, behaviours, attitudes, perceptions and cultural values of people with regard to international migration, as well as relevant information on individuals and households, and the local communities involved.

b. *Reviving the Arab Observatory for Migration:*

LAS is working on reviving its Observatory for Migration, which was established to fill the gap in data and work on updating it continuously, sustain the technical capabilities in the Arab countries, contribute to knowledge transfer and adaptation in the international migration field, and find mechanisms to magnify the benefit of migration and expatriates' experiences to promote development and integration within the Arab region. The observatory includes an experts' database, and LAS is currently working on updating the available data and creating an interactive way of data entry in order to facilitate the update process and enable expatriates, experts and concerned bodies to enter their data directly.

5. *New mechanisms for cooperation in the field of migration in the Arab region*

a. *Arab Regional Working Group on International Migration (RWG):*

An Arab Regional Working Group on International Migration was established and is co-chaired by LAS, UN-ESCWA and IOM, in order to promote coordinated normative and technical work on international migration in the region; prevent duplication of efforts; and ensure a consistent, system-wide message and strategy for migration. The working group is open to UN agencies, relevant international and intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs.

The RWG held its first meeting at LAS headquarters on 25 November 2013. The meeting was attended by representatives of UN-ESCWA, IOM, UN-Women, ILO, UNFPA, UNODC, WHO, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNAIDS, and ALO. It discussed the final version of the group's terms of reference, the progress report, as well as the proposed work plan for 2014.

b. Africa-Arab Technical and Coordination Committee on Migration (TCCM)

According to the resolution adopted by the Africa Arab Summit held in Kuwait in November 2013, a Technical and Coordination Committee on Migration (TCCM) co-chaired by the African Union (AU) and LAS was established in order to help strengthen their cooperation in migration management, and to promote and protect migrants rights, especially in the provision of sound advice to member States on issues related to migration in both regions, in conformity with regional and international instruments.

The TCCM will build on existing initiatives to deliver specific outputs that will support the overall implementation of the provisions of the Africa-Arab Partnership Strategy and Joint Action Plan 2011-2016 as well as migration instruments and programs of AU and LAS.

c. Regional Consultative Process (RCP) on Migration in the Arab Region

Being aware of the importance of the Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) in circulating information, best practices and lessons learned on migration, and given that RCPs have proved their value in promoting collective responses and experience-sharing to confront migration challenges, LAS is seeking to establish a Regional Consultative Process on Migration in the Arab region, as a State-driven, non-binding, flexible and informal forum to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between LAS member States on migration issues of common concern. Technical support from UN-ESCWA and IOM will be provided to LAS in the process.

High-level officials of LAS member States emphasized the importance of establishing such a mechanism in the final declaration of the "Regional Consultative Meeting for the Arab Region", in preparation for the Second United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, in June 2013.

D. INTEGRATING MIGRATION INTO THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Migration and development are highly interdependent processes. International migration in the development context relates both to people who have chosen to move of their own accord, and forced migrants who can ultimately end up contributing to both their country of destination and possibly their country of origin when they return. Development, meanwhile, is a dynamic process implying growth, advancement, empowerment and progress, with the goal of increasing human capabilities, enlarging the scope of human choices, and creating a safe and secure environment where citizens can live with dignity and equality. In the development process, it is important that people's productivity, creativity and choices are broadened, and that opportunities are created. At the same time, risks to human development are also present where migration is a reaction to threats and denial of choice, and where regular opportunities for movement are constrained. That's why there is a need to maximize the positive relationship between migration and development especially in this era of unprecedented mobility for different reasons and push factors.

LAS, as well as all the international and regional organizations working in the field of migration, are eager to include migration in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda, as a central component of current population dynamics and as a key enabler for development at the global level.

The post-2015 agenda should take into account the important global trends, challenges and opportunities caused by migration, in order to guarantee its positive outcomes for development, which requires effective cooperation and coherence at the international, regional and national levels. It also should be ambitious and flexible for adjustments to regional and national contexts, as well as to multi-

stakeholder implementation partnerships, in order to make the inclusion of migration-related commitments more effective.

Migration can be included into the post-2015 agenda through:

- Recognizing the relationship between migration and the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), and the importance of the contributions of migrants to development through remittances, trade and investment in the countries of origin, and skill transfer.
- Strengthening the role of partnerships in the post-2015 agenda to give adequate attention to the global challenges, including migration, which require collective solutions.
- Reducing the negative impact of forced migration on development.
- Encouraging reforms to enable remittances to contribute to economic development, especially in LAS member States.
- Mainstreaming migration in the development strategies of the states.
- Recognizing the role of migrants in the development of countries of destination as well as countries of origin.
- Paying more attention to the provision of reliable data, which could be helpful to experts, planners and policymakers in assessing the impact of migration on the development process.