

Concept Paper

High Level Side Event

70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Strengthening cooperation on migration and refugee movements in the perspective of the new development agenda

30 September 2015, 3 to 5 p.m., Conference Room 4

Overview

The United Nations Secretary-General will convene a high-level side event on migration during the high-level segment of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The aim is to encourage enhanced cooperation and collective action in dealing with the problems and challenges of migration and human mobility, including mixed movements involving migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees. Facilitating safe, orderly and responsible mobility is also a key component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which requires coordinated action not only among States, but also at all levels of Government, and with a series of non-governmental stakeholders, to ensure no one is left behind.

Recent situations at sea and land borders, including in the Mediterranean Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, and more recently in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, demonstrate that mixed migration in insecure circumstances is a global challenge. These large mixed flows, often facilitated by criminal smuggling rings, have heightened the risks of abuse and exploitation, particularly for women and children. This phenomenon generates specific dynamics at the regional level and has multi-dimensional implications for origin, transit and destination countries. Moreover, patterns of migration are evolving rapidly. Today, we find that most United Nations Member States are countries of origin, transit or destination and, increasingly, all three simultaneously. Beyond immediate humanitarian responses, these new patterns of migration and forced displacement require long-term, comprehensive approaches.

Lessons learned from implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) show that human mobility is a key factor for sustainable development – as recognized in the Declaration of the General Assembly’s 2013 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development – and highlight the importance of human rights and the rule of law to ensure the sustainability of development goals.

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, now rightly address contemporary human mobility, calling for “orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” as a means of reducing inequalities within and among countries. They also call for the full recognition of the rights of migrant

workers, and address the phenomena of migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. The focus must now be on implementing the agenda and supporting member States in achieving the targets they have set.

Underpinning the notion of sustainable development is the recognition that one-dimensional and short-term approaches belong to the past. Long-term strategies and commitments are needed, combined with action across a wide range of policy areas. Migration can be well managed and mixed migration can be governed in an efficient and principled manner through effective cooperation among countries of origin, transit, and destination. The private sector, diaspora groups, civil society and receiving communities, humanitarian and development actors also have crucial roles to play.

Convinced of the need for collective approaches, underpinned by universal principles of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and based on the eight point agenda for action presented to the General Assembly's 2013 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (A/68/190), the Secretary-General will share his views on the key elements of such a global partnership and comprehensive approach to migration and refugee flows.

The high-level side event will also provide an important opportunity for member States to bring together different policy areas related to migration and refugee flows, and discuss enhanced cooperation across these areas. This includes the implementation of migration and integration policies, and the creation of adequate channels for orderly, safe, and regular migration with full respect for human rights, as well as the humanitarian admission of refugees, whilst improving cooperation and effectiveness in law enforcement operations aimed at combatting transnational organized crime.

Areas of Discussion:

The high-level side event will cover the following areas:

- What steps can be taken by member States and what elements are required to ensure comprehensive approaches to migration and human mobility, including asylum seekers and refugees?
- What concrete steps can be taken to achieve the SDG target of planned and well-managed migration?
- How can migration be integrated in national development plans and strategies?
- Who are the key players and what are their roles and responsibilities? What role can regional organizations play?
- What are the key challenges, as well as best practices, in preventing and addressing human rights violations in the context of migration and refugee flows, and in protecting the rights of migrants and asylum seekers?