

**FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

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**SUBMISSION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS PROJECT
FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION***

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

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A proposal for the United Nations

The International Metropolis Project has long been interested in the extent to which migration-related phenomena can further the economic and social development of the migrants' countries of origin. Owing to the relative youth of the Metropolis Project, it has had less interest in an issue that dominated in earlier years, namely the extent to which economic development would reduce migration flows. Managing migration by managing development has over the past ten years given way to an interest in managing development in part through managing migration, specifically in ways that will further the development goals of the world's poorer migration source countries. This is a fascinating turnabout and one that has taken place rapidly and principally amongst those in the migration field. To a certain extent, this shift has been made possible by the growing acceptance in the West of the utility of migration as populations age and labour forces begin to experience the stress of retirements accompanied by low birth rates. Attention has been able to move from means for reducing migration flows, including development, to managing these flows for the best societal outcomes, including source country development. The extent to which those in the development field think of migration management as an effective means for enhancing development appears to be less than among those in the migration arena. Of more concern is the relatively little attention that migration experts and commentators are spending on the basics of development theory and experience. The result has been an explosion of ideas of how migration can be a force for development with little hard evidence to support the individual ideas or to determine which of them would have the greatest benefit if put into practice.

No matter how well-meaning the advice, a free-wheeling approach to migration and development poses dangers. Not only might energy and resources be devoted to initiatives that hold little promise of success and that, therefore, would call into question the viability of managing migration for development benefits, but some results might actually prove to cause more harm than good if only from opportunity costs.

The High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development has resulted in the creation of a state-led initiative to continue the discussions that took place in the summer of 2006 in New York. Given that this is to be a state-led project, a central question now must be of the role of the United Nations itself in the new Global Forum on Migration and Development. What will or could be the value added to the workings of the Forum by the United Nations itself? The following is a proposal for one avenue that the United Nations could explore in its support of the Forum that would not violate the primacy of the states involved. This proposal would seek to rectify the dangers of an inadequate scientific evidence base mentioned above.

The United Nations could manage a research program designed to collect data and synthesize existing theoretical and empirical research on central elements of development and of migration in so far as the latter relate to development. More specifically, the United Nations could create an evidence base to guide those working on the development effects of migration beginning with:

- A contemporary evidence-based account of the conditions in countries of origin that are necessary for development to proceed
- A contemporary evidence-based account of the conditions in countries of origin that are necessary for development to be sustained

- An evidence-based assessment of which migration-related phenomena do or, if so-managed, could contribute to the creation or enhancement of these necessary conditions in countries of origin
- An evidence-based assessment of how migration-related phenomena could be managed in order for them to produce development benefits for countries of origin.

The proposal, in other words, is for the United Nations to produce research information about the fundamentals of development that would indicate clearly the directions through which the Forum could most fruitfully explore how to manage migration for development objectives. Without such a foundation, the enterprise risks floundering or proceeding in a way dominated by political imperatives.

The conditions of development examined in this research could be of an economic, political, administrative, social, educational, environmental, or other nature. How migration could contribute to their creation or their enhancement is the objective of the world's efforts to understand the relations between migration and development. Without a clear view of what is required to be in place for development to occur in a sustained way, we have no bearings for thinking about migration's possible contribution, let alone for how to manage migration for development effects. Work to help those in the migration field understand better what is required for successful development may as well open up new ideas or new possibilities for how migration can make a significant contribution, ideas that are quite simply not yet on the discussion table.

A timely product from the United Nations would help the Global Forum on Migration and Development focus its efforts and maximize its utility. Once the Forum has acquired this information and has carried out work on how to create and implement a migration-development plan, the United Nations' role could shift to studying the actual effects of migration-development initiatives, not for purposes of normative judgement but for acquiring empirical knowledge about the extent to which migration effects can be managed for development purposes.

Activities of the International Metropolis Project with respect to migration and development

Metropolis is an international policy-research network in the field of migration and its societal effects. Our goal is to inform policy making on migration management through the application of empirical academic research. The Project is directed by an International Steering Committee supported by a Secretariat in Ottawa with a European office in Amsterdam. Metropolis stimulates research worldwide on the dynamics of migration flows, on the societal impacts on countries of reception with a particular emphasis on the social and economic integration of migrants, and on the effects of emigration on countries of origin. Among the most visible outputs of the Metropolis Project are the annual conferences where upwards of 1,000 researchers, policy officials, representatives of international organizations and of non-governmental organizations from over 40 countries convene to discuss a full range of migration issues in plenary sessions and in numerous small workshops devoted to highly specific matters. Over the past 5 years, these conferences have included sessions devoted specifically to the instrumental relations between migration and development and this will continue in the 2007 event which takes place in Melbourne October 8-12. (<http://www.metropolis2007.org/>)

Some discussions of note have included that at the 2001 Metropolis conference in Rotterdam during which the economist Oded Stark introduced his hypothesis that the brain drain, under certain conditions, will give rise to a subsequent brain gain within the country of origin. The now familiar argument is that the emigration of people with considerable human capital will, if they succeed reasonably well in their countries of destination, create incentives in the country of origin for people to emulate their success. This requires an upgrading of their human capital. If countries of destination control entry and thereby restrict migration flows, only a subset of those with increased human capital will actually leave. The net result will be an increase in the source country's human capital, a brain gain, that could be harnessed for internal economic and social development. Some empirical research is beginning to confirm the hypothesis, but this process of confirmation will, of necessity, take considerably more time.

At this same conference, the Nigerian, Aderanti Adepaju, warned the audience of the dangers posed by the brain drain to sub-Saharan African nations. This theme, one which has dominated the migration-development discussion, has recurred at a number of other Metropolis discussions, most recently during a conference in 2006 on the future of immigration. Kumi Naidoo of CIVICUS (South Africa), Dilip Ratha of the World Bank, and Bob Rowthorn of Cambridge University led the conference in an exploration of the ethics of immigrant selection systems among OECD countries that favour those with high skills. The situation requires nuancing and attention to detail, including the distinction between the actual effects of migration on source countries and the potential effects were migration managed in part from a development point of view.

Most recently, the 2006 International Metropolis Conference in Lisbon included a panel on migration and development during which we attempted to elicit new perspectives on a subject that, despite its youth, seems to be conceptually stalled. Remittances are a constant theme in the literature, almost universally cited as a highly significant instrument of development. However, we heard from Neil Ruiz of the Brookings Institute of the danger that remittances can become an alternative to development and hence a hindrance to attaining this goal. He cited the Philippines' long-standing national project of exporting talent and encouraging remittances and argued that it had allowed the country to forego its own development. Further, Ruiz argued that the skewing of the educational system for export had diminished the supply of agricultural workers and that the exodus of the middle class could have harmful effects on what is a fragile democracy. Richard Black articulated the basics of how diasporas can be engaged by their homelands to assist in development, emphasizing that this requires a long-term investment of effort on the part of the homeland to build trust with those who have left. Black argued that it is ultimately business relationships that will emerge as the most fruitful but that these can be founded upon more widespread relations of trust created by homeland outreach, even of celebration of their expatriates as illustrated by Mexico's regard for them as heroes. Temporary return programs featured among the elements of a multi-dimensional approach with the private sector and government sharing in the effort to engage the diaspora. Jonathan Crush of the Southern African Migration Project turned attention towards the urban dimension of development and of the potential development effects of South-South migration. Crush urged both national and local governments in the South to attend to the integration of their immigrants in the local economy and society generally to best take advantage of the capacity of their immigrants to contribute to local wealth creation. The focus on cities as the locus of the development effects of migration brings an entirely new perspective on the debate.

The International Metropolis Project will continue to attend to this issue in future conferences. It remains willing to bring its network of experts to contribute to the efforts of the United Nations in this field. Should the United Nations take upon itself the task of preparing an evidence base for the Global Forum and other migration-development initiatives, Metropolis would be pleased to make a contribution.