International Migration Policies: An Overview

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations

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Introduction

Substantial changes in government perceptions of migration trends took place in the second half of 1970s and the early 1980s.

Migration has become prominent in the national and international agenda since the 1990s

OUTLINE

Immigration policies

Regulation of the number
and type of migration

Formulation of policies to influence
the conditions of migrants within
a country

Overall immigration levels
Skilled migration
Low-skilled migration
Family reunification
Undocumented migration

Integration of non nationals
Regularization programmes
(linguistic and vocational training,
easier acquisition of citizenship)

Emigration policies

Overall emigration

Return migration

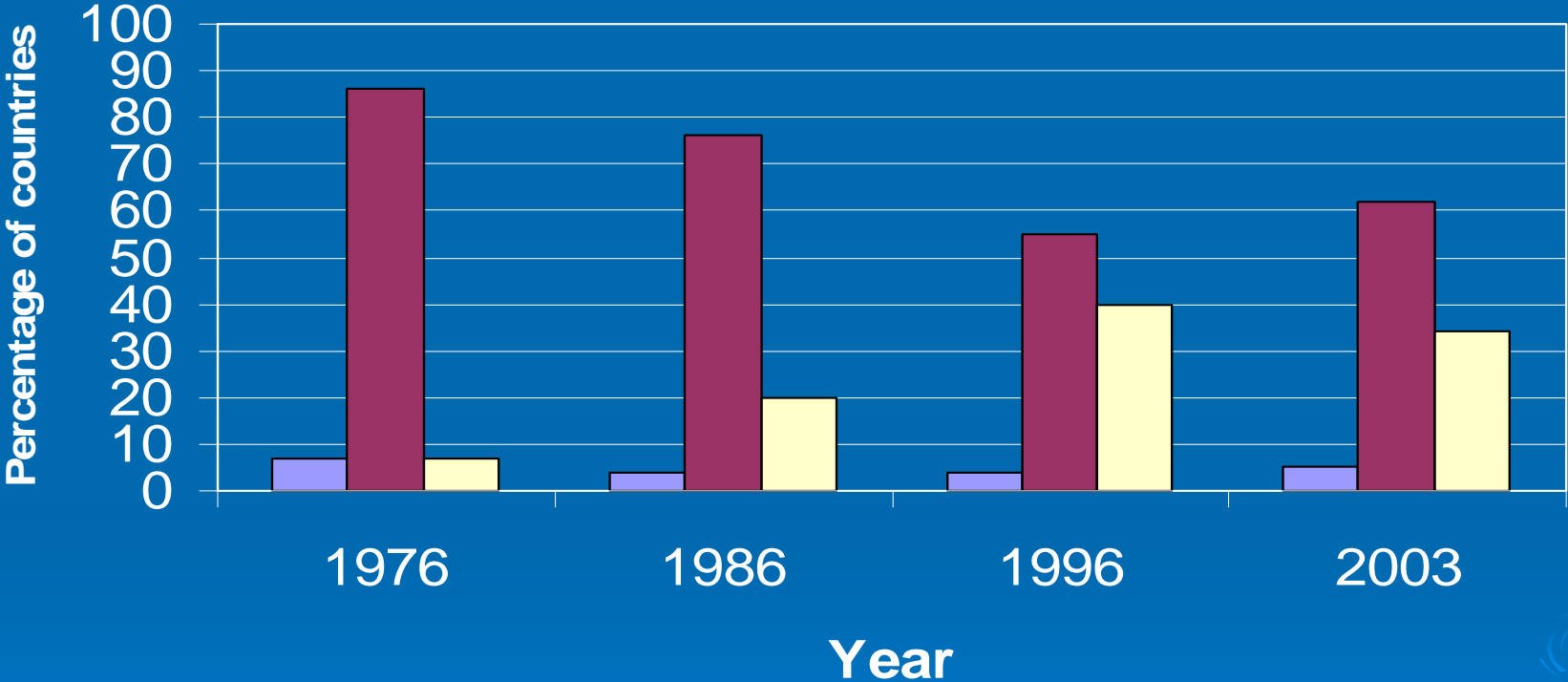**Regional and sub-regional harmonization**

Immigration Policies

Overall immigration levels

Views: Since 1986, about one-fifth of countries view the level of immigration as too high.

➢ In 2003, more than one-third of countries report policies designed to change migration from its current level; among them, one-third want to lower immigration and 5 per cent want to raise it.

➢ This contrasts with 1976 when only 7 per cent of countries want to lower immigration and another 7 per cent wanted to raise immigration

Skilled worker migration

➢ Growing number of countries are promoting the migration of skilled workers; at the same time that increasing restrictiveness towards overall migration in receiving countries is becoming common.

➢ A number of receiving countries have enacted legislation placing greater emphasis on migrants skills. For example

- Germany (2000 Green Card Initiative)
- United Kingdom (2002 Highly Skilled Migration Programme)
- United States (2000 H1-B visas)
- Bilateral agreements (skilled and unskilled migrants)
  - Germany-Poland
  - Italy-Tunisia
  - Spain-Morocco

➢ New trends within OECD countries to encourage the international migration of highly skilled workers

Low-skilled migration

➢ Number of countries are experiencing labour shortages in low skilled fields due to population ageing and rising jobs expectations (agriculture, construction, domestic services)

➢ Several countries have responded to these labour gaps by tolerating undocumented migration and visa overstayers.

➢ Countries have signed bilateral agreements to recruit foreign workers. For example, countries of Southern Europe signed bilateral agreements with Poland, Romania and Ukraine.

➢

Family reunification

➢ For a number of countries, family reunification is the predominant mode of entry.

➢ Most countries of immigration accept some migrants on the ground of family reunification; some countries give it preference.

Integration of non-nationals

➢ Increasing number of countries (61) have programmes to integrate non-nationals in 2003. Those programmes are found mainly in the more developed countries:

- Linguistic and vocational training
- Easier acquisition of citizenship
- Recognition of dual citizenship

Undocumented migration

- ➢ Countries clamping down on undocumented migration (including trafficking/smuggling)
- ➢ Undocumented migration is increasing and is a major concern in almost all receiving countries. This translates into:
    - Extension of legal competencies
    - More stringent requirements for visa issuance;
    - Tighter border security (e.g. fingerprinting and photograph); increased use of technological measures;
    - Regularization programmes
    - Bilateral agreements for readmission
        - Poland-Russian Federation
        - Ireland-Nigeria
        - Spain-Colombia, Dominican Republic
        - Spain-Morocco (nationals and those transiting)

Regional and subregional harmonization

➢ Harmonization of immigration policies among governments has facilitated information exchange and improved regional cooperation. Consultative processes have been established at regional and international level to stem the flow of undocumented migrants;

- Bali Ministerial agreement on People Smuggling
- Puebla process (Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States.)

International Initiatives

- International instruments:

    Migrant worker convention 1990 (entered into force on 1/7/2003)

    Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children 2000 (entered into force on 25/12/2003)

    Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air 2000 (entered into force on 28/1/2004)

    Report of the Secretary-General on Strengthening the United Nations: An Agenda for Change

    United Nations General Assembly
    - Report of Secretary-General on international migration and development
        - Resolution of 23 December 2003 calling for High Level Dialogue in 2006 on international migration and development
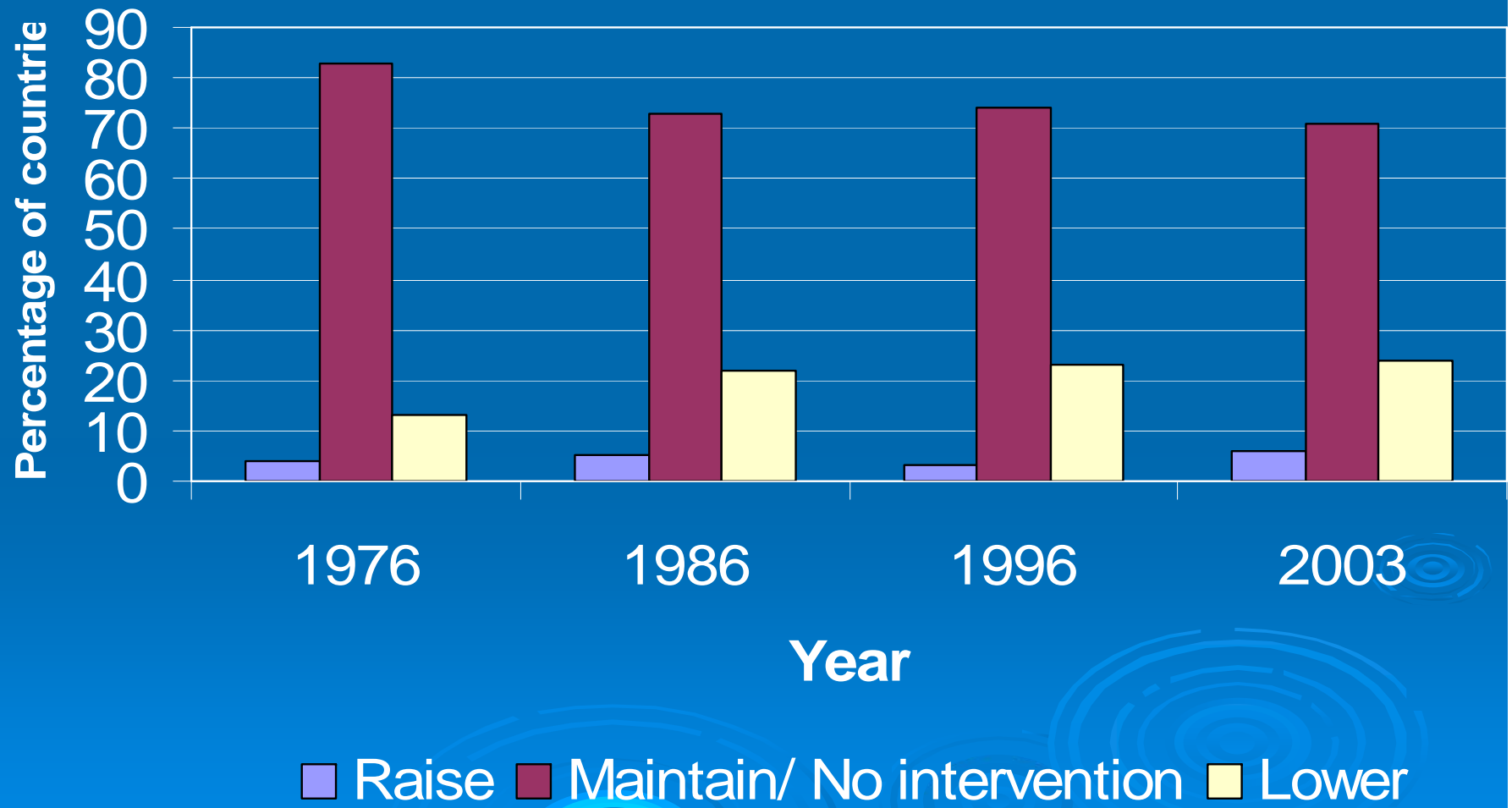
    Establishment of the Global Commission on International Migration (2003)

Emigration Policies

Sending countries:

➢ Despite increasing volume of migration, percentage of countries aiming to lower emigration remains at one-quarter since 1980s.
  - South Africa-United Kingdom (U.K agrees not recruit health professionals from South Africa)

➢ Eleven countries seek to raise emigration
  - Government units to manage migration
    - Bangladesh, India, Philippines

➢ Countries less inclined to encourage return migration.

➢ Establishing linkage programmes with nationals abroad El Savador, Mexico, Morocco).

➢ Recognizing dual citizenship

Government Emigration Policies

Conclusions

➢ Migration will remain at forefront of national and international agendas for foreseeable future

- With low fertility and population ageing, immigration needed to fill labour shortages, forestall population decline, sustain economic growth

    For sending countries, migration major source of foreign exchange from remittances ($75 billion)

    Making migration work for all countries, while respecting rights and responsibilities of migrants is a major challenge and opportunity

"Only through cooperation can we build partnerships, make migration a driver of development, fight smugglers and traffickers and agree on standards for the treatment of migrants and the management of migration." Address of Secretary-General to the European Parliament upon receipt of the Andrei Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, 29 January 2004.