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**DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON  
EMPLOYMENT AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

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## A. INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges Arab countries are faced with is international migration. This issue derives its significance from the fact that a large number of working-age people are leaving their country of origin for other countries that may offer more attractive employment opportunities and higher incomes, as well as better health and education services for themselves and their families. With the resulting demographic transition as it occurs, it is expected that the migration of the working-age population will increase, leading to an accelerated rate of international migration on the whole. It is also true, however, that as the demographic transition proceeds, a window of opportunity will begin to take shape, in which the dependency ratio will decline, making savings and investments more feasible.

In evaluating the future on the basis of the current erroneous economic policies in the Arab region, there is little likelihood of benefiting from the declining dependency and taking advantage of the consequent increase in resources for investment unless effective policies are undertaken to make employment rates grow faster than the working-age population. Whether the Arab countries will be able to make the most of the emerging demographic bonus and achieve higher economic growth, thus containing international migration, will depend on how efficient their socio-economic policies are in converting the increased savings into productive investment geared to generating economic growth.

One of the predictable problems Arab governments will have to face in the near future will be the political and social pressures resulting from the growing demand by people to migrate. The policies and legislation of many countries no longer encourage migration, and the majority of receiving countries are currently seeking to limit the influx of migrants by imposing tighter control through rigid immigration policies. This paper, therefore, is formulated in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendation that international migration should be considered a priority area of concern for the international community; and, in line with the recommendations of international conferences (ICPD, 1994), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has given special importance to the issue of international migration in its work programme, in which the Commission calls for integrating population issues in the socio-economic planning process, thus advocating the strategy of "making the option to remain in one's country a viable one for all people."

## B. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Migrants can be classified in two groups, according to migration types: (1) voluntary migration, resulting from the deterioration of economic conditions in a wide range of Arab communities; this type of migration is based on a voluntary personal decision; and (2) forced migration, resulting from disturbing political situations and severe local and regional conflicts; this type of migration, forced and compulsory, displaces people involuntarily. This paper will cover the causes, challenges, and opportunities within the context of voluntary migration.

It is interesting to note that population mobility within the Arab region is not a new phenomenon. At the onset of the last century, movement between regions was a very easy process and did not entail any political or legislative restrictions. Following the independence of countries, however, social and economic laws were enacted to organize the population movement between countries. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, international migration within the Arab region occurred mostly in response to the economic development of the oil-rich Gulf countries, where rising oil prices considerably increased the growth rate of the gross domestic product (GDP), as well as the investment rates. To benefit from the economic wealth generated by the soaring oil prices, which ameliorated their economic and social infrastructure, the Gulf countries sought to attract workers from highly-populated

countries and chose to assign high priority to the Arab labour force. This created a kind of balanced regional labour market during that period. Owing to the high oil prices, these countries managed to increase their capital accumulation and thus their economic growth, which opened up a large number of employment opportunities. During the 1980s, ambitious projects were launched to build basic infrastructure and develop modern services in the oil-exporting countries of Western Asia. However, the small size of their populations, the low female labour force participation rates, the low status of manual labour, and the reluctance of nationals to work in the private sector made it very difficult to alleviate the ensuing labour shortages without importing foreign workers.

The oil-producing countries of the Gulf region thus became the main destination for migrant workers from Arab countries. At the same time, the countries from which they originated adopted a one-sided strategy, in which they viewed their industrial sector as strategic in retaining their citizens at home, by attempting to create new job opportunities and increase productivity. Coinciding with this strategy, however, were the conflicting realities of high population growth, an unfavourable age structure of the population, and a high dependency ratio. These countries were unable to absorb the vast growth in the working-age population, however, the reason being that the accumulation of GDP in the industrial sector now depended on high technology, which required technical skills that their educational and training system had failed to provide. Yet, it should be mentioned that in the last decade of the past century, international migration was also linked to other significant factors, such as political instabilities and wars, which seriously hampered socio-economic development in the region and left many people either unemployed or displaced.

At the same time, another type of migration had emerged, in which a large flow of people migrated outside the Arab region. The unfavourable demographic trend in Western countries, where fertility rates were below replacement level, had made it difficult for them to meet their labour market requirements. In contrast, population and high fertility trends in the Arab countries were moving in an opposite direction that eventually created widespread unemployment. These conditions caused a good number of Arabs to emigrate from their country in search of jobs at higher wages and a better quality of life.

### C. PHASES OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Three historical phases can be distinguished in the process of international migration in the region:

#### *1. Phase One: balanced Arab labour market*

During this phase, the process of international migration in the Arab region was interpreted in terms of labour market demand and supply. In general, that stage reflected the former role of the Arab labour market in achieving a balance between the flow of labour from countries that were highly populated but scarcely endowed to other countries that were highly endowed with oil and scarcely populated. Thus, economic prosperity as a pull factor in countries of destination has played a considerable role in decreasing unemployment in countries of origin. Gross national incomes from the export of oil had climbed from US\$ 2.6 billion in 1965 to US\$ 8 billion in 1972, and to US\$ 208 billion in 1980. Following this period, when the international oil prices were rectified, the Gulf countries felt compelled to adopt ambitious programs and plans; but because of population growth, the labour force participation rate and the skills level, they were unable to ameliorate the requirements for investments.

Meanwhile, the non-oil Arab countries were experiencing a high population growth and had an overflow in their labour force, which made it normal that this surplus be used to meet the labour shortages in Gulf countries. Consequently, the Gulf countries witnessed an intensive movement of Arab labour that reached 3.14 million in emigration during the oil boom period of 1973 to 1982.

## *2. Phase Two: regressed economic growth*

Because of the decline in Arab oil revenues, which had fallen to US dollar 92 billion by 1985, the oil-producing countries were forced to reconsider their economic policies and investment plans, as well as their public expenditure programs, and allowed for only a limited number of highly skilled Arabs to enter the labour markets. The new era of restrictive measures reduced the number of projects and thus the number of employment opportunities. In many cases, the Gulf countries imposed taxes on immigrants and also refrained from the services of a great number of the existing labour force.

## *3. Phase Three: return migration*

The end of the last phase marked the beginning of a new phase known as “return migration”. If the economic recession during the 1980s constituted a reason for the returned labour force, the wrapping up of many infrastructure projects in a number of the Gulf countries constituted an added reason for them to return home. However, their return was gradual, which enabled the economies of their countries to accommodate them. The outbreak of the Gulf war in August 1990, however, dealt a severe blow to the economies of labour-exporting countries. The immediate implications of the conflict prompted a large and sudden Arab exodus from the Gulf countries, namely from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, to their countries of origin, and the subsequent economic slowdown experienced by those countries led to scaling back the number of Arab migrant workers. It is important to note that despite the remittances sent by the migrants to their country of origin, those remittances did not improve productivity nor did they create new job opportunities. The unemployment rate soared and the problem of absorbing the sudden flood of returnees in the economy of the sending countries was left unsolvable for a long time. The sudden, large number of returnees put tremendous pressure on productive capacity and raised many questions on the effectiveness of remittances.

## D. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF ICPD

According to the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), economic, political, and cultural interrelations play an important role in the flow of people between countries, whether they are developing or developed countries. International migration in its diverse types is linked to those interrelations and both affects and is affected by the development process. International economic imbalances, abject poverty, and environmental degradation, combined with the absence of peace and security, the violation of human rights, and the varying degrees of development of judicial and democratic institutions, are all factors affecting international migration. Explicably, international migration can have a positive impact on both the countries of origin and the countries of destination, providing the former with remittances and the latter with needed human resources. International migration also has the potential of facilitating the transfer of skills and contributing to cultural enrichment. However, international migration entails the loss of human resources for many countries of origin and may give rise to political, economic, or social tensions in the countries of destination.

To be of use, international migration policies need to take into account the economic constraints of the receiving countries, as well as the impact of migration on the host society as well as on the countries of origin. The long-term manageability of international migration hinges on making the option to remain in one's country a viable one for all people. Therefore, efforts to achieve sustainable economic and social development and ensure a better economic balance between developed and developing countries should be strengthened. It is also necessary to increase efforts to defuse international and internal conflicts before they escalate, to ensure that the rights of indigenous people and of persons belonging to ethnic, religious,

or linguistic minorities are respected, and to respect the rule of law, promote good governance, strengthen democracy, and ensure human rights.

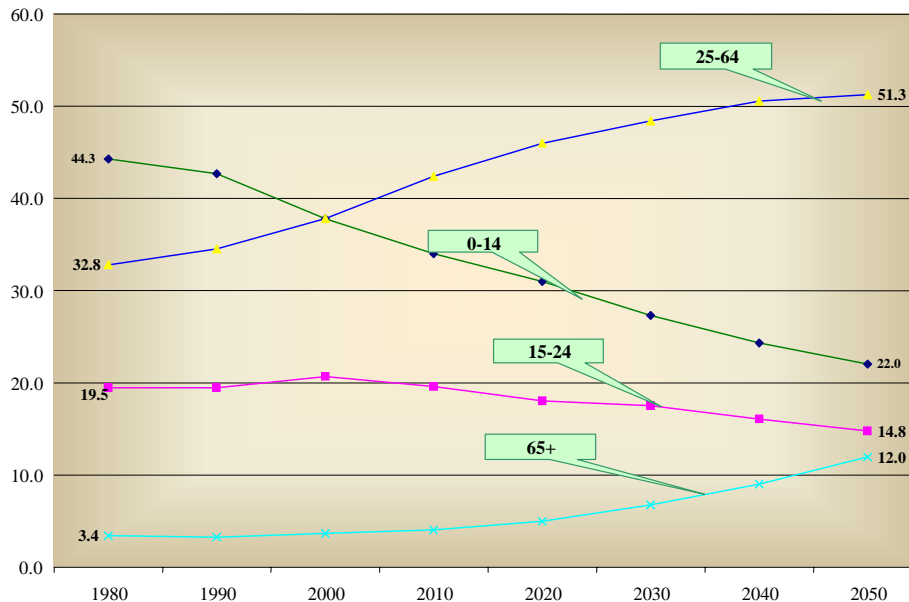
What is being emphasized in the ICPD Programme of Action is the task of eliminating the causes of international migration, namely those related to the problem of poverty, by achieving sustainable economic growth and equitably improving the quality of life for all people. In the Millennium Declaration, strategies aimed at realizing a sustainable economic growth that may alleviate poverty and foster equality between men and women are considered, along with empowering women and providing suitable and productive job opportunities for youth. In order to realize those goals, good governance should prevail in every country; enabling all citizens to participate in ensuring accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. The Programme of Action also recommends taking essential measures to ensure human rights for migrants, migrant workers and their families as well. Within the aforementioned framework, we shall define a fourth phase of international migration in the Arab region.

### *1. Profile of Phase Four: challenges and opportunities*

The fourth phase of international migration should be considered within the context of challenges and opportunities. If the countries of the region hope to succeed in transforming the challenges into a success story, they have to: (1) accelerate the process of demographic transition and resolve regional and domestic conflicts; (2) initiate economic policies that will improve the capability of the economic sectors to absorb the oversupply of labour and productively employ those workers—a capability largely associated with the rate and type of capital accumulation and dependent on the availability of other related factors, such as managerial and administrative skills; (3) integrate population issues in the process of economic growth and development, which is an instrumental factor in achieving the demographic dividend; and (4) finding a niche for competing in the global markets.

The traditional demographic balance was based on a high fertility rate coupled with a high mortality rate. This pattern has changed in recent decades, with the rapid decline in infant mortality and the increase in life expectancy, causing an imbalance in the age structure of the population that considerably increased the number of people in the working age group (15–64). Even though the absolute number of children aged 0–14 in the Arab region increased from 75 million in 1980 to 109 million in 2000 and is projected to reach 124.4 million in 2010, the proportion of children aged 0–14 has actually declined, from 44.2 percent in 1980 to 38 percent in 2000 and is expected to reach 34.8 percent in 2010. This young age structure, in which more than one third of the region's population is under the age of 15, gives population growth an unexpected momentum. In the Arab region, the 15–24 age group, which represents the transition period from childhood to adulthood in most societies, totalled 33 million in 1980, 58.3 million in 2000, and is projected to increase to 69.9 million and 78.3 million by 2010 and 2020, respectively. The most dramatic and rapid population increase in the coming decade is likely to occur in the Arab working-age (25–64 years) group, which will add a total of 40.8 million people to the economically-active population by 2010. The region's working-age population in 1980 was 55.9 million, which increased by 52.8 million to reach a total of 108.7 million by the year 2000 and which is projected to grow to 149.6 million by 2010 and 194 million by 2020. Similarly, between 1980 and 2010, this age group is projected to increase from 32.9 percent to 41.8 per cent of the total population of the region (Chart 1).

**Chart 1. Arab countries: population age structure is changing dramatically (between 1980–2050)**



Historical evidence shows that the simultaneous process of fertility decline, along with the slow growth of the elderly population, offers a number of countries in the region—at different points in time and only for a limited time—a demographic window of opportunity through which increased personal savings and investment become possible.<sup>1</sup> This opportunity will allow the dependency ratio to decline, since the number of the dependent young population (aged 0–14) will be declining faster than the increase in old-age dependency. In other words, during a specific period of time, the overall dependency ratio—which expresses the proportion of people in need of support from each potential worker—will decline. This particular situation eases the pressure on countries to provide for the dependent young and elderly, thus enabling more investment in economic and social development.

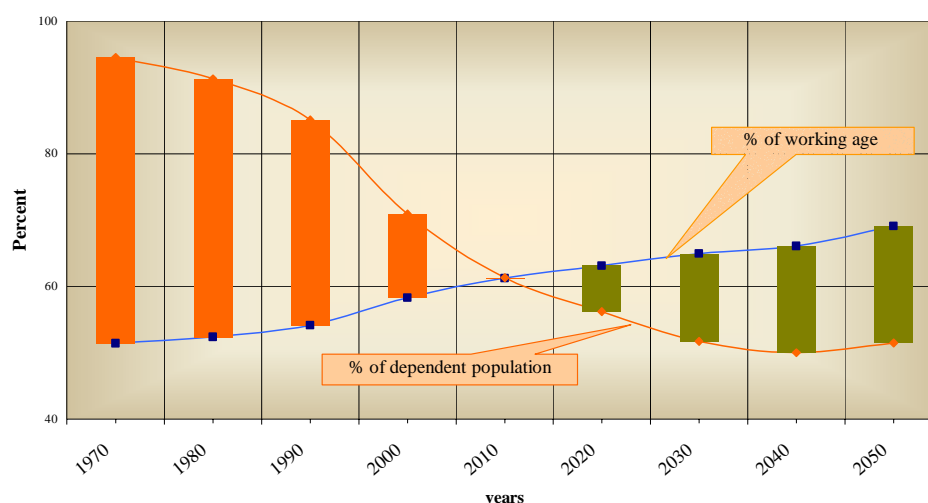
To assess the potential of the demographic window of opportunity, or the “demographic bonus,” to occur in the Arab region, it is imperative that we examine the capacity of the economic sectors to create a sufficient number of jobs to absorb the increased size of the labour force. The projected increase in the working-age group is thus of particular importance for the region. This group embraces three categories that have specific implications for the future development of the Arab countries: (1) it is in the reproductive age, which sustains the population momentum, (2) it is economically active, which increases the number of newcomers into the labour market and creates a labour imbalance where supply is more than demand, and (3) early marriage and the generally high fertility rate will further contribute to population growth and also create greater demand for secondary and higher education.

<sup>1</sup>International Family Planning Perspective, V.28, #1 March 2002, Thomas W. Merrick, Population and Poverty: New Views on an old Controversy.

Moreover, as globalization proceeds, the need for a dynamic and flexible labour market will also increase, and more investment in education will be needed to enable the labour force to acquire the required skills; more investment in health will be necessary to improve the quality of life; and more investment will have to be made in high technologies. All of this will place pressure on the country's economic resources.

As noted above and in Chart 1, population trends in the Arab region started to change in the last decades of the past century towards more advanced phases of the demographic transition, paving the way to changes in the age structure of people in the region. The increase in the number of working-age people may be a good opportunity to increase the savings and investments that result from the decrease in the dependency ratio. When the dependency ratio declines—as in the case of Arab countries, from 90.9 in 1980 to 71.5 in 2000 and to 61 per 100 people aged 15-65 by 2015—more resources will be freed for investment. However, it may not prove to be a good opportunity if those savings and investments are not able to accommodate the growing number of working-age people, thus urging them to migrate (Chart 2).

**Chart 2. Arab countries: declining dependency ratio intercepts the increased working-age**



The present change in the age structure of the population in most of the Arab countries is only considered to be positive if integrated with appropriate policies that promote economic growth and social changes. The desired results may be difficult to achieve if the appropriate combination of socio-economic and demographic policies—including the need for creating productive job opportunities, providing appropriate wages, developing integrated programs on reproductive health, empowering women and ensuring political participation for the majority of population—are not given importance. What is more, this phenomenon may have negative impacts on development if decision makers fail to consider it at an early stage and if they don't provide good governance and a responsive political environment.

#### E. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

In most of the Arab countries, past policies have ignored the human dimensions of economic development. The strategic aim of increasing economic growth through industrialization and/or exports contributed to focusing on maximizing economic growth rather than on improving the standard of living for the people. In spite of their attempts to initiate structural reforms, many countries in the region are still on a slow growth path, effectively sidelined from globalization and the benefits of closer economic

integration with the rest of the world. The countries of the region receive only one third the foreign direct investment (FDI) expected for developing countries of equivalent size, while portfolio investment is virtually non-existent, because equity markets are underdeveloped. Global financial integration lags behind that for other developing countries—less than half the Arab countries have meaningful access to financial markets. Trade performance is also below that of other regions, although oil exports continue to be a substantial source of foreign exchange earnings, despite their overall decline since 1985. As a result, the region's share of the world export market fell by more than half between 1980 and 2000 (whether including or excluding oil exports), whereas the trade share of other developing regions rose slightly during that same period. It should also be noted that the region's information and technology links are among the weakest in the world—the number of Internet users per capita, for example, is quite low compared with other regions.<sup>2</sup>

With the persisting slow growth of the past few decades, unemployment increased in almost all Arab countries. Consistent and comparable data on employment trends are hard to find; estimates of joblessness vary widely and come from a range of different sources. Table 1, however, provides some relevant figures; and from data contained in a recent publication of the International Labour Organization (ILO), it can safely be concluded that most Arab countries suffer from double-digit unemployment and that regional hot spots, such as Algeria, Iraq, and the occupied Palestinian territory, suffer from much higher rates.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 1. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES IN SOME ARAB COUNTRIES

Country	1990	2000	2001	year	youth unemployment %
Algeria	19.8	29.9	27.3	2001	46
Egypt	8.6	7.9	9.2	2000	60
Jordan	16.8	13.7	13.1	2004	76
Morocco	12.1	13.7	13.0	2001	39
Tunisia	16.2	15.9	15.0		
Syria	--	--	11.2	2002	82
Yemen	--	11.5	--	1999	47
Saudi Arabia	--	--	4.6	2001	61
Bahrain				2000	47
Kuwait				2001	66
Qatar				2002	53
UAE				2000	46

Source: ILO <http://laborsta.ilo.org>

In the Gulf countries, segmented labour markets with differential wages for nationals and non-nationals contributed to the high unemployment rate. In the private sector, employers preferred to hire expatriate labour (mostly male), since nationals were generally unwilling to work at the same wage levels as non-nationals. On the other hand, the public sector has been responsible for the absorption of nationals, particularly in the employment of women. The sluggish economic growth of 1.2 percent and the rapid population growth of 3.4 percent during the period 1980–2000 reduced the governmental capacity to expand public-sector job opportunities, which led to the rising problem of unemployment of nationals in a number of countries.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> George T. Abed. "Unfulfilled Promise." International Monetary Fund (IMF), *Finance and Development*, March 2003, Vol. No. 1.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Arab Human Development Report 2002*.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Arab Human Development Report 2002*.



Furthermore, government policies that neglected agricultural development in favour of capital intensive industrialization have created legacies of instability and promoted large-scale urban migration. The growth in the number of jobs envisioned by the industrial sector, however, was not adequate; it absorbed only a small percentage of the labour force, and an imbalance between the supply and demand of labour resulted. In addition, inequalities between the developed and the underdeveloped world, as well as real wage differentials, pushed workers to seek higher wages outside their country.

Associated with those policies, unfavourable vocational and educational policies led to a mismatch between the requirements of the labour market and the available skill level of the labour force. The main focus of the education policies adopted by Arab countries was on expanding the number of people with educational degrees rather than on providing them with the skills needed by the labour market. The educational process, by and large, was separated from the overall development process—its aim was to satisfy social preferences rather than fill the demands of the labour market. In consequence, the gap between the qualifications provided by education and the occupational skills required by the labour market was amplified. These non-integrated policies aggravated the unemployment problem, pushed the wage level further down, and caused a great number of working-age educated people to migrate to countries with higher productivity and ample job opportunities. Recently, many countries realized that out migration not only had deprived them of their best human resources, but had negatively influenced the educational system and created a situation of concern about investment in education. At the same time, policies that encouraged rural-urban migration also contributed to reducing the meagre availability of job opportunities in the manufacturing and other services sectors.

Furthermore, the main reasons for the recent policy changes in international migration in the region have been wars and political instability. In the aftermath of the 1990 Gulf war, the old mechanism that produced and structured the Middle East migration system ended. Policies which had previously been based on the conventional neo-classical thinking that treats migrant labour as a form of human capital and explains international mobility of labour in terms of market supply and demand were found to be no longer successful in interpreting the organizational shift that had occurred in the labour migration process.<sup>5</sup> Owing to the Gulf war, the structure and character of the international migration system in the labour-receiving countries of the Gulf region collapsed and left in its wake policies based on security concerns. The old migration regime, under which Arab emigrants had enjoyed advantage as the favoured category of employees in the oil-rich countries, came to an end. Other than the war, political instability in many countries significantly contributed to international migration, forcing people to migrate to countries outside the region in pursuit of security and political stability.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the prospects for increased emigration to other destinations have lessened since September 2001, with the probability that more stringent emigration regulations will be introduced by Europe and the United States. The declining prospects for remunerative emigration will be reflected in lower remittances to middle-income countries, creating a strain on domestic economies and potentially adversely affecting poverty—and perhaps reducing investment and consumption—unless major international and national development programmes are put in place to simultaneously accelerate productive investment and demographic transition.

In terms of remittances, Arab sending countries have been both important sources and significant recipients of migrants' remittances. The Gulf States, which alone have hosted the great majority of migrant workers in the world, are important sources of those remittances. Among the countries receiving large remittances from their migrant workers are Morocco (US\$ 2.3 billion), Egypt (US\$ 2.9 billion), and

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<sup>5</sup> Wiley & Sons, *Population Migration and the Changing World Order*, Gould and Findly (editors)

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

Lebanon (US\$ 2.3 billion). In Jordan, remittances of Jordanians working abroad have played a key role in the country's economy—US\$ 2.2 billion in 2003, compared to US\$ 1.54 billion in 1998, representing an average annual growth during that period of 8.4 percent. Jordan, in fact, ranked as the ninth largest recipient of remittances in nominal terms among developing countries, after Bangladesh (US\$ 2.1 billion), Lebanon (US\$ 2.3 billion), Turkey (US\$ 2.8 billion), Egypt (US\$ 2.9 billion), Morocco (US\$ 3.4 billion), Philippines (US\$ 6.5 billion), Mexico (US\$ 9.8 billion), and India (US\$ 10 billion).

Jordanian expatriate remittances, which rose from 19.5 percent of GDP in 1998 to 22.6 percent of GDP in 2003, are the highest in the Arab region, followed by Yemen, where remittances accounted for 16.1 percent of the country's GDP, Lebanon 13.8 percent, and Morocco 9.7 percent. According to the *World Development Finance* of 2003 published by the World Bank, workers remittances to the Arab region reached an estimated total of US\$ 14 billion in 2002. Among developing countries, the largest recipient by region was Latin America at US\$ 25 billion in 2002, followed by South Asia (including the Indian subcontinent) at US\$ 16 billion, East Asia and the Pacific at US\$ 11 billion, and East Europe and Central Asia at US\$ 10 billion.<sup>7</sup>

However, while remittances are mostly of interest to migration and livelihood, more recently debates have been prominently featuring topics such as global financial trends, money laundering, and anti-terrorism, the latter following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. Recent research and initiatives on the issue of remittances have revolved around remittance volumes and flows and their macro-economic effects, as well as around how to attract and leverage remittances and how to make financial services for money transfers more transparent reduce transaction fees.<sup>8</sup> In most of the Arab countries, remittances and their investment were significantly hampered by inefficiencies and access barriers in financial systems and services, especially since the policy and institutional frameworks in Arab countries are not sufficiently developed to capture the benefit of this special effect of labour migration at macro level and allow it to act as a stimulus for economic growth.

#### F. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Determining the current and future phase of migration calls for analyzing a series of interconnected political, economic, social, and demographic factors. In view of the demographic changes, on one hand, and the evolving economic, social, and political challenges facing the region, on the other hand, initiating swift appropriate policy responses should be considered within an integrated approach that will achieve "making the option to remain in one's country a viable one for all people." One of the predictable issues Arab governments will have to face is related to the political and social pressures resulting from the growing demand for migration. The receiving countries, however, no longer encourage migration and are currently seeking to curtail its movement through the tighter control of rigid immigration policies.

On the other hand, despite the hidden momentum of population growth, the age structure of the population in the region is changing. Currently, the Arab population is youthful, making the youth dependency ratio very high, which means that the working force must support almost twice as many children as it does in low-fertility countries. Nevertheless, with the continuing trend in decelerated fertility, an opportunity to compensate for the performance of the recent past could soon emerge. As mentioned before, when fertility begins to decline, a demographic "window of opportunity" opens up, by which sustained economic growth can be generated through the increased personal savings and investment that become possible. Whether the Arab countries will be able to make the most of the

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<sup>7</sup> *Arab News*. <http://www.arabnews.com/services/> Monday 10 May, 2004

<sup>8</sup> Cerstin Sander, "Migrant Remittances to Developing Countries," Bannock Consulting.

emerging demographic bonus and achieve higher economic growth, thus containing international migration and making the option to remain in one's country a viable one for all people, will depend on:

1. How efficient their socio-economic and demographic policies are in converting the youth bulge into productive human resources, in increasing investment in education, in empowering women, and in adopting good governance. These policies will have a reinforcing effect in helping to create a “virtuous cycle” of sustained economic growth.

2. To which extent these countries will be able to fit into the evolving global economic order. It is imperative that Arab countries find a niche in the rapidly integrating global market, based on the comparative advantage of each.<sup>9</sup> Markets promote efficiency through competition and the division of labour—the specialization that allows people and economies to focus on what they do best. Global markets offer greater opportunities for people to tap into more and larger markets around the world. It means they can have access to more capital flows, technology, cheaper imports, and larger export markets. While carving out their niche in the global market will be a step forward, administering its social consequences would constitute the essential major step towards benefiting from fair and just globalization.

Judging the future on the basis of the current socio-economic situation in the Arab region, it appears clear that unless reinforcing and effective policies are taken to achieve sustained economic growth and find a niche in the global market, the consequences of unsuccessful policies and bad governance will cause the opportunity of benefiting from the demographic bonus to be missed. Such an unfortunate eventuality would reinforce the decision of people to migrate, perhaps to unfavourable regional and world political environments, in which many young men and women may find themselves prone to criminal behaviour or to engaging in political conflicts out of frustration with the hopelessness of their lives.

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<sup>9</sup>Saad Nagi, “Toward Integrated Social Policies in Arab Countries,” unpublished UNESCWA document, 2005.