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MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**
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INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Population Division
United Nations

I. INTRODUCTION

The Arab region has experienced diverse migration flows. The countries of the Maghreb—Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and Tunisia—have been important sources of migrants to the European countries and have become in recent times countries of transit or destination for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. The countries or areas of the Mashreq—Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Occupied Palestinian Territory—have mostly been countries of origin for flows of migrant workers to the oil-producing countries in the region and have also been the destination of migrants. The Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, namely, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are among the major destinations of migrant workers in the world.

This paper reviews trends in recent migration in the Arab region in comparison to those at the world level. It focuses primarily on voluntary migration trends since 1990 and on their characteristics. The paper also documents the views and policies of Governments regarding levels of immigration and emigration. Lastly, it reviews regional and international cooperation in relation to developments in the Arab region.

II. LEVELS AND TRENDS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION

At the global level, the number of international migrants increased from 155 million to 191 million between 1990 and 2005 (table 1). The share of international migrants as a percentage of the world population remained unchanged at about 3 per cent during this period. The developed countries absorbed virtually all the increase in the number of international migrants between 1990 and 2005 (33 million out of 36 million). As a result, the number of international migrants in more developed regions increased by 40 per cent since 1990. In contrast, the overall increment in the number of migrants in less developed regions between 1990 and 2000 was small, amounting to less than 3 million migrants, so that their overall number increased by just 4 per cent. These changes have produced an increasing concentration of international migrants in the developed world. Six of every ten migrants now live in developed countries.

These estimates of the number of migrants at the world and regional levels are derived from data gathered by censuses on the number of foreign-born persons in each country. For countries not having data on the foreign-born, the number of foreigners (that is, non-nationals) was used instead. Among countries in the Arab region, only three had data on the foreign-born, and 14 other had data on non-nationals. The estimates presented include also the number of refugees as reported by UNHCR and UNRWA. Migrants in an irregular situation are included provided they are included in census counts.

Since the most recent censuses for many countries date back to the 1990s or earlier dates, recent estimates are the result of extrapolation. In addition, the definition of migrant used implies that persons who have been abroad but have returned to their countries of birth are not counted as migrants. The net overall increase in the number of migrants in developing countries is therefore the result of both increases and decreases in the number of migrants in different countries. At the world level, the number of migrants decreased in 72 countries between 1990 and 2005

Table 1. Estimated number of international migrants and international migrants as percentage of population, by development group and sub-regions of the Arab region, 1990 and 2005

	<i>Number of migrants (millions)</i>		<i>Increment (millions)</i>	<i>Percentage change</i>	<i>Migrants as percentage of population</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2005</i>			<i>1990-2005</i>	<i>1990</i>	2005
World	154.9	190.6	35.7	23.0	2.9	3.0
More developed regions	82.4	115.4	33.0	40.1	7.2	9.5
Less developed regions	72.6	75.2	2.7	3.7	1.8	1.4
Arab region ^a	13.1	19.8	6.7	51.1	6.8	7.3
of which:						
MAGHREB	0.9	1.0	0.2	20.6	1.4	1.3
MASHREQ	3.5	5.7	2.2	61.9	3.7	4.3
GCC	8.6	12.8	4.2	48.5	37.2	35.7

Source: *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision* (United Nations Population Division, POP/DB/MIG/Rev.2005) data in digital form, 2006.

Note:

^a Including Yemen.

A. Increase in migrant stock in the Arab region

The Arab region includes some of the major receiving countries in the world. Hence, between 1990 and 2005, it is estimated that it gained nearly seven million international migrants, so that its migrant stock increased from 13 million to nearly 20 million migrants. In 2005, the Arab region hosted one in every ten international migrants in the world and one in every four migrants in the less developed regions. Moreover, the share of migrants in the Arab region among all migrants in developing countries has increased from 18 per cent in 1990 to 26 per cent in 2005. Six of every 10 migrants in the Arab region live in the Member States of the GCC. Saudi Arabia alone accounts for one in every three migrants living in the region.

In 2005, three Arab countries were among the 20 countries with the largest number of migrants: Saudi Arabia with an estimated 6.4 million migrants; the United Arab Emirates with 3.2 million, and Jordan with 2.2 million migrants. These countries accounted for 3.3 per cent, 1.7 per cent and 1.2 per cent, respectively, of overall number of migrants in the world.

In ten countries of the Arab region, including Jordan, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and all the Member States of the GCC, migrants accounted for over 10 per cent of the population in 2005. That is, whereas in two-thirds of the Arab countries migrants accounted for high percentages of the total population, at the world level only in a third of all countries did migrants account for more than 10 per cent of the population. Among the countries with at least a million inhabitants, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have the highest proportion of migrants in the total population: 71 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively.

Countries in the Arab region have also witnessed some of the largest gains in the number of international migrants between 1990 and 2005. At the world level, in twelve countries the number of migrants increased by one million or more, three of which were Arab countries: the

United Arab Emirates with an increase of 1.9 million; Saudi Arabia with 1.6 million, and Jordan with 1.1 million. In contrast, the number of migrants declined in Algeria, Egypt and Iraq.

B. Trends in net migration

In terms of migration flows, trends in some countries in the Arab region have changed abruptly over the past 15 years. If the period 1990-2005 is divided into three five-year slots, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia experienced negative net migration during 1990-1995 as a result of the Gulf war, but positive net migration thereafter. Lebanon changed from being a net receiver during 1990-1995, when large numbers of expatriates returned following the end of civil conflict, to negative net migration since 1995. Four countries—Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates—experienced consistently positive net migration over the three five-year periods in 1990-2005, whereas all the Maghreb countries plus the Syrian Arab Republic experienced negative net migration during those periods.

C. Contribution of migration to population change

In the more developed regions, where countries are experiencing very low fertility levels and hence low or even negative rates of natural increase, net international migration has become the major contributor to population growth. During 1990-1995, net migration accounted for half of the population growth in the more developed regions as a whole, and for three-quarters of that growth during 2000-2005 (table 2). In Europe, the population would have decreased were it not for net migration. In contrast, net migration in developing countries is generally low compared to natural increase. During 2000-2005, less developed regions gained annually about 75 million people from the excess of births over deaths but lost nearly 3 million people as a result of a negative net migration balance with the more developed regions.

In the Arab region, most countries are still experiencing moderate to high population growth fuelled mainly by moderate to high fertility and a young population. In countries experiencing negative net migration, its contribution to the reduction of population growth is moderate or low. In the Arab region, Lebanon and Morocco each experienced a reduction of population growth of at least 15 per cent during 2000-2005, making them two of the 48 countries with growing populations whose negative net migration reduced population growth by at least that amount.

The impact of net migration on population growth was more significant among the major migrant receiving countries of the Arab region. During 2000-2005, net migration accounted for over a quarter of total population growth in the GCC countries as a whole (table 2). Furthermore, in Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, population growth was higher from net migration than from natural increase. Because of high natural increase combined with high net migration, some of the GCC countries experienced some of the fastest rates of population growth in the world.

International migration, if sustained, can also affect the age-composition of the population, since migrants tend to be younger than the population in the country of destination. Sustained inflows of migrants can therefore slow population ageing and lower dependency ratios. Because

international migration has not only been significant in size but also sustained over long periods in countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar or the United Arab Emirates, it has had a rejuvenating effect on the age distribution of their populations.

Table 2. Role of international migration as a component of population growth, by development group and sub-regions of the Arab region, 1990-1995 and 2000-2005

	1990-1995				2000-2005			
	Annual net migration		Annual births minus deaths		Annual net migration		Annual births minus deaths	
	Number	Rate per	Number	Rate per	Number	Rate per	Number	Rate per
	(thousands)	1,000	(thousands)	1,000	(thousands)	1,000	(thousands)	1,000
	population	population	population	population	population	population	population	
World	0	0.0	82 567	15.1	0	0.0	75 835	12.1
More developed regions	2 533	2.2	2 550	2.2	2 622	2.2	960	0.8
Less developed regions	-2 533	-0.6	80 017	18.5	-2 622	-0.5	74 875	14.8
Arab region ^a	-11	-0.1	5 024	24.4	123	0.5	5 500	21.3
of which:								
MAGHREB	-74	-1.1	1 378	20.9	- 102	-1.3	1 247	16.1
MASHREQ	41	0.4	2 460	24.2	- 43	-0.3	2 878	22.5
GCC	-108	-4.4	689	28.0	288	8.7	748	22.5

Source: *World Population Prospects: Revision 2004* (United Nations Population Division, Sales No. E.05.XII.11) data in digital form, 2005.

Note:

^a Including Yemen.

D. Major migration movements in the Arab region

A dominant feature of migration flows in the Arab region has been the large and growing volume of labour migration to the Member States of the GCC. Other population movements have, to some extent, been fuelled by political instability and armed conflict, which have also influenced the size and composition of labour migration flows.

Statistics on migrant inflows to the GCC countries are not readily available. Some data on labour migration to the Middle East can be obtained from the countries of origin of migrant workers. Thus, in the labour-exporting countries of Southern and South-eastern Asia¹, Governments have instituted complex procedures established to regulate the outflow of migrant workers, so as to ensure that their contracts are in order and therefore exercise some degree of protection against abuse or exploitation in the country of destination. As a by-product of the procedures established to provide emigration clearance for migrant workers, these countries collect data on them. These data have, however, some limitations since they do not necessarily cover all emigrants from a country, their coverage may change if administrative procedures are modified, and they do not represent persons but rather the number of permits issued which may overestimate flows when a person may obtain multiple permits over one year (Bilborrow et al, 1997).

¹ Regarding the countries of origin of migrants, data on the migrant stock compiled by Kapiszewski (2004) suggest that in 2002 the major migrant communities among 12.5 million migrants in the GCC countries were from India (3.2 million), Pakistan (1.7 million), Egypt (1.5 million), Yemen (1 million), Bangladesh (0.8 million), Sri Lanka (0.7 million), Philippines (0.7 million) and Jordan (0.7 million).

Table 3. Outflow of migrant workers from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka by country of employment, selected years from 1990 to 2005

Country of origin	Countries of employment							Total
	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates	Bahrain	Qatar	Kuwait	Oman	Other countries	
<i>Number of workers (thousands)</i>								
Bangladesh								
1990	57	8	5	8	6	14	6	104
1995	84	15	3	0	17	21	47	188
1998	159	39	7	7	25	5	26	268
2002	163	25	5	1	16	4	11	225
2005	80	62	11	2	47	5	46	253
India								
1990	79	12	7	..	1	34	6	140
1995	257	80	11	..	16	22	29	415
1998	105	135	17	..	22	21	55	355
2002	99	95	21	..	5	41	106	368
Indonesia								
1998	123	9	..	..	..	..	174	306
2001	103	11	..	..	..	..	225	339
Pakistan								
1995	74	28	1	1	4	9	1	117
1998	47	43	2	2	4	3	1	101
2003	126	61	1	0	12	7	6	214
Philippines								
1998	194	35	5	11	17	5	371	638
2003	169	49	6	14	26	4	383	652
Sri Lanka								
2000	61	33	6	12	34	5	31	182
2004	71	33	4	30	37	3	36	213
<i>Percentage distribution of migrant workers by country of employment</i>								
Bangladesh								
1990	55	8	4	7	6	13	6	100
1995	45	8	2	0	9	11	25	100
1998	59	14	3	3	10	2	10	100
2002	72	11	2	0	7	2	5	100
2005	32	25	4	1	19	2	18	100
India								
1990	57	9	5	..	1	25	5	100
1995	62	19	3	..	4	5	7	100
1998	30	38	5	..	6	6	15	100
2002	27	26	6	..	1	11	29	100
Indonesia								
1998	40	3	..	..	..	..	57	100
2001	30	3	..	..	..	..	66	100
Pakistan								
1995	63	24	1	0	3	8	1	100
1998	47	42	2	2	4	2	1	100
2003	59	29	0	0	6	3	3	100
Philippines								
1998	30	6	1	2	3	1	58	100
2003	26	8	1	2	4	1	59	100
Sri Lanka								
2000	34	18	4	7	18	3	17	100
2004	33	15	2	14	17	2	17	100

Source: Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, Government of Bangladesh; Rajan (2003); Soeprobo (2003) based on unpublished data from Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, Government of Indonesia; Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan, <http://www.beoe.gov.pk>; Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (<http://www.poea.gov.ph/html/statistics.html>); Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (<http://www.slbfe.lk>).

In general, Asian labour migration to the GCC countries increased during the 1990s (table 3). However, this trend varies by country of origin and destination, and numbers often fluctuate from year to year. Since 1980, the share of migrant workers in the GCC countries who originate in Asia has generally increased, while the share of those originating in Arab countries has declined.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and the war that ensued had a profound effect on the distribution by region of origin of the foreign population in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It is estimated that the during first four months after the invasion more than 2 million migrant workers left Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (Russell, 1992). Although soon after the end of the Gulf war foreign workers began returning to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, changes in political alignments during the Gulf crisis led to the repatriation of Jordanians, Palestinians and Yemenites (United Nations, 1997). In 1989, Arab migrant workers constituted 59 per cent of the foreign population in Kuwait. By 2001, their share had dropped to about 45 per cent (Shah 2004).

Many countries of the Mashreq are currently both countries of origin and destination. In Jordan, despite the high levels of unemployment of the Jordanian population, there are substantial inflows of migrant workers, especially from Egypt (Al Khouri, 2004). Moreover, the flow of migrant workers from Southern Asia to Jordan is increasing. For instance, the number of migrant workers moving from Bangladesh to Jordan increased five-fold between 2002 and 2005, surpassing 9,000 workers in 2005 (Government of Bangladesh, 2006). Migrants from Sri Lanka to Jordan also numbered about 9,000 in 2004, the majority of whom were women (Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, 2006). At the same time, many Jordanians leave to work in abroad, particularly in the GCC countries and the United States. While migrant workers in Jordan are generally low skilled, Jordanian emigrants are for the most part skilled workers (Al Khouri, 2004).

Similarly, Lebanon, which is generally considered a country of emigration, has experienced an influx of workers from Egypt and South-Eastern Asian since the 1990, most of whom work in low-skill service occupations (Al Khouri, 2004). For instance, about 18,000 workers from Sri Lanka left to work in Lebanon in 2004 (Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, 2006).

E. Low levels of female participation in migration to the Arab region

At the world level, the percentage of women and girls among international migrants has remained at about 50 per cent since 1990 (table 4). In developed countries, female migrants accounted for about 52 per cent of all international migrants, while in developing countries their share was lower, at 46 per cent. The higher percentage of female migrants in developed countries is associated with the important role of family reunification as a reason for admission to many developed countries. It is also affected by the transformation of internal migrants into international migrants in several countries of Eastern and Southern Europe after the disintegration of the former USSR or the former Yugoslavia.

The Arab region stands out as having one of the lowest proportions of women among international migrants. Current estimates indicate that just 36 per cent of international migrants

in the Arab region are women or girls. Eight Arab countries are among the ten with the lowest proportions of female migrants (all below 35 per cent). They include Iraq, Yemen and the six Member States of the GCC.

Table 4. Number of migrants by sex, by development group and sub-regions of the Arab region, 1990 and 2005

	<i>Number of migrants (million)</i>				<i>Percentage female</i>	
	<i>1990</i>		<i>2005</i>		<i>1990</i>	<i>2005</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>		
World	76.0	79.0	94.5	96.1	49.0	49.6
More developed regions	42.8	39.6	60.3	55.1	52.0	52.2
Less developed regions	33.2	39.4	34.3	41.0	45.7	45.5
Arab region ^a	4.7	8.4	7.0	12.9	36.1	35.1
of which:						
MAGHREB	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.6	41.6	41.1
MASHREQ	1.7	1.8	2.8	3.0	48.7	48.6
GCC	2.6	6.0	3.7	9.1	31.4	29.2
Bahrain	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	28.5	30.9
Kuwait	0.6	0.9	0.5	1.2	39.0	31.0
Oman	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.5	20.9	20.9
Qatar	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.5	25.8	25.8
Saudi Arabia	1.4	3.3	1.9	4.4	30.0	30.1
United Arab Emirates	0.4	1.0	0.9	2.3	28.5	27.8

Source: *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision* (United Nations Population Division, POP/DB/MIG/Rev.2005) data in digital form, 2006.

Note:

^a Including Yemen.

Although the number of female migrants has increased in the major receiving countries of the region, this increase has generally not matched that among male migrants. Thus, in the GCC countries, the number of female migrants increased by one million between 1990 and 2005, to reach 3.7 million, but that of male migrants rose by 3.1 million, to reach 9.1 million. The number of female migrants increased particularly sharply in the United Arab Emirates, more than doubling from 1990 to 2005 (from 379,000 to 894,000). In Saudi Arabia, the number of female migrants increased by about half a million, to reach 1.9 million in 2005.

There has been an increase in the number of migrant women working in female occupations, including health care, care giving and domestic services. The proportion of women in the labour force in the GCC countries has risen since the late 1970s and early 1980s when they accounted for 10 per cent of the foreign workforce (United Nations, 2003). Moreover, female labour force participation has also increased among national women. Today, female migrants constitute 33 per cent of the foreign labour force in Oman and the United Arab Emirates and 20 per cent of that in Bahrain and Kuwait. However, in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, women account still for under 15 per cent of the foreign workforce (table 5).

Table 5. Number of women in the labour force in the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, selected years

Country	Year	Persons in the labour force				Percentage of women in the labour force	
		Total labour force (thousands)		Foreign labour force (thousands)		Total	Foreign
		Female	Male	Female	Male		
Bahrain	1981	19	127	7	74	13.2	8.8
	2003	74	256	37	157	22.4	19.0
Kuwait	1995	195	551	144	442	26.1	24.5
	2003	361	1,058	257	890	25.4	22.4
Oman	1993	68	637	45	387	9.7	10.4
	2001	..	..	183	347	..	34.5
Qatar	1986	19	181	16	163	9.3	9.2
	2001	50	273	37	240	15.6	13.2
Saudi Arabia	1974	96	1,621	20	371	5.6	5.1
	2002	901	5,341	436	2,657	14.4	14.1
United Arab Emirates	1980	28	532	26	479	5.0	5.2
	2000	252	1,657	..	..	13.2	..

Source: United Nations 2003; The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Information Center, Statistical Department, (<http://www.gcc-sg.org>).

Data on the outflow of migrant workers from countries such as Indonesia or Sri Lanka indicate that these countries are the source of more female than male migrant workers (table 6). In 2000, more than 90 per cent of the Indonesian migrant workers who went to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were women. A similar proportion of women prevailed among Sri Lankan migrants to Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon. But males outnumbered females in Sri Lankan migration to Qatar.

Domestic work is the single most important occupation among migrant women employed in the GCC Member States, as well as in Jordan and Lebanon. In recent years, up to 81 per cent of all female migrant workers leaving Sri Lanka and 39 per cent of those departing from the Philippines to the GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon have been engaged in domestic work. Data for Sri Lanka on the occupational distribution of newly employed migrant workers indicates that, while male migrant workers find employment in various occupations, migrant women are largely confined to domestic work (Moreno-Fontes Chammartin, 2004).

Table 6. Outflow of female migrant workers from Indonesia and Sri Lanka, by country of destination in the Arab region

<i>Country of origin and destination</i>	<i>Number (thousands)</i>			<i>As percentage of all migrant workers</i>		
	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>
Indonesia						
Saudi Arabia	115	93	..	93	90	..
United Arab Emirates	9	11	..	98	98	..
Sri Lanka						
Saudi Arabia	..	35	47	..	57	66
UAE	..	22	17	..	68	53
Kuwait	..	28	29	..	84	81
Qatar	..	3	5	..	23	17
Bahrain	..	5	3	..	77	75
Oman	..	4	2	..	74	53
Lebanon	..	13	17	..	97	98
Jordan	..	7	8	..	95	87

Source: Soeprobo (2003) based on unpublished data from Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration. Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, <http://www.slbfe.lk>

The number of female migrant workers in the GCC countries, Jordan and Lebanon is likely to remain high as labour force participation increases among native women and the demand for caregivers and domestic workers to perform the tasks natives no longer have time for also increases. Therefore, it seems likely that the demand for female migrant workers may be less responsive to policies aimed at the substitution of foreign workers by nationals, that is, the so-called “nationalization” of the workforce.

F. Increase in refugee populations in the Arab region

Globally, the number of refugees declined from 18.5 million in 1990 to 13.5 million in 2005. This reduction was in large part achieved through the voluntary repatriation of refugees, particularly in Africa. During 1990-2005, an estimated 20 million refugees returned voluntarily to their home countries as conflicts, some of long-standing, were resolved. In developed countries, refugees constitute 2.3 per cent of the international migrant stock. By contrast, in less developed regions, they account for 14 per cent of all international migrants and in the least developed countries for 25 per cent.

The Arab region hosts the largest refugee population in the world. At the end of 2005, these were 4.3 million refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Syrian Arab Republic (UNRWA, 2006) and 241,000 refugees under the mandate of UNHCR in Saudi Arabia (UNHCR, 2006). In the Mashreq, a large proportion of all migrants are refugees: 81 per cent in Jordan, 61 per cent in Lebanon and 44 per cent in the Syrian Arab Republic.

G. Irregular migration

Because of its geographical proximity to Europe, Northern Africa has become a region of transit for unauthorized migration to Europe. It is estimated that between 100,000 and 120,000 unauthorized migrants cross the Mediterranean annually, about 35,000 of whom originate in sub-Saharan Africa, 55,000 in Northern Africa and 30,000 in other countries, mostly in Asia (ICMPD, 2004).

There is also some degree of irregular migration to the GCC Member States. Because of growing restrictions in the issuance of work permits, migrant workers are increasingly likely to enter clandestinely or stay beyond the expiration of their permits. In Kuwait, for instance, it is estimated that up to 60,000 foreigners have an irregular status (Shah, 2005).

H. Emigration from the Arab region

Data on the foreign-born population enumerated by the 2000 round of population censuses classified mainly by country of birth indicate that among the countries in the Arab region, the main countries of origin are Morocco with 1.8 million emigrants, Egypt with 1.6 million and Algeria with 1.4 million (table 7). These figures may underestimate somewhat the number of emigrants because the data released by countries of destination are not necessarily classified by all possible countries of origin and, consequently, emigrants from these countries are not always identified in the data. However, the degree of underestimation is likely to be small because countries with large concentrations of migrants usually produce tabulations showing their numbers explicitly.

According to table 7, the number of emigrants from the Maghreb countries as a whole amounted to 3.7 million and approximately the same number had emigrated from the Mashreq countries. In comparison, emigration from the GCC countries was considerably lower, at just half a million.

Data on the foreign-born population in OECD countries around 2000 show that there were about 4.5 million migrants in OECD Member States whose place of birth was a country in the Arab region (Dumont and Lemaitre 2005). The largest numbers of these migrants were born in Morocco (1.4 million) and Algeria (1.3 million). Since the total number of migrants from countries outside the OECD amounted to 42.6 million, one in ten of the non-OECD migrants living in OECD countries were born in the Arab region.

Data relating only to the number of foreign-born persons enumerated in OECD countries show that emigrants from Maghreb countries having tertiary education constituted between 15 per cent and 18 per cent of the total number of emigrants from each of those countries. In comparison, the proportion of highly-educated migrants from the Mashreq countries was higher, ranging from 29 per cent in Iraq to 51 per cent in Egypt (Dumont and Lemaitre, 2005).

Table 7. Estimates of the number of emigrants from countries in the Arab region around 2000

	<i>Number of emigrants (thousands)</i>
Maghreb	
Algeria	1,442
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	64
Morocco	1,799
Tunisia	436
Sub-total	3,741
Mashreq	
Egypt	1,598
Iraq	684
Jordan	285
Lebanon	496
Occupied Palestinian Territory	337
Syrian Arab Republic	326
Sub-total	3,727
Gulf Cooperation Council	
Bahrain	17
Kuwait	178
Oman	6
Qatar	5
Saudi Arabia	72
United Arab Emirates	40
Sub-total	316
Yemen	503
Total	8,286

Source: Database of the University of Sussex

Estimates of the number of emigrants from each country as presented in table 7 refer to persons who still have recent ties with the countries of origin. Some countries in the Arab region, particularly those in the Mashreq have very long migration histories with the result that, the descendants of early waves of migrants, now constitute very large populations. Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular, were the regions of origin of important flows of migrants going to the Americas, North and South, and to Africa during different periods of the twentieth century. It is estimated that there are about 14 million people of Lebanese descent living outside Lebanon, equivalent to four times the number of inhabitants in Lebanon today. This estimate includes 6 million persons of Lebanese origin in Brazil, 3 million in the rest of Latin America, 3 million in Northern America, and half a million each in Africa, Europe, Australia and the Mashreq (Al Khouri, 2004). Similarly, the Syrian Minister for Emigration estimates that there are around 20 million persons of Syrian descent living abroad, a number higher than the population of the Syrian Arab Republic today (Al Khouri, 2004).

II. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION POLICIES IN THE ARAB REGION

A. Government policies on immigration

Since 1990 there have been substantial changes in the views of Governments regarding migration trends. In 1996, 40 per cent of Governments wished to reduce the level of in-migration but by 2005, that percentage had fallen to about 20 per cent (table 8). Furthermore, the percentage of Governments seeking to maintain the prevailing level of in-migration increased from 30 per cent in 1996 to 54 per cent in 2005 and the percentage wishing to raise in-migration levels remained at about 5 per cent between the two dates (United Nations, 2006b).

Table 8. Distribution of countries according to Government views on the level of international migration, by development groups and sub-regions of the Arab region, 1996 and 2005 (percentage)

Region and year	View on the level of immigration					View on the level of emigration				
	Lower	Maintain	Raise	No intervention	Total	Lower	Maintain	Raise	No intervention	Total
<i>World</i>										
1996	40	31	4	25	100	23	20	3	54	100
2005	22	54	6	18	100	23	16	6	55	100
<i>More developed regions</i>										
1996	60	27	2	10	100	25	19	2	54	100
2005	12	75	8	5	100	17	14	0	69	100
<i>Less developed regions</i>										
1996	34	31	5	30	100	23	20	3	54	100
2005	25	47	5	23	100	25	17	8	50	100
<i>Arab region^a</i>										
1996	56	31	0	13	100	19	31	19	31	100
2005	63	31	0	6	100	25	19	19	37	100
Of which:										
<i>Maghreb</i>										
1996	25	50	0	25	100	25	25	25	25	100
2005	25	50	0	25	100	25	50	25	0	100
<i>Mashreq</i>										
1996	60	40	0	0	100	40	20	20	20	100
2005	60	40	0	0	100	60	20	20	0	100
<i>GCC</i>										
1996	66	17	0	17	100	0	50	0	50	100
2005	83	17	0	0	100	17	0	0	83	100

Source: *World Population Policies 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.XIII.5)

Notes:

^a Including Yemen.

Changes toward a less restrictive stance regarding migrant inflows have been more pronounced among developed countries, among which the percentage wishing to lower immigration fell from 60 per cent in 1996 to 12 per cent in 2005. This change reflects an improved understanding of the positive aspects of international migration and a growing recognition on the part of Governments of the need to manage migration instead of restricting it. It is also the result of labour shortages in certain sectors; the expanding global economy, and reactions to the implications of long-term trends in population ageing.

In contrast to these changes in the policy stance of Governments of developed countries, the Governments of countries in the Arab region are more inclined to take measures to lower immigration: in 2005, two-thirds of these Governments wished to reduce migrant inflows (table 8). In most of the Arab countries having restrictive admission policies, the number of migrants either constituted more than 15 per cent of population in 2005 (table 9) or had experienced a sharp rise, as in Morocco or Yemen, where the number of migrants rose by over 25 per cent since 1995.

Table 9. Government views on the level of immigration and migrant stock in the Arab region, 2005

<i>Migrants as percentage of total population</i>	<i>Countries according to Government view on the level of immigration</i>		
	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Maintain</i>	<i>No intervention</i>
<i>Greater than 15</i>	Lebanon Oman Jordan Kuwait Qatar Saudi Arabia United Arab Emirates	Bahrain Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	
<i>Between 5 and 15</i>		Syrian Arab Republic	
<i>Less than 5</i>	Egypt Morocco Yemen	Algeria	Tunisia

Source: World Population Policies 2005 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.XIII.5)

The Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council have long maintained policies to restrict migrant inflows in order to reduce their dependence on foreign workers, while seeking to foster employment among their citizens. In 2003, for instance, the Government of Saudi Arabia set the goal of reducing the number of migrant workers and their families to at most 20 per cent of the population by 2013. According to the 2004 census, there were 6.2 million foreigners in Saudi Arabia, representing about 27 per cent of the total population.

Jordan and Lebanon, two countries with significant numbers of low-skilled Asian migrants, also wish to lower the inflow of migrants. In Egypt, Morocco and Yemen, the concern is to reduce transit migration and to focus on policies to address the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers.

B. Policies on labour migration to the Arab countries

At the global level many countries have taken measures to manage the inflow of migrant workers. Skilled migration, in particular, is on the rise, facilitated by policies that favour the admission of persons with needed skills that can enhance the competitive advantages of knowledge-based economies. Since 1990, several countries have relaxed restrictions on the admission of highly skilled workers. Some 30 countries, including 17 developed countries, have policies or programmes to promote the admission of highly skilled workers (United Nations, 2006b).

Although the Member States of the GCC have admitted significant numbers of skilled migrants, none of their Governments have formulated policies that explicitly facilitate the admission of migrants with skills (table A2). Furthermore, among the five countries in the world that report wishing to reduce the inflow of skilled foreign workers in order to improve the employment prospects of their educated nationals, three are in the Arab region (Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates). In 2003, for instance, the Saudi Ministry of Labour ordered the accelerated replacement of 9,800 migrant workers holding jobs in banks and financial institutions by Saudi nationals in an effort to promote the “Saudinazation” of the labour force (Looney, 2004).

Governments in all parts of the world have been addressing shortages of low-skilled workers in sectors such as agriculture, construction, hospitality or domestic service, by adopting temporary worker programmes. All GCC countries admit large numbers of migrant workers under temporary worker programmes, in which employment and stay are usually regulated through the issuance of work permits tied to a particular employer.

Because of its nature, domestic service is usually not regulated in the same way as other type of employment. In most countries, employers of domestic workers are not bound by law to abide by the labour regulations that applied to salaried workers. That is the case in most Arab countries, although the situation is improving in some countries. The Government of Bahrain, for instance, is reviewing the procedures to hire foreign domestic workers and the conditions of employment, while Jordan has approved the use of labour contracts for domestic workers (Moreno-Fontes Chamartin 2004). Jordan has also amended recently its law concerning the registration of recruitment agencies in order to monitor their practices and to take appropriate measures when infringement of regulations occurs.

Regarding international instruments covering migration for employment, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has two conventions specifically relating to migrant workers: the Migration for Employment Convention of 1949 (No. 97) and the Migrant Workers Convention of 1975 (No.143). At the world level 45 countries, including Algeria, have ratified the Convention No. 97 and 19 countries, none of which is in the Arab region, have ratified Convention No. 143 (table 10). The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families adopted in 1990 entered into force in 2003. As of 1 May 2006, 34 countries, including five Arab countries, became parties to this Convention (table 10).

Table 10. International legal instruments related to international migration

<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Year of entry into force</i>	<i>Countries that have ratified^a</i>		<i>Arab countries that have ratified^a</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage^b</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage^c</i>
Migrant workers					
1949 ILO Convention concerning Migration for Employment (Revised) (No. 97)	1952	45	23	1	6
1975 ILO Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) (No. 143)	1978	19	10	0	0
1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	2003	34	17	5	31
Trafficking and smuggling					
2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children ^d	2003	97	50	7	44
2000 Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea ^d	2004	89	46	7	44
Refugees					
1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	1954	143	73	5	31
1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees	1967	143	73	5	31

Notes:

^a As of 19 April 2006.^b Of States Members of the United Nations.^c Of 16 countries in the Arab region.^d Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

C. “Nationalization” of the labour force in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries

Beginning in the late 1980s, the increasing presence of migrant workers in the labour force has prompted Governments to develop programmes to “nationalize” the labour force, that is, to replace migrant workers by citizens and thus provide more employment opportunities to citizens and reduce dependence on migrant workers. There are generally two categories of policies in this regard: those aimed at decreasing the supply of foreign workers and those aimed at boosting demand for citizens (box 1) (Shah, 2005).

Box 1: Policies aimed at reducing the supply of and demand for foreign workers in the Gulf

<i>Policies aimed at affecting:</i>	
<i>Supply of foreign workers</i>	<i>Enhancing labour demand for citizens</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and indirect taxes on migrant workers (e.g. health fees) • Periodic expulsions • Stricter regulation of visa issuance in countries of origin • Restricting visa trading by implementing the law strictly 	<p>Creating job opportunities for citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training for citizens • Enhancing private sector benefits • Encouraging “nationalization” of the labour force through market measures • Increase fees for those employing foreigners • Provide cash benefits for those employing citizens <p>Forcing “nationalization” of labour force through administrative measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibiting employment of foreigners in the public sector • Establishing quotas for migrant admissions • Establishing quotas on the employment of citizens • Banning foreigners from working in certain sectors <p>Tightening of immigration legislation</p>

Source: Adapted from Shah (2005).

“Nationalization” policies have been in place for some time (table 11). However, they have generally not been as effective as expected. Thus, in most countries with such policies, the percentage of foreigners in the total population has either remained the same or increased. One exception is Kuwait, where the decline in the proportion of foreigners in the total population is more likely to be the result of the Gulf war than of the “nationalization” policy, although there is a steady if small reduction in the proportion of foreigners in the labour force. The other exception is Saudi Arabia where the share of foreigners in the labour force declined from 64 per cent in 1995 to 50 per cent in 2002, whereas their proportion in the overall population has not changed much. This development suggests that family reunification has been counterbalancing to some extent the reduction in the proportion of foreign workers and, indeed, data from the 1992 and 2004 censuses indicate that the share of foreigners at older ages and among children has increased while that among male adults of working age has decreased (table 12).

Table 11. Trends in percentage of foreigners in the total population and in the labour force, and year of adoption of programme to reduce these percentages, Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council

<i>Country</i>	<i>Year when programme started</i>	<i>Foreigners as a percentage of population</i>			<i>Foreigners as a percentage of the labour force</i>			
		<i>At initial date^a</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2003^b</i>
Bahrain	1996	37	38	41	58	60	59	59
Kuwait	1991	72	62	62	86	83	82	81
Oman	1988	25	25	24	52	64	64	71
Qatar	2000	..	76	78	77	82	86	86
Saudi Arabia	1995	25	24	26	63	64	56	50
United Arab Emirates	1999	..	70	71	91	90	90	..

Source: Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision (United Nations Population Division, POP/DB/MIG/Rev.2005) data in digital form, 2006; Girgis 2002; The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Information Center, Statistical Department, (<http://www.gcc-sg.org>).

Notes:

^a 1995 for Bahrain, 1990 for Kuwait and Oman

^b Saudi Arabia in 2002 and Qatar in 2001.

Table 12. Foreign population by sex and age, Saudi Arabia, censuses 1992 and 2004

Age	Male						Female					
	Number (thousands)		Increment 1992- 2004	As percentage of total population		Difference in percentage points 1992-2004	Number (thousands)		Increment 1992- 2004	As percentage of total population		Difference in percentage points 1992-2004
	1992	2004		1992	2004		1992	2004		1992	2004	
0 - 1	39	42	2	15	17	2	38	40	2	15	16	1
1 - 4	164	182	18	16	18	2	157	176	18	16	17	1
5 - 9	183	207	24	15	16	1	179	198	18	15	15	0
10 - 14	130	177	47	12	14	2	126	168	42	12	13	0
15 - 19	80	150	70	11	14	3	81	142	62	11	13	2
20 - 24	259	298	39	33	28	-5	102	160	58	16	17	0
25 - 29	613	627	14	60	46	-13	156	240	84	26	26	0
30 - 34	634	710	76	66	55	-10	226	271	45	41	32	-9
35 - 39	500	675	175	65	58	-8	143	190	47	34	28	-6
40 - 44	321	512	191	64	55	-9	72	122	50	28	25	-3
45 - 49	172	338	166	53	52	-1	37	73	36	19	21	2
50 - 54	92	193	101	39	47	7	23	44	21	13	18	4
55 - 59	40	85	45	25	37	11	10	22	11	10	12	2
60 - 64	21	40	19	14	24	10	9	15	5	9	10	1
65 - 69	8	17	9	10	14	4	4	8	4	8	7	-1
70 - 74	5	10	5	7	11	4	5	6	2	8	7	-1
75 - 79	2	4	2	6	8	2	2	3	1	7	7	0
80+	3	5	2	5	7	2	3	4	1	6	7	1
Total	3,264	4,270	1,006	34	34	0	1,374	1,881	507	18	19	0

Source: Saudi Arabia Statistical Office (2006).

The success of policies to “nationalize” the labour force hinges on controlling recruitment, since visa trading among sponsors is a lucrative business, as is the strong market for work visas in countries of origin and the continued reluctance of citizens to work in certain occupations (Shah, 2005).

D. Policies on family reunification, migrant integration and naturalization

Globally, countries of destination are increasingly adopting policies that focus on the integration of migrants. In 2005, 75 countries in the world reported programmes designed to integrate foreigners, up from 52 countries in 1996 (United Nations, 2006b).

As of 2005, five of the 17 countries in the Arab region reported that they had programmes to integrate foreigners (table A2). In the GCC countries, most of the migrant population consists of temporary foreign workers under renewable contracts. Although some of these migrants have worked in the GCC countries for lengthy periods they have not been granted the possibility of long-term residence. The view of Governments in the GCC countries is that the foreign work force is temporary and hence integration issues are not a concern.

Kuwait, for instance, has policies both to curtail labour migration and to reduce the number of migrant-worker dependants living in the country. One of the measures taken to achieve this goal is to place a salary cap on workers who bring their families to Kuwait. Furthermore, a migrant worker in Kuwait must purchase health insurance for himself and his family members if accompanied by them, thus increasing the cost of living in the country. Private-sector employers, who employ 92 per cent of migrant workers in Kuwait, tend not to cover such insurance costs, making the stay of family members in the country too costly for the majority of migrant workers (Shah, 2005).

Generally, foreigners do not enjoy the full spectrum of rights that citizens do. The conditions and procedures for acquiring the citizenship of the host country vary widely among the countries of the world: whereas countries of immigration have well established procedures for the naturalization of foreigners admitted as immigrants, in other countries, naturalization has not been considered an automatic outcome.

Despite differences among the Arab countries, most base the right to citizenship on descent through male line. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Tunisia and Morocco as of 2005 also permit women to transmit their nationality to their children when the latter have a foreign father. Foreign women may generally acquire citizenship by marriage but not foreign men. One exception is the Syrian Arab Republic, where foreign men can also acquire citizenship through marriage with Syrian women.

The procedure for naturalization of foreigners varies among countries in the Arab region. As the number of long-term foreign residents in some Arab countries continues to rise, new naturalization provisions have been implemented or are under consideration. Thus, an amended law on citizenship entered into force in 2005 in Saudi Arabia. It is based on a point system whereby applicants must obtain at least 23 points out of 33 before being eligible for naturalization. Points are obtained by having at least ten years of residence in the country (10 points), a high level of education (13 points for doctorate) and relatives among Saudi citizens (maximum 7 points). Because of the high number of points required, few migrants have applied for naturalization (Arab News, 3 and 17 May 2005).

E. Refugee and asylum policies

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol are the major international instruments concerning policies on refugees. As of April 2006, 143 countries or three-quarters of all countries in the world had become parties to both instruments. In the Arab region, only five of the 16 countries—Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen—have ratified these instruments (table 10). The countries hosting the highest numbers of refugees, namely, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, are not parties to the international instruments relating to refugees.

F. Policies to address irregular migration

As a consequence of the European Union's intensified efforts to halt irregular migratory flows, several countries in the Arab region have become crucial partners in these efforts. These

countries have reinforced border controls and engaged in strategic cooperation with the European Union including by launching joint sea-borne operations. Furthermore, some of these countries have adopted legislation dealing with unauthorized transit across their territories. For instance, Morocco's new immigration law, adopted in 2003, aims at controlling transit migration from sub-Saharan Africa and establishes two new institutions: the Directorate of Migration and Border Surveillance and the Migration Observatory.

Bilateral readmission agreements constitute one of the most important tools in combating clandestine migration. By 2005, the European Commission had concluded readmission agreements with 11 countries, including Algeria and Morocco in the Arab region (European Union, 2005). In addition, Italy has focused on some of the Maghreb countries that lie on the routes used by unauthorized migrants and has agreed to grant preferential quotas for the admission of temporary migrant workers from those countries (Chaloff and Piperno, 2004).

Important developments in combating the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons have been the criminalization of those involved in smuggling and trafficking, activities that were not considered crimes until recently. There has been a rapid and widespread ratification of the Palermo protocols on smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons which supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air was ratified by 89 countries, seven of which are in the Arab region. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, was ratified by 97 countries, seven of which are in the region (table 10).

G. Policies regarding student migration

The number of persons migrating in order to study abroad has been rising and developed countries are the main destination of foreign students. Large numbers of foreign students from Northern Africa are found in countries with historical, cultural and linguistic links to the Arab region. In France, students from the Maghreb accounted for over a quarter of all international students: Morocco (11.8 per cent), Algeria (10.9 per cent) and Tunisia (3.4 per cent) as of 1998. In Spain, Moroccan students represented 6.8 per cent of the foreign student population (Tremblay, 2002).

Although most foreign students study in developed countries, there are some developing countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon in the Arab region, that attract significant numbers of foreign students. These countries have been hubs for the advanced training of students from countries in their respective regions. Other countries are expanding their training capacity by building partnerships with prestigious universities and other institutions in developed countries. A prominent example in the Arab region is Qatar, which has established local campuses run in partnership with foreign universities in order to offer high-quality training to its citizens and to attract international students (Kritz, 2006). International competition in the field of education may lead to greater diversification of destinations for students, particularly for those from developing countries.

H. Government policies on emigration

Globally, the percentage of Governments wishing to lower emigration has remained at about 25 per cent. A similar proportion has the same views in the Arab region. In contrast, just 11 countries in the world, including Jordan and Tunisia, seek to increase the level of emigration. For some countries in the Arab region, labour emigration has been part of a national strategy to deal with periods of high unemployment.

Bilateral projects have become an important component for the management of labour migration. For instance, the Integrated Migration Information System Project (IMIS), established between Italy and Egypt, aims to match potential Egyptian migrants with job opportunities in Italy (IOM, 2004).

Countries of origin have become more pro-active in encouraging the return of their expatriates so as to harness their potential contribution to the socio-economic development of their communities of origin. In 2005, 72 countries had policies and programmes to encourage the return of their nationals, up from 59 in 1996.

Some Arab countries with large numbers of expatriates have developed such programmes, including Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco. In addition to promoting permanent return, an increasing number of Governments are fostering links with expatriates and facilitating temporary returns. An important means of maintaining ties with expatriates has been the granting of dual citizenship. In the Arab region, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia recognize dual citizenship.

IV. THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

A. Unemployment in countries of origin

International migration can alleviate labour market pressures in countries with labour surpluses. In the Arab region, high population growth in previous decades has produced a rapidly growing labour force and most countries are having trouble generating sufficient jobs for new entrants into the labour market. In the 17 countries and areas considered, on average, one in five young adults aged 20-24 is unemployed. The situation is especially critical in the Maghreb where an estimated 1.85 million young adults (28 per cent) are unemployed (table 13). These high levels of unemployment persist even though international migration has provided some relief in certain countries. Consequently, were more opportunities to work abroad available, the potential for continued emigration is high.

Table 13. Youth unemployment and labour force growth rates, 1991-2004

	<i>Percentage of youth unemployed</i>				<i>Total youth unemployed (thousands)</i>	<i>Percentage increase in labour force participation among young adults</i>
	<i>1991</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>		
Arab region	21	22	21	21	5 199	44
Maghreb	27	30	28	28	1 850	35
Mashreq	22	21	22	22	2 017	29
GCC	10	10	10	10	224	61

Source: *The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region, 2005*.

B. The impact of remittances on development in the countries of origin

Remittances can benefit countries of origin, improving the situation of the families of migrants remaining in the country of origin. In 2004, the top 20 recipients of remittances in the world included two Arab countries: Morocco which received an estimated US\$ 4.2 billion and Egypt with US\$ 3.3 billion (table 14).

Table 14. Remittances^a received in the Arab region

	<i>Remittances (millions of US dollars)</i>		<i>Remittances as percentage of GDP</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2004</i>
MAGHREB	2 909	8 118	2.3	4.6
Algeria	352	2 460	0.6	3.0
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	0	8	0.0	0.0
Morocco	2 006	4 218	7.8	8.5
Tunisia	551	1 432	4.5	5.1
MASHREQ	6 986	9 823	11.7	6.7
Egypt	4 284	3 341	10.2	3.8
Jordan	499	2 287	12.4	21.1
Lebanon	1 818	2 700	64.7	13.5
Occupied Palestinian Territory	..	692	..	20.2
Syrian Arab Republic	385	803	3.6	3.4
Yemen ^b	1 498	1 283	36.9	9.8
GCC	39	40	0.0	0.0
Oman	39	40	0.3	0.2

Source: *Global Economic Prospects 2006: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration*, World Bank.

Notes:

^a Remittances include workers' remittances, compensation of employees and migrants' transfers.

^b Yemen not included in the total for Mashreq.

The magnitude of remittances can vary from year to year, as happened, for instance, with the rapid decline of remittances to Egypt during the early 1990s when large numbers of Egyptian migrant workers returned from Iraq and Kuwait during the Gulf war. Recently, remittances have grown rapidly in some countries, doubling in Morocco between 2000 and 2004 and tripling in Algeria between 2001 and 2004.

Remittances are a significant contributor to the GDP of many countries. In Lebanon, for instance, remittances represented over 60 per cent of GDP in 1990 when the country was just emerging from a protracted civil war. However, as the economy recovers, the share of remittances in GDP has been declining, passing from 15 per cent in 1995 to 8 per cent in 2004. In Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen remittances accounted for over 10 per cent of GDP in 2004.

Although the evidence is still limited, remittances can reduce the incidence and severity of poverty in low-income countries. The impact of remittances on poverty reduction is, however, not automatic since remittances generally raise first the income of people above the poverty line because people from the poorest strata do not migrate internationally. Compared to other developing regions, the Maghreb and the GCC countries have a relatively low proportion of people living below the US\$ 1 or US\$ 2 a day. Page and van Gelder (2002) suggest that remittances have been instrumental in keeping poverty levels low. Indeed, proximity to the high-income countries of the GCC and to the European Union reduces the costs of migration and allows poorer households to send migrants abroad and to benefit from remittances. Furthermore, the longer emigration continues, the more likely that migrant networks develop and help reduce the costs of emigration, thus allowing poorer persons to migrate and helping, via remittances, to reduce income disparities.

Remittances may trigger additional emigration, since remittances can be seen to improve the economic status of those who receive them and prompt others to emulate that success by engaging in migration. In the case of Morocco, Van Dalen et al. (2005) shows that the receipt of remittances contributes to additional migration flows.

C. Remittances from the GCC countries

Saudi Arabia has been one of the most important sources of workers' remittances (table 15). According to the International Monetary Fund, Saudi Arabia has accounted for a quarter of the total amount of workers' remittances in the world between 1996 and 2000. By 2004, Saudi Arabia was the source of US\$ 13.6 billion in remittances, accounting for 15 per cent of the world total. Only the United States reported a higher level of remittances. Kuwait and Oman also report high levels of remittances, but their share of overall remittance flows is 2 per cent to 3 per cent each.

Table 15. Workers' remittances outflow and their percentage distribution, by selected countries

Country of origin of remittance flows	Workers remittances (millions of US dollars)			Percentage distribution of workers' remittances outflow		
	1996	2000	2004	1996	2000	2004
Bahrain	559	1 013	1 120	1.0	1.6	1.2
Jordan	100	174	240	0.2	0.3	0.3
Kuwait	1 376	1 734	2 402	2.4	2.8	2.7
Lebanon	..	..	3 573	..	..	3.9
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	272	454	755	0.5	0.7	0.8
Oman	1 371	1 451	1 826	2.4	2.3	2.0
Saudi Arabia	15 493	15 390	13 555	27.4	24.8	15.0
France	3 067	2 696	3 154	5.4	4.3	3.5
Germany	4 919	3 191	3 951	8.7	5.1	4.4
Spain	553	1 325	4 332	1.0	2.1	4.8
United States	17 423	23 442	29 918	30.8	37.8	33.1
Other countries	11 416	11 209	25 631	20	18	28
All countries	56 548	62 080	90 458	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Balance of Payments Statistics Database: Yearbook 2005, IMF (2005).

Remittances sent home by migrant workers in the GCC countries are an important source of national income to many countries of origin. In 2004, the 20 countries receiving the highest levels of remittances in the world included Bangladesh, Egypt, India, the Philippines and Pakistan, all countries with large numbers of migrant workers in the GCC countries. The data on remittances disaggregated by country of stay of migrant worker are available only for a few countries. Comparison of Bangladesh and the Philippines offers some insight into the critical importance of migration to the GCC countries. Most of the workers' remittances received in Bangladesh were from the GCC countries: 76 per cent out of a total US\$ 1.7 billion in 1998/99 and 70 per cent out of a total US\$ 3.8 billion in 2004/05. Saudi Arabia alone was the source of 47 per cent in 1998/99 and 39 per cent in 2004/05 of the workers' remittances received by Bangladesh (Bangladesh Bank, 2006).

In contrast, the Philippines received US\$ 10.7 billion of workers' remittances, 9 per cent (US\$ 949 million) of which originated in Saudi Arabia and 1 per cent (US\$ 91 million) in Kuwait. The United Arab Emirates accounted for another 2 per cent: US\$ 106 million (1 per cent) from Abu Dhabi and US\$ 152 million (1 per cent) from Dubai (Philippines Central Bank, 2006). Altogether, only 13 per cent of remittances to the Philippines originated in the GCC and other Arab countries.

D. Asian countries of origin

In addition to the countries of the Arab region, other major sources of migrants for the GCC and the Mashreq countries have been Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Bilateral cooperation can be useful in ensuring the welfare of migrants abroad. The Philippines, for example, has been actively involved in promoting the

protection and welfare of its citizens working abroad and in ensuring that the terms and conditions of employment stipulated in contracts are observed. A number of countries of destination of Filipino workers, including some in the Arab region, have not accepted to enter into formal agreements with the Philippines (Go, 2004).

Policies implemented by receiving countries can have important consequences for the management of labour emigration in countries of origin. For instance, the Manpower Council of Saudi Arabia adopted a decision in 2003 stipulating that no nationality could exceed 10 per cent of the total number of foreigners in the country. Such a decision has serious implications for migration from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and the Philippines, as well as from Egypt, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, all countries whose nationals already surpass the 10 per cent limit (Looney, 2004). Countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, where labour migration is directed to a small number of countries of destination (table 3 above), may be more vulnerable to changes in the admission policies of one or two countries of destination. Thus, when Saudi Arabia imposed restrictions on the issuance of visas for limousine and taxi drivers as a move to provide employment to nationals, Pakistani workers, who have been concentrated in those occupations, were denied entry. Similarly, when the United Arab Emirates decided to grant visas only to foreign workers with secondary or higher education, low-educated workers from Pakistan lost this potential place of employment abroad (Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment of Pakistan, 2006).

V. REGIONAL COOPERATION REGARDING MIGRANTS

A. Regional cooperation

In the Arab region, the primary agreement regarding international migration is the Agreement of the Council of Arab Economic Unity. Adopted in 1965, this agreement aims to achieve the economic integration of the region within the framework of economic and social development. The Agreement provides for freedom of movement, employment and residence and abolishes certain restrictions on movement within the region (United Nations, 2005). The Agreement was ratified by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As a follow-up to this agreement, the Arab Declaration of Principles on the Movement of Manpower was adopted in 1984. It underscored the need to give preference to Arab nationals and called for intraregional cooperation.

Another regional initiative was the adoption by the GCC Member States of the Unified Economic Agreement in 1982. Through this agreement, a Member State grants to the citizens of other signatory Member States the same treatment as that extended to its own citizens in regard of freedom of movement, work and residence, and freedom to exercise an economic activity. However, the impact of this agreement has been limited because only in Saudi Arabia are there a substantial number of citizens from other GCC Member States, mainly 120,000 Kuwaitis (Kapiszewski, 2004).

Since 2002, the consultative process known as “Five plus Five” has provided a forum for dialogue among the countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination in the Mediterranean region. Labour migration has become an increasingly important topic in these discussions. The partner countries from the Arab region are Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and Tunisia (IOM, 2005). No such formal process exists among the Mashreq countries. Similarly, there is no informal dialogue between the GCC and countries of origin in Southern and South-eastern Asia.

Other regional activities include meetings coordinated by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) on transit migration in the Mediterranean, involving Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia from the Arab region (ICMPD, 2005).

The League of Arab States, an intergovernmental organization with a membership that includes Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates, is involved in dialogue and advocacy. It organizes regional meetings on international migration, including conferences and meetings about transnational communities and the diaspora communities living outside the Arab region (League of Arab States, 2004).

B. Cooperation with the European Union

International migration is an important issue in the relations between the European Union (EU) and Mediterranean countries, as formulated in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This partnership is expected to reinforce economic liberalization and promote trade, both of which may eventually lead to development and a reduction of migration pressures in the countries of origin. Since June 2002, participation in the joint management of migration has been part of a “global development package” that gives third countries a major stake in the EU internal market. The main objective concerning international migration is to promote the joint management of migration flows by concluding readmission agreements between the EU and Mediterranean countries and reinforcing the protection of third-country nationals who legally reside in the EU (Commission of the European Union, 2005). Jordan, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Tunisia adopted the European Neighbourhood Policy Plan of Action in 2005. Other countries that have since joined the ENP programme are Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic (European Union, 2006).

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Table A1. International migrant stock in the Arab region

Type of data ^b	1990					2005					
	Total population (thousands)	Migrant stock				Total population (thousands)	Migrant stock				
		Number (thousands)	Percentage of population	Percentage			Number (thousands)	Percentage of population	Percentage		
				Female	Refugees				Female	Refugees	
World	5 279 519	154 945	2.9	49.0	11.9	6 464 750	190 634	2.9	49.6	7.1	
More developed regions	1 148 572	82 368	7.2	52.0	2.4	1 211 265	115 397	9.5	52.2	2.3	
Less developed regions	4 130 947	72 577	1.8	45.7	22.7	5 253 484	75 237	1.4	45.5	14.4	
Least developed countries	521 816	10 950	2.1	46.2	43.7	759 389	10 460	1.4	46.5	23.2	
Arab region	193 000	13 128	6.8	36.1	20.4	271 990	19 838	7.3	35.1	24.8	
MAGHREB	62 540	854	1.4	41.6	19.8	80 288	1 030	1.3	41.1	17.8	
Algeria	NR	25 291	274	1.1	45.2	61.7	32 854	242	0.7	45.2	69.7
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	N	4 334	457	10.6	35.5	0.0	5 853	618	10.5	35.5	2.0
Morocco	N	24 696	85	0.3	50.7	0.4	31 478	132	0.4	50.7	1.6
Tunisia	N	8 219	38	0.5	50.2	0.0	10 102	38	0.4	48.7	0.2
MASHREQ	95 181	3 547	3.7	48.7	69.5	134 865	5 741	4.3	48.6	77.2	
Egypt	B	55 673	176	0.3	47.1	1.1	74 033	166	0.2	46.7	54.9
Iraq	NR	18 515	84	0.5	33.3	0.5	28 807	28	0.1	31.2	95.1
Jordan	NR	3 254	1 146	35.2	48.8	81.1	5 703	2 225	39.0	49.1	81.0
Lebanon	BR	2 741	520	19.0	57.5	58.1	3 577	657	18.4	57.5	61.4
Occupied Palestinian Territory	B	2 154	911	42.3	43.3	100.0	3 702	1 680	45.4	43.4	100.0
Syrian Arab Republic	NR	12 843	711	5.5	48.7	45.0	19 043	985	5.2	48.9	43.7
Yemen ^a	NR	12 086	107	0.9	31.8	38.9	20 975	265	1.3	31.8	26.0
GCC	23 194	8 620	37.2	31.4	0.0	35 862	12 802	35.7	29.2	1.9	
Bahrain	N	493	173	35.1	28.5	0.6	727	295	40.7	30.9	0.0
Kuwait	NR	2 143	1 551	72.4	39.0	0.0	2 687	1 669	62.1	31.0	0.1
Oman	N	1 843	452	24.5	20.9	0.0	2 567	628	24.4	20.9	0.0
Qatar	N	467	370	79.1	25.8	0.0	813	637	78.3	25.8	0.0
Saudi Arabia	NR	16 379	4 743	29.0	30.0	0.0	24 573	6 361	25.9	30.1	3.8
United Arab Emirates	NR	1 868	1 330	71.2	28.5	0.0	4 496	3 212	71.4	27.8	0.0

Source: Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision (United Nations Population Division, POP/DB/MIG/Rev.2005) data in digital form, 2006.

Notes:

^a Yemen is not included in the total for the Mashreq region.

^b B - Indicates that the estimate of the migrant stock was derived from data classified by place of birth, thus, it represents the foreign-born; N - Indicates that the estimate of the migrant stock was derived from data classified by citizenship, thus, it represents the foreign population; R - Indicates that the number of refugees as reported by UNHCR or UNRWA and interpolated or extrapolated to refer to the appropriate date were added to the estimates derived from other data.

Table A2: Governments views and policies on migration and ratification of United Nations instruments related to migration, Arab region, 2005

	<i>Views and policies on immigration</i>			<i>Views and policies on emigration</i>		<i>Parties to</i>				
	<i>Overall level</i>	<i>Highly skilled workers</i>	<i>Integration of non-citizens</i>	<i>Overall level</i>	<i>Encouraging the return of citizens</i>	<i>United Nations instruments</i>				
						<i>1951C^a</i>	<i>1967P^b</i>	<i>1990C^c</i>	<i>2000T^d</i>	<i>2000S^e</i>
MAGHREB										
Algeria	Maintain	..	..	No intervention	Yes	1963	1967	2005	2004	2004
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Maintain	..	..	Maintain	No	--	--	2004	2004	2004
Morocco	Lower	Maintain	Yes	Maintain	Yes	1956	1971	1993	--	--
Tunisia	No intervention	No intervention	No	Raise	No	1957	1968	--	2003	2003
MASHREQ										
Egypt	Lower	Maintain	Yes	Maintain	Yes	1981	1981	1993	2004	2005
Iraq	Maintain	Maintain	Yes	Lower	..	--	--	--	--	--
Jordan	Lower	Lower	No	Raise	No	--	--	--	--	--
Lebanon	Lower	No intervention	No	Lower	Yes	--	--	--	2005	2005
Occupied Palestinian Territory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Syrian Arab Republic	Maintain	..	..	Lower	..	--	--	2005	--	--
Yemen	Lower	Maintain	..	Raise	..	1980	1980	--	--	--
GCC										
Bahrain	Maintain	..	..	No intervention	..	--	--	--	2004	2004
Kuwait	Lower	Maintain	Yes	No intervention	No	--	--	--	--	--
Oman	Lower	Maintain	No	No intervention	No	--	--	--	2005	2005
Qatar	Lower	Maintain	..	No intervention	..	--	--	--	--	--
Saudi Arabia	Lower	Lower	Yes	Lower	Yes	--	--	--	--	--
United Arab Emirates	Lower	Lower	..	No intervention	Yes	--	--	--	--	--

Source: *World Population Policies 2005* (United Nations Population Division, Sales No. E.06.XIII.5); Treaty Collection of the United Nations (<http://untreaty.un.org>).

Notes:

^a the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

^b 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

^c 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

^d 2000 Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

^e 2000 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.