

ACTIVITIES OF ECLAC IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

*Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and
Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre
United Nations*

A. BACKGROUND

ECLAC, mainly through its Population Division—the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)—carries out various activities concerning international migration, human rights and development as part of its regular programme of work and with the support of the regional project of the United Nations Population Fund.

In the year of the fiftieth anniversary of CELADE, the activities in 2007 focused on research, publications and technical assistance to countries, as well as the active participation in intergovernmental conferences, seminars and forums and preparations for a worldwide project involving the five regional commissions and headed by ECLAC.

B. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND THOSE ALREADY UNDER WAY

1. Research, publications and technical assistance

Following the presentation of the document “International migration, human rights and development: Summary and conclusions” to the ad hoc Committee on Population and Development at the thirty-first session of the Commission held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in March 2006, CELADE presented a small book at a seminar to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Division in October 2007¹. An expanded version of those texts was being completed for publication in the series *Libros de la CEPAL* in 2008.

The above-mentioned documents, which have been widely disseminated and which were associated with the session of the Commission, study the trends and issues of international migration and put forward proposals to help the region’s Governments to tackle the most significant challenges and opportunities for development offered by migration, with a cross-cutting approach based on the human rights of migrants and their families. The main message that ECLAC wishes to convey to countries is the need to recognize that international migration is a matter of development and rights, which calls for comprehensive actions that are conducive to the governance of international migration from a Latin American and Caribbean perspective, and that help to free up mobility, boost positive externalities and protect the human rights of all migrants.

Following the preparation of the document on international migration, human rights and development, the Commission at its thirty-first session adopted a resolution, which is available from the website of the Committee on Population and Development. Among other matters, the resolution called for the ratification of international instruments on migration and welcomed the initiative to organize an Ibero-American meeting on migration, organized by the Ibero-American Secretariat, with the support of ECLAC and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This meeting was held in Madrid, Spain, in June 2006.

The resolution also called for the creation of an inter-agency group on migration, coordinated by ECLAC. In 2007, preparations began for the implementation of this mandate. This initiative will establish a platform to align the work of international and intergovernmental organizations, with the collaboration of expert networks, civil society organizations and intergovernmental forums.

ECLAC initiated two studies on census information in 2007. One constitutes an exhaustive analysis of census information based on microdata from the new questions included by some countries in the 2000 round, with view to making proposals concerning the 2010 round. The second study is a comparative analysis of census information in the Caribbean countries, the aim of which is to consider setting up a database.

In 2007, the project “Migration and development: The case of Latin America”, financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was completed. The international migration component of the project was implemented by the ECLAC Economic Development Division. An international seminar held in August 2007 summarized the content of the project, which included a summary of the conceptual approach and a presentation of the main empirical results regarding the role of country differences in per capita income, business cycles, functioning of the labour market and determinants of economic policy in selected countries of origin and destination. These results will be published at a later date.

ECLAC, through CELADE, has also been actively involved in meetings on international migration organized jointly by Governments, research centres and universities, as well as by United Nations agencies and the IOM. Thus, CELADE participated in the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Centre for Demographic Studies of the University of Havana, Cuba, in seminars organized by the IOM in Chile and Ecuador and in two regional consultative forums on migration, namely the Regional Conference on Migration and the South American Conference on Migration, which included a workshop on migration and gender. A series of national seminars organized by research associations and networks provided an opportunity to disseminate the work of CELADE and to provide technical assistance, including the ninth Argentine Symposium on Population Studies. Furthermore, CELADE presented its work at various European seminars, including the “Conference on migration between Latin America and Europe”, organized by the Institute of Development Studies of the Catholic University of Louvain, in Brussels, Belgium in November 2006, and the “Seminar on Latin American immigration in Spain: The state of research”, organized by the Centre for International Relations and Development Studies (CIDOB Foundation) in Barcelona, Spain in November 2007.

2. Collaboration with the Ibero-American Community

ECLAC, through CELADE, has been actively involved in the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Salamanca, Spain (2005), Montevideo, Uruguay (2006) and Santiago de Chile, Chile (2007). At these summits, delegates recognized the increased importance of international migration within the Ibero-American Community. The Declaration of Salamanca not only highlighted migration as a high-priority issue, but also established the principle that migration is a common good, with enormous potential for the development and social cohesion of countries. Dialogue, cooperation and convergence were essential in order to move forward the governance of migration within the framework of the principles of international human rights law.

In follow-up to the mandates arising from the Summit of Salamanca, the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB), with the cooperation of the Carolina Foundation of Spain, ECLAC/CELADE and the IOM, organized the Ibero-American meeting on international migration and development, which was held in Madrid in July 2006. At the meeting, which was attended by about 700 participants, various aspects of migration were discussed by government authorities, academics, experts from civil society networks, representatives of subnational consultative processes and experts from international agencies. One of the

conclusions of the meeting was that countries of origin, transit and destination of migratory flows of the Ibero-American Community should cooperate more closely to ensure the full respect of the human rights of migrants and the recognition of the positive contribution of international migration to national development. The meeting also called for the identification and dissemination of best practices in governing migration to the benefit of the countries of the Ibero-American Conference and of migrants themselves.

The contributions presented at the Ibero-American meeting on international migration and development and the conclusions of the debate were published in the report “Unidos por las migraciones” published by the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB). This report served as input for the sixteenth Ibero-American Summit held in Montevideo in 2006, which had as its main theme the linkages between migration and development. The resulting Montevideo Commitment on Migration and Development, signed by Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American Community, stated that the history of Ibero-America had been strongly influenced by migration flows, that migration continued to mark the Community’s present and that migration would continue to play a major role in the future. The Commitment also stated that Ibero-American peoples had benefited from the cultural, scientific, academic, economic, political and social contribution of migrants, and that there was a common obligation and responsibility to continue ensuring the positive impact of migration.

The Montevideo Commitment identified a wide range of matters that needed to be dealt with jointly by Ibero-American countries. With a view to effectively applying the guidelines contained in the Declaration of Salamanca and the Montevideo Commitment, the Heads of State and Government of the Ibero-American Community decided to establish and organize an Inter-American Forum on Migration and Development to exchange good practices, develop consensus and coordinate joint actions by Ibero-American States. The first meeting of the Inter-American Forum on Migration and Development is scheduled to take place in Cuenca, Ecuador, from 10 to 11 April 2008. Preparations for the meeting include defining the contents, making contact with relevant national and local authorities for planning and monitoring purposes, identifying speakers and commentators and producing the two studies mentioned in the Montevideo Commitment. The Ibero-American Secretariat has requested the participation of ECLAC in these tasks.

The Montevideo Commitment also outlined the main content of the meeting of the Inter-American Forum on Migration and Development. It requested the Ibero-American Secretariat to carry out a study on migration and development, with contributions from, *inter alia*, ECLAC, IOM, the MERCOSUR Specialized Forum on Migration, the South American Conference on Migration and the Regional Conference on Migration (“Puebla Process”), and to formulate proposals for the Forum in consultation with Member States. The Montevideo Commitment instructed the Ibero-American Secretariat to coordinate, in collaboration with ECLAC, a study on the social and economic impact of the integration of migrants in countries of destination, which started in late 2007.

At the seventeenth Ibero-American Summit in 2007, Heads of State and Government adopted the Declaration of Santiago, reiterating the Montevideo Commitment and the multidimensional attention to migration as an essential element for ensuring social cohesion. They emphasized the need for a multidisciplinary approach in keeping with the principle of shared responsibility among countries of origin, transit and destination, as part of international cooperation for development. Leaders agreed to fully guarantee the human rights of migrants in the framework of each State’s legal system, independent of their migratory status. As part of the Declaration, member countries committed themselves to adopt the Ibero-American Multilateral Convention for Social Security and to promote its rapid entry into force. The Programme of Action adopted at the seventeenth Ibero-American Summit, requested the Cuenca Forum to develop an action programme on migration that, in keeping with the Montevideo Commitment on Migration and Development, would promote the protection of human rights of migrants. ECLAC was requested to continue to support the Ibero-American Secretariat in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

C. PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

In the 2008-2009 biennium, ECLAC through CELADE intends to implement the project “Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: Maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact” in the context of the United Nations Development Account. The project will involve all five regional commissions (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as implementing agencies. In its capacity as lead agency for the project, ECLAC submitted the project for approval by the Programme Manager of the Development Account in late 2007. The Fifth Committee of the General Assembly will consider the fascicle on the Development Account in the context of the review of the proposed programme budget.

The general objective of this project is to strengthen national capacities to incorporate international migration issues into national development strategies in order to maximize the development benefits of international migration and minimize its negative impacts. Specific objectives of the project include improving data quality and availability on international migration, highlighting female migration, increasing institutional and human capacities in designing and implementing policies and programmes, and promoting cooperation on international migration through an effective intra- and inter-regional network for the exchange of information, studies, policies, experiences and best practices among countries and regions.

The project is expected to deliver three specific outcomes: creation of an effective interregional network of national and regional centres, institutions and experts aimed at increasing knowledge and exchange of best practices on policy responses to migration and development challenges in the five regions; increased availability of information on international migration and its development impacts, and development of national skills and capacities to design and implement policies and programmes taking into account the particular challenges of international migration.

The coordinated action of the five regional commissions and DESA, as well as the collaboration of other partners such as intergovernmental organizations, regional development entities, and research centres, will help build a critical mass of existing knowledge on international migration and its impact on development. The beneficiaries of the project will be Governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, research centres, academia, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations related to migration issues.

NOTE

¹ See LC/L.2706.