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In resolution 3 (III) of 3 October 1946, the Economic and Social Council established what was then called the Population Commission because “it required advice and assistance on matters affecting or affected by population changes”. The Commission was charged with arranging studies and advising the Council on four issues, the third of which focuses on “migratory movements of population and factors associated with such movements”.

The inclusion of migration in the original mandate of the Population Commission reflects the basic reality that an understanding of population trends and their impacts requires the careful consideration of all three components of population change: namely birth, death and migration.

Since 1974, the UN’s global population conferences have examined various aspects of international migration. For example, the World Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974 recommended that countries wishing to increase their rate of population growth may wish to encourage immigration.

Given the increasing number of countries facing population stagnation or decline in recent years, the contribution of migration to population growth and its role in limiting population decline and slowing the pace of population ageing, are receiving renewed attention.

In addition to considering international migration as a component of population change, both the Plan of Action of the 1974 Bucharest conference and the Recommendations for Action from the International Population Conference in Mexico City in 1984 called attention to the multi-dimensional factors associated with these movements, including:

- respecting the human rights of international migrants,
- mitigating the effects of the “brain drain”,
- upholding labour standards for migrant workers,
- addressing the separation of migrant families,
- preventing discrimination,
- promoting understanding about contributions of migrants to development,
- providing prospective migrants with accurate information,
- regulating migration flows through bilateral and multilateral agreements, and
- finding lasting solutions to the plight of refugees.
The International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994 produced the most comprehensive negotiated text on international migration ever seen at the United Nations until the New York Declaration was adopted last September. Chapter X of the Programme of Action of the Cairo conference examines the opportunities and challenges of international migration for development, highlights the rights of documented migrants and lists concrete actions to address the challenges of undocumented migration. The Programme of Action, which was reaffirmed and extended beyond 2014 by General Assembly resolution 65/234 in 2010, also calls on governments to address the root causes of migration, especially those related to poverty. It also encouraged more cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and destination. In addition, the Programme of Action encouraged governments to strengthen the protection and assistance accorded to refugees and asylum-seekers, and to redouble efforts to seek durable solutions to their plight.

In short, Chapter X of the Cairo Programme of Action addresses international migration in all its dimensions. It should be mandatory reading for all of us as we reflect on the content of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Many United Nations conferences and summits in the social and economic field have affirmed the commitments made in the Cairo Programme of Action. In addition, subsequent resolutions on international migration and development that were negotiated in the Second Committee of the General Assembly or in the annual sessions of the Commission on Population and Development have advanced the goals of the Programme of Action by highlighting concrete, action-oriented measures that member States could implement in order to leverage migration for development and to address the challenges of migration.

The discourse on international migration and human rights has moved forward since 1994. Recent resolutions have recognized the increasing complexity of international migration flows in terms of their composition and the effects of these flows on countries of origin, destination and transit. In addition, resolutions have recognized the significant advances that have been made in the area of migration partnerships and cooperation among member States, international organizations and civil society.

Despite the consensus that migration often contributes in a positive way to development, migration was not referenced in the Millennium Development Goals for various reasons. It took two high-level dialogues on international migration and development, the establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, further discussions in the General Assembly and the Commission on Population and Development, the relentless work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration, Mr. Peter Sutherland, and the active engagement of various other stakeholders to achieve the inclusion of migration as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in September 2015.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We often hear questions such as: What is a global compact on migration? What should it look like? What would its key elements be? What should be its scope?
Again, the Programme of Action from the Cairo conference in 1994 offers us some useful ideas and inspiration.

[Slide 2] First, let us look at the structure of the Programme of Action.

Chapter I, the Preamble, describes the global economic, social and demographic context, highlights the relationship between sustainable development and population growth, and affirms the application of universally recognized human rights standards to all aspects of population programmes.

A key purpose of Chapter II, with its 15 Principles, was to guide the conference participants during their deliberations. The list of Principles recalls applicable standards and norms regarding human rights, development, women, children, education and so forth. Principle 12 provides specific guidance on the treatment of documented and undocumented migrants, while Principle 13 recalls the right to seek and enjoy asylum for those who are fleeing persecution.

The following chapters address various aspects of the interactions between population and development, with Chapter X devoted entirely to international migration.

[Slide 3] Second, let us look at the structure of the substantive chapters, taking Chapter X on international migration as an example.

First, each chapter contains sections on specific aspects of the topic. For example, within the chapter on international migration, the four sections address: A. International migration and development, B. Documented migrants, C. Undocumented migrants, and D. Refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons. Each of these sections is then further divided into three sub-sections describing:

1. the Basis for action,
2. the Objectives to be achieved, and
3. the Actions to be taken.

[Slide 4] Let’s take the first section of Chapter X, which addresses international migration and development, as an example. Here, the sub-section on the Basis for action provides basic information on migration trends and summarizes the impact of migration on development. Further, it states that international migration policies, in order to be effective, need to take into account the economic constraints of the receiving country, the impact of migration on the host society and its effects on countries of origin. The first sub-section also underlines the need to ensure that remaining in one’s own country should a viable option for all people.

The second sub-section on international migration and development sets out three concise Objectives. The first objective is to address the root causes of migration, especially those related to poverty. The second objective is to encourage cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination in order to maximize the benefits of migration and to increase the likelihood that migration has positive consequences for the development of both sending and receiving countries. The third objective is to facilitate the reintegration process of returning migrants.
The third sub-section provides details about the *Actions* required including specific recommendations. The recommended *Actions* include ensuring the option to remain, facilitating remittance flows, promoting short-term migration, mitigating the negative impact of migration on development in countries of origin, allowing for the entry of migrants who move as a result of climate change and improving migration data and research.

Thus, for each substantive chapter of the Programme of Action, the document provides both a perspective that spans the range of relevant topics and an analysis that extends from a general overview of relevant issues to specific recommended actions.

[Slide 5] Finally, let us take a moment to study the arrangements for implementation and follow-up of the Cairo Programme of Action.

In Chapter XVI, Section C on “Activities at the international level” gave important mandates to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

First, the Assembly was invited to organize regular reviews of the implementation of the Programme of Action (16.21)

Second, the Council was requested to promote an integrated approach and provide system-wide coordination and guidance in the monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action (16.23)

Third, the Assembly and the Council were invited to review roles, responsibilities, mandates and comparative advantages of UN intergovernmental bodies and organs addressing population and development (16.25)

Fourth, the Council was invited to consider the role of the Population Division and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the follow-up to the Programme of Action (16.26).

[Slide 6] How have these recommendations at the international level been taken forward?

First, in resolution 49/128 of 19 December 1994, the General Assembly decided that the Population Commission should be renamed the Commission on Population and Development. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided that the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Commission should constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism that would play the primary role in the follow-up to the implementation of the Programme of Action and that the Commission, as a functional commission assisting the Council, would monitor, review and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels and advise the Council thereon.

Second, UNFPA became an observer in the Bureau of the Commission. This arrangement helps to ensure that intergovernmental discussions of population issues can benefit from the Fund’s technical knowledge and practical experience.
Third, each year, the Commission reviews an important topic featured in the Programme of Action. For instance, in 1997, 2006 and 2013, the Commission addressed the issue of migration; in 2006 and 2013, the annual session of the Commission preceded the high-level dialogue on international migration and development taking place later in the year.

With regard to documentation, both the Population Division and UNFPA prepare reports of the Secretary-General on the special theme that serve as inputs to the annual sessions of the Commissions. The two reports are complementary in nature, reflecting their respective roles and responsibilities. Thus, the report prepared by the Population Division focuses on documenting and explaining the significance of key trends in respect of the Commission’s special theme, whereas the report prepared by UNFPA focuses on the monitoring of population programmes focusing on the annual theme.

Between 1994 and 2014, the General Assembly considered progress in implementing the entire Programme of Action on four occasions: in 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. Thus, every five years, the Commission undertook a comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the entire Programme of Action. In 1999, the Commission’s annual meeting was followed by a special session of the General Assembly, leading to a negotiated outcome focusing on the key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action. In 2004, 2009 and 2014, the only negotiated outcome following up on the Programme of Action was provided by the Commission on Population and Development.

In General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 3 July 2003, Member States urged the Economic and Social Council to promote the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields. In the same resolution, the Assembly underscored that the functional commissions, when mandated, should continue to have the primary responsibility for the review and assessment of progress made in implementing United Nations conference documents.

In its resolution 70/1 of 2015, the Assembly tasked the functional commissions with reviewing progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Noting that thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals would take place in the high-level political forum, the Assembly decided that these would be supported by reviews by the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums. In General Assembly resolution 70/299 adopted in 2016, Member States decided that the high-level political forum on sustainable development should follow a four-year cycle of review of the SDGs, reflecting on the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs and the three dimensions of sustainable development. The resolution specified annual themes for the high-level political forum when it meets under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council as well as the sets of goals to be reviewed in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

In short, with regard to both migration and population issues more broadly, the Commission on Population and Development plays a crucial role in promoting the discussion of these issues and providing inputs for discussions taking place in the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly (bottom-up approach). The Assembly also requests inputs on these topics from the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions as a contribution to the follow-up
and review of major intergovernmental agreements in the economic, social and related fields (top-down approach).

Dear colleagues,

I hope that I have demonstrated that the Programme of Action from the 1994 Cairo conference can provide a useful point of reference for us as we prepare to elaborate the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, providing examples and inspiration in terms of content, structure, scope, levels of analysis and mechanisms for implementation and review.


Thank you.