

ACTIVITIES OF ESCAP IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

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The topic of international migration continued to receive high priority in the work of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In recognition of the complex linkages between migration and development, particularly the contribution of international migration towards poverty alleviation and overall socio-economic development, ESCAP continues to promote better understanding of the phenomenon and further cooperation in migration management at the regional level.

A. ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE 2006 HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT AND THE 2007 GLOBAL FORUM ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

ESCAP, at its third session of the Committee of Emerging Social Issues held in Bangkok from 12 to 14 December 2006, considered regional challenges in managing migration for development as one of the agenda items, and examined key issues of international migration in the ESCAP region. The Committee reviewed the activities undertaken by ESCAP in advance of the High-level Dialogue as well as the outcome of the Dialogue. The Committee was also informed of the establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The Committee recognized international migration as an emerging cross-border issue in the Asian and Pacific region and requested ESCAP to coordinate regional follow-up actions to the outcomes of the High-level Dialogue. It urged ESCAP to provide a forum for regional dialogue and to facilitate discussions on the multidimensional aspects of international migration and its linkages with development. To this end, the Committee called for the establishment of a regional consultative process on international migration and development.

As a follow-up activity to the High-level Dialogue, the ESCAP Commission, at its sixty-third session held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 17 to 23 May 2007, considered the challenges and opportunities of international migration and development, with particular emphasis on the situation in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. The topic was vigorously discussed among the delegations of ESCAP members and associate members. The Commission adopted a resolution on international migration and development which re-emphasized the mandate of ESCAP in this area and called on the Secretariat to compile and analyse information on international migration, to continue to provide a forum for dialogue among members and associate members and to convene a high-level meeting on international migration and development, preferably in 2008.¹

In preparation for the first Global Forum on Migration and Development, held in Belgium in July 2007, the Asia-Pacific Conference on International Migration and Development took place in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, from 25 to 26 June 2007. The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea in collaboration with ESCAP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Bringing together representatives of 26 countries in the ESCAP region, the conference saw vigorous exchange of views, concerns and experiences in migration management. The discussion centred on the topics of the Global Forum, namely: (a) interlinkages between international migration and socio-economic development; (b) remittances and resources of expatriate communities as tools for development, and (c) promotion of partnerships and policy coherence. The outcome of the conference, in the form of a Chairman's Summary, was forwarded to the Global Forum, ensuring the expression of perspectives and concerns from the Asia-Pacific region.

B. RESEARCH AND TRAINING

The social dimension of international migration, despite its importance, often receives marginal focus in the migration debate. Hence, ESCAP will be publishing a study entitled “Social implications of international migration in Asia”, as an issue of the Asia-Pacific Population and Social Studies series. The study will explore the impacts of international migration on family and children, gender roles and health. It will also discuss the growing trend of international marriages. The forthcoming ESCAP Economic and Social Survey 2008 will devote a chapter to the social dimensions of international migration.

ESCAP is also taking the lead in a situation analysis, being undertaken by the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration, including Human Trafficking. The Group has conducted research on the situation of international migration in Eastern and South-eastern Asia and plans to publish it as a report to provide policymakers and practitioners with comprehensive reference materials and policy recommendations. The publication will present an overview of the multidimensional aspects of international migration, thereby indicating the scope and status of knowledge on the issue. It will also provide a regional perspective on migration, including comparative information and statistics, and covering cross-cutting thematic topics such as gender, health and regional cooperation.

Using the information gathered for the above-mentioned publication, ESCAP organized a “Policy dialogue on international migration and development in Eastern and South-eastern Asia”, from 8 to 9 November 2007. Resource persons delivered lectures on a wide range of migration issues, in addition to country overviews presented by participants. Attended by senior Government officials of 12 countries in the region, the meeting provided an effective venue to enhance understanding of migration issues, promote constructive dialogue and exchange of good practices.

C. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

ESCAP continued to coordinate its activities on international migration with relevant United Nations agencies and bodies, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and promote cooperation at the regional level. Since 2005, ESCAP co-chairs with IOM the Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration, including Human Trafficking, whose members consist of 15 United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations. The group met four times in 2007 and shared information on recent activities undertaken by the respective organization. The group is currently preparing a situation report on international migration in Eastern and South-eastern Asia, drawing upon the expertise of member organizations in the area of international migration.

On 20 June 2007, ESCAP formalized its long-standing collaboration with IOM by signing a memorandum of understanding. The agreement established a general framework for cooperation and coordination on international migration issues. It also enables ESCAP and IOM to develop joint initiatives as well as harmonize their respective activities.

NOTE

¹ ESCAP resolution 63/7, 23 May, 2007.