

Global Forum on Migration and Development 2011

Thematic Meeting

Addressing Irregular Migration through Coherent Migration and Development Strategies

Draft Concept Note

Date and place:	Turkey, 13-14 October 2011
Hosted by:	Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Co-chairs:	
In collaboration with:	International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
Supported by:	Government of Switzerland (Federal Office for Migration)
Overall Objective:	Promote discussion and explore ways of international cooperation with a view to address the development-related causes of irregular migration.
Specific Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exchange information on bilateral, regional and international practices, models and strategies that offer viable alternatives to irregular migration;• Identify conditions and mechanisms for sustained and effective partnerships between countries of origin, transit and destination in order to address development related causes of irregular migration.
Participants:	Total 50-60 Selected Governments of Europe Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America; International Organizations; Civil Society
Estimated Budget:	CHF 75.000

Background and Justification

The issue of irregular migration first appeared on the agenda of the GFMD in Manila in 2008. The focus of discussion was on minimizing the negative impacts on irregular migration, emphasizing the migrant vulnerability and protection. The issue of irregular migration appeared again in Mexico in 2010 within the framework of Roundtable 1, intensifying discussions on joint strategies to address irregular migration. Whilst it was agreed that the issue of irregular migration must remain on the agenda of the Global Forum, the main conclusions of the 2010 Roundtable were:

1. The importance of establishing joint mechanisms for international cooperation at multilateral, regional and bilateral levels based on the principle of shared responsibility between countries of origin, transit and destination.
2. The need for a greater focus on irregular migration that prioritizes the protection of the most vulnerable groups, specifically irregular migrants, victims of trafficking, women and unaccompanied children.

In the Swiss Chair's programme for 2011, the issue of irregular migration is elaborated under cluster II, which addresses irregular migration through coherent migration and development strategies. The emphasis of the Chair's programme under this cluster is put on national practices, models and strategies for inter-state cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, in managing irregular migration, taking account of i) the development-related causes and implications of irregular migration, and ii) the human rights and special vulnerability of migrant children, women and men in an irregular situation.

In order to continue and intensify the discussion on irregular migration under the perspective illustrated above, a thematic meeting will take place in Turkey on 11-12 October as regards practices, models and strategies for cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination in managing irregular migration with a view to address the development-related causes. The Istanbul meeting follows directly the El Salvador meeting of 4-5 October 2011 on irregular migration, focusing on increasing the human and economic development potential of migration, reducing the vulnerability of migrants in an irregular situation, upholding the human rights of and protection of migrants and promoting legal and labour migration. Thus the two meetings will be of complementary nature, addressing the priorities identified by the Swiss Chair under cluster II.

The Context of Irregular Migration

Irregular migration poses real challenges for states, as well as exposing migrants themselves to insecurity and vulnerability. The forces driving irregular migration are very complex, powerful and difficult to modify such as the disparities in the level of prosperity, human rights and security in different parts of the world. While there has been much talk of improving economic and security conditions in source countries with a view to alleviate migration pressures, the emphasis has rather been on policies aimed at curbing immigration at the destination end so far. However, it is undeniable that from an economic perspective irregular migration is quite functional for many destination countries and therefore efforts to govern irregular migration are not likely to succeed if its economic rationale is not properly understood. Very often economies of developed countries need unskilled workers while their publics would not accept a labour recruitment policy, which results in interest conflicts and paves the way to side or backdoors.

Thus, despite tighter immigration systems in the destination countries and increased security enforcement of the last decades, it must be acknowledged that most states have failed to

cease, deter or control irregular migration effectively or efficiently. Certainly a perspective focused primarily on irregular migration obscures the broader picture and fails to address irregular migration through more comprehensive, coherent and effective approaches. When tightening of immigration policies is the only response, though it is a legitimate response by States to irregular migration, the effect may be to push more people into the hands of smugglers and traffickers, thereby increasing irregular modes of migration, vulnerability and exploitation. This undermines security due to links with organized crime, violence, and corruption. Furthermore, the concentration and assets dedicated to the fight against irregular migration may also outweigh its quantitative significance.

It is in general accepted that poverty – whether absolute or relative - and differences in the level of development, security and human rights among countries and regions remain important causes of irregular migration. Over the last decades, the link between migration and development has featured high on the global international policy agenda. However, at the same time the international debate registered the gradual dismissal of the “root causes approach”, meaning attempts to remove the causes of migration. Because of the conflicting interests of states, the focus moved on to finding ways to make migration contribute to development, while the root causes still remain to be tackled as a long-term policy objective.

Currently, the most important measures to reduce irregular movements such as the securitization of the migration area with strengthened law enforcement have no direct connection with migration at all. Efforts to control migration by states still follow a national logic, while many of the forces driving migration follow a transnational logic. Transnational networks in all their disguises will undermine migration control, as long as it is based on a national logic and separated from mainstream policies on aid, trade, development and governance. Most migration flows today are an integral aspect of the global inequality. Unless states go beyond the securitization of the migration area and address the current patterns of global inequality and other development-related causes of migration, it needs to be acknowledged that irregular migration will continue for the foreseeable future, although it may be possible to reduce its scale.

The Meeting in Turkey:

The thematic meeting in Turkey will focus on addressing the development-related causes of irregular migration within the framework of inter-state cooperation, including relevant regional and inter-regional consultative processes or other regional bodies. Turkey is the Chair of “Budapest Process”, which is an intergovernmental dialogue, engaging more than 50 governments and 10 international organisations, aiming at developing comprehensive and sustainable systems for orderly migration in the wider Europe region. The Budapest Process has recently expanded to cover the Middle East and South Asia. The purpose of this expansion has been addressing irregular migration through inter-state cooperation with a primary development focus.

There are numerous bilateral and regional initiatives and dialogues, where the (irregular) migration and development nexus is addressed and ways are sought to address migration pressures through development cooperation. However, the migration policies of developed countries are currently defined independently of the issue of their impact on developing economies, and those of the countries of origin. Despite many decades of development assistance and links established between migration and development, the biggest challenge remains the identification of forms of development cooperation that can offer people viable alternatives to irregular migration. It also needs to be remembered that although the principal objective of development cooperation remains poverty eradication, it cannot easily serve the double goal of poverty reduction and migration management at the same time.

The Istanbul meeting will seek to discuss models and strategies of inter-state cooperation aiming to address irregular migration through development and to identify good practices of development cooperation offering viable alternatives to irregular migration within the framework of regional and intra-regional processes and other relevant bodies.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Practical examples, programmes and projects of development cooperation that offer viable alternatives to irregular migration
2. Practices, models and strategies for regional and inter-state cooperation in managing irregular migration with a development-related focus
3. Practical steps that have been taken to address irregular migration, under a focus of shared responsibility of countries of origin, transit and destination to promote economic and social development
4. Effective data collection and information exchange mechanisms on irregular migration and migration related development issues