



Statement of the Global Migration Group
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“Impacts of the financial and economic crisis on international migration and migrants”

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(Check against delivery)

President/Prime Minister of Greece, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

I have the honour to address you today as the Chair of the Global Migration Group, on behalf of the 14 Heads of agency of the UN, IOM and World Bank that the GMG brings together. The GMG has been and will be a ready supporter and partner of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. I wish to congratulate the Government of Greece for hosting the third Global Forum and for advancing the international dialogue on migration and development at this critical juncture, as individual countries and the world community are facing the challenges and repercussions of the 2007 financial crisis, which has resulted in global recession for the first time in 70 years.

Impacts of the crisis

The recession affects many of the interlinkages between migration and development that are being discussed here at the Global Forum. It is impacting migration flows, remittances and investment; and it also comes with social and political ramifications for the integration and the well-being of migrants and their families.

Indeed, evidence from different world regions indicates that migrants, in comparison with national workers, have experienced higher levels of unemployment and decreased income due to the crisis. While the impact is not the same in all countries and regions, globally speaking, worsening economic conditions and more restrictive policies for labour movements have led to a slowdown of migration and remittance flows.

At the same time, due to the recession and a slump in foreign direct investment, remittances have gained relative importance as a major source of foreign income for developing countries, and countries in transition. While remittances remain relatively resilient, the World Bank forecasts that flows to all developing regions will decline between 7 and 10 percent in 2009. Many countries which depend upon these flows will be adversely affected not only economically, but also socially. Households that receive fewer remittances are under pressure to cut back on expenses. Too often this will negatively affect development outcomes, for example in the area of children's and especially girls' education and health.



The 2006 UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development recognized that, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and other internationally agreed development goals, it is important to embrace migration as a force for development.

Speaking on behalf of the GMG, I wish to highlight our three central views on this great challenge:

Main messages

First, we should not allow the global recession to undermine the progress made since the 2006 High-Level Dialogue in recognizing the development gains associated with international migration. In the context of the current recession, many States have adopted restrictive requirements for obtaining entry, legal residence and work permits. Curtailing regular migration tends to increase irregular flows that are more risky for migrants, particularly the most vulnerable such as unaccompanied minors. Additional restrictions can also reinforce the impression that migration is a questionable, criminal phenomenon, thereby contributing to anti-migrant, xenophobic reactions in destination countries. Further, from a development perspective, such measures risk slowing down the resumption of growth.

As it adapts to the crisis, migration policy should keep sight of its development implications. This also means recognizing that migration is no short-cut to development. Rather, migration and refugee policy concerns are to become an integral part of aid, trade, investment and development policies to ensure that migration happens out of choice.

Second, migration policies and practices must be rooted in human rights. Human mobility is a fundamental component of human freedoms. Notwithstanding the crisis, the core international human rights instruments, as well as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol must be fully respected and implemented. States must be vigilant against xenophobic sentiments and discriminatory practices prompted by the economic crisis. Female migrants must be adequately protected from exploitation and abuse, for example by recognizing domestic work as formal employment. We call on Governments to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, as well as the ILO Conventions no. 97 and 143 on Migrant Workers. Furthermore, the economic crisis requires a renewed commitment to vigorously combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and to protecting the rights of victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants.

Third, the evidence-base for policy making must be strengthened. The GMG fully endorses the recommendations contained in the recent report *Migrants Count: Five Steps toward Better Migration Data*, issued by the Center for Global Development, which is available in the back of the room. If we implement the five simple steps identified in the report, we can collectively close the widely acknowledged gap in migration information before the 2013 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. To accomplish this goal, we need an action plan. And, to ensure the relevance of migration data, including those coming from the 2010 round of censuses, a regular dialogue with policy makers such as that happening within the



GFMD must be strengthened. In this regard, the GMG welcomes the creation of the Working Group on Data and Research and hopes it will continue beyond the Greek Presidency.

The role of and support provided by the GMG

The expertise of its members ideally positions the GMG to provide timely analysis and policy advice on the impacts of the global recession on migrants and their families and communities. A series of GMG fact-sheets are being made available to this Global Forum, showcasing the GMG's findings and recommendations on the economic crisis and migration. The long-standing Migration and Development Seminar Series at UN Headquarters, a collaboration between UNITAR, IOM, UNFPA and the MacArthur Foundation, and an UNCTAD ad hoc expert meeting on the *Contribution of Migrants to Development: Trade, Investment and Developmental Links* held in July, have provided platforms for all GMG members to share their assessments of the impacts of the crisis on international migration. UNDP's Human Development Report 2009 entitled *Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development* discusses how mobility can foster human development and reviews a number of policies and institutions to enhance development outcomes in the context of the crisis and beyond. The ILO published a nuanced analysis on the global economic crisis and migrant workers. The World Bank is keeping us abreast of trends in global remittance flows. UNDESA released new estimates and short term projections on the evolution of the number of international migrants by country that indicate the overall effect of the crisis. IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNICEF are monitoring country-specific developments related to the crisis on an ongoing basis.

Furthermore, several GMG member agencies have contributed to the third Global Forum proceedings through, for example, producing a joint Handbook on *Mainstreaming Migration in National Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies* and by providing inputs to background papers for the GMFD roundtables. The joint GMG publication on *International Migration and Human Rights: Challenges and Opportunities on the Threshold of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which was presented at last year's Global Forum in Manila, continues to provide a comprehensive and easily accessible guide to the legal framework underpinning the migration and development debate.

Conclusion

In closing, let us not forget that this third Global Forum is part of a larger process; a process that began at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and has gained critical momentum since the 2006 UN High Level Dialogue. The global recession must not overshadow the fragile achievements of this process, most importantly the trust that has been built among States to address the traditionally contentious issue of international migration constructively at the global level. The GMG stands ready to assist States and to engage with other relevant stakeholders to address the challenges faced in ensuring that the benefits of international migration for development prevail, and to support greater cooperation in this field.

I thank you for your attention.