



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Memorandum

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**Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sweden**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Department for Migration and Asylum Policy

**Presentation on International migration and development
by Deputy Minister for Migration, Ms. Charlotte
Svensson**

Mr. Chairperson,

Migration is good for development. It can have positive development impacts on all countries, whether they are what we traditionally refer to as countries of origin or countries of destination.

This is the starting point for this symposium and for the High level Dialogue this September.

Migration is not a new phenomenon. People have always been moving. They have done so in order to seek better opportunities, to do business and generally to secure a livelihood for their families. But the scope and circumstances has changed over time.

Migration today is a prominent feature of globalization.

The individual migrants, women and men, should at the center of our discussions. We should acknowledge their potential. In policy formulation, we need to recognize that the migrant often is an entrepreneur and generally not a victim.

The report from the Global Commission on International Migration shows the way in this respect. It presents new perspectives on migration, focusing on migration as a development force – not as an obstacle. We should make use of the many valuable findings in this report.

Migration is a complex issue. It involves sensitive justice-, home- and foreign affairs considerations. The report from the Global Commission and the report from the UN Secretary General both provide a platform for

further discussions. They are the results of extensive global consultations and they define common understandings and can lead the way towards a constructive dialogue. We should make use of these reports in our future discussions and deliberations.

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The theme of this symposium is ‘Migration for development’, but the reverse – development for migration – is also true. The negative side of today’s migration flows; trafficking, human smuggling, abuse and exploitation of labor is driven by lack of development, lack of decent working conditions, lack of respect for human rights and equality between women and men, and the unequal distribution of resources. All these problems cannot be solved by migration. The work must start at home. It is every government’s obligation to create and sustain a society where people, women and men, can secure a livelihood and build a future. There is also an international responsibility to create a more equal world.

This is a shared responsibility.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to outline a few factors that can improve the development impact of migration.

First of all, we need more progressive development policies, including policies for agricultural, trade and foreign affairs.

Different policy areas must not contradict – but support each other. On the contrary, we should put much more effort into making different policy areas work in the same direction – towards global justice.

Sweden has taken one step in this direction. In 2003 we adopted a policy for global development applying to the government as a whole – for all policy areas. The policy clearly states that although development aid will continue to be an important resource in the poorest countries, other policy areas often turn out to be even more significant for poverty reduction and development.

In the case of migration, policies and actions for international trade, environmental improvement and employment are of the utmost significance.

A second point is that we should develop instruments that promote circular migration.

Circular migration can boost development. Let me take my own country as an example. A hundred years ago more than a million Swedes left my country to go to America. The main reason for people leaving was poverty. Sweden was a poor, rural country at that time. But every fourth person came back home. They made an important contribution to development in both Sweden and America.

More research is needed to determine which conditions can promote voluntary returns and to ensure that their impact on development is positive. The Swedish historical example is interesting because it shows that circular migration can promote development. There are many examples in today's world that merits further attention. We should make it easier for people to move - and move back home.

I am very proud when I meet, or read about, Swedish citizens around the world, working either as ministers, parliamentarians or as entrepreneurs. They came to our country as refugees. They are returning home, building a new future in their country of origin. They are a very important part of a reconstruction and reconciliation.

They have two home countries.

Mr. Chairperson,

Remittances are the most immediate and tangible benefit of migration (as pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report).

Remittances provide relief to poor individuals, families and communities. Also more indirectly, remittances can support a more vibrant economy by expanding job markets. But this is also an area where more coherence is needed. Too much money is lost on the way. Efforts are needed to reduce the transaction costs and facilitate the flows, as well as enhancing the development effects of remittances.

I also believe that remittances should be part of a development strategy. Governments should consider how to reinforce the development impact of remittances. Having said this I would like to underline that remittances are, and should remain, private flows. Remittances – irrespective of volume – must never be an excuse for a reduction in development assistance, nor should they be subject to taxation.

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If we are to maximize the development impact we must see to that migrants are not exploited but that they benefit from improved labour standards and better wages.

To achieve this we need orderly migration. It should support and be supported by the international human rights frameworks that protect migrants, especially women and children.

Irregular migration must be reduced. For me this is a very ideological question, it is about what kind of society we would like to live in. The magnitude of irregular migrants reveals the existence of a dual labour market in a majority of countries. It leaves many people in our societies with no rights and without security. At the same time it undermines human rights and labour standards.

Many countries need labor and we should be ready to pay for it! This is not only a question about managing migration. It is about human rights.

In all this, it is however important to underline the right and obligation of every country to decide who can enter and stay in its territory and under what conditions.

Only when a person legally resides within a country can he or she be guaranteed the same rights and obligations as the citizens of that country. This is an important basic principle of Sweden's migration policy. This includes for instance the right to family reunification, full access to the labour market and to the social benefits' system.

A migration policy with the aim of managing migration is in everybody's interest – countries of origin and destination as well as the migrants themselves.

Mr. Chairperson,

We need more knowledge.

There are many myths surrounding international migration, including the levels of migration flows and their impact on development. To help counteract these myths and to enable the development of policies built on evidence rather than assumptions and anecdotes we need better data and multidisciplinary research.

In particular, there is tremendous need for more as well as better statistics and research in sending countries. This will demand increased efforts and resources, and may also require additional capacity building and support.

We very much welcome the upcoming UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in September.

Sweden hopes that the outcome of the High Level Dialogue will focus on the positive impacts of migration on poverty reduction and development. By considering migration as an integral part of the development agenda, an important step is taken towards the ultimate goal that migrants should migrate out of choice rather than necessity.

During the High Level Dialogue, I hope that the focus will be on identifying common interests based on the fact that today all countries are countries of migration.

The High Level Dialogue is not an end of a process, but as a starting point. The international discussion on migration and development must continue.

I do however not think that the time is right to create a new international organization. It is too soon. We need an open-ended, consultative and non-decision-making forum for continued dialogue on migration, as suggested in the Secretary General's report. The agenda for the meetings in this future forum should furthermore be set by member states in order to create the possibility for a truly constructive discussion. There is no forum that presently meets these criteria.

Migration needs global attention. That is why we need to discuss further— in line with the proposals in the SG report — on how best to address the issue of international dialogue in the future.

Thank you for your attention.