

## **Ninth GFMD - 2016**

### **Concept Paper for Third Thematic Workshop on Migration for Peace, Stability and Growth**

*UN HQ, New York; 19 July 2016*

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*With a view to supporting the discussion at this Thematic Workshop, this concept paper focuses on two issues: (i) to shift the discourse from securitization of migration to focus on enhancing mobility; and (ii) the need for well-managed migration policies.*

*The paper also proposes some general questions to be discussed at the workshop.*

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#### ***The case for migration governance***

Migration, as a global phenomenon, continues to loom large as a subject of intense media scrutiny, of community pre-occupation and of political controversy. States are confronted with rapidly evolving situations offering, on one hand, opportunities for social and economic growth and, on the other, with complex policy challenge of balancing the facilitation of movement across border with objectives of security and control. In order to derive greatest benefit from this international migration - for the migrants themselves and also for their families, their host societies and their countries of origin - States have little choice but to collaborate with each other and with all stakeholders to develop their policy development and programme management capabilities in this field and prepare a flexible migration governance framework which would promote peace, stability and growth.

In 2000, there were 150 million migrants. This figure could rise to 405 million by 2050.

However, migration is one of the newer areas of governance to receive attention; and migration governance is a work in progress, not yet a completed project. While there are numerous elements of international law, policy and principles that are of direct or indirect relevance, there is as yet no overarching, unifying legal framework.

In the absence of such an agreed platform (*which would provide the basis for common orientations to governance*), the political discourse and policy discussions invariably gravitate towards those aspects of migration that loom large in media coverage of the topic, and end up dominating community debates. The issues that receive most attention tend to be related to the “problematic” aspects of migration: irregular movement, violation of rights, human smuggling and trafficking, and perceived threats to national and personal security. These concerns are not without basis: they deserve attention and must be addressed. But, they should not distort our perception of the place and importance of mobility in

contemporary world, nor should they steal attention from the broader assignment that must be undertaken by policymakers, i.e. the development of a comprehensive approach to international migration governance and one that does not detract from, but contributes to peace, stability and growth.

### ***Moving towards international migration governance***

Several trans-boundary issues e.g. environment, trade, finance have an identifiable institutional framework at the global level, whilst migration lacks a coherent governance structure that can facilitate migration at a global level<sup>1</sup>. This is one of our century's biggest challenge, considering that in 2015 there were some 244 million migrants worldwide<sup>2</sup> (UNDESA).

Most migration occurs through safe and regular means. The majority of the world's international migrants leave from, transit through and move to countries of destination without incident. However, this is not the case for all migrants, many of whom experience significant discrimination, lack of opportunity and exploitation. While the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the "*positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development*," it also recognizes that migrants' energy and ingenuity is often squandered. Regrettably, the current state of governance and policy development on migration tends to breed vulnerabilities and prevents migrants and states from reaping the full benefits of this global reality.

There are clearly, some serious obstacles to be overcome including the general inclination of governments to address migration from a unilateral rather than from a plural perspective; the lack of political will to undertake the energy-consuming task of constructing a global/legal policy framework; the difficulty of pulling together all the constituent parts of a comprehensive global framework, one that would have to include elements as diverse as labour migration, migration and development, smuggling and trafficking, border control and social diversity together with linkages in adjoining fields such as trade, employment, health and climate change.

In order to work forward, we need to distill some orientations for action out of the bewildering "busyness" of this policy space: there are, in fact, three distinct but inter-connected policy areas that require exploration:

- The first covers the measures that the international community requires to enable what is arguably the world's most valuable resource i.e. human beings – to move about in safety and dignity. It is about the provision of safe and legal options for people to move from one country to another. The focus here is about those aspects of migration which can be facilitated and enhanced, including labour migration, tourism, family reunion, student migration and promoting short-term migration for skills enhancement or training for the youth. Enhancing mobility, as well as providing legal and safe access to migrate, will promote innovation and growth in both the country of destination and the country of origin. Facilitation of these movements will require cooperation and partnership of all stakeholders. This is enshrined in SDG 17 - which highlights the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> Betts, A.2010. *Migration governance: alternative futures, Background paper for the World Migration Report 2010*, IOM, Geneva.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. 2015. *International Migration Report : Highlights*. Available online: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015\\_Highlights.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2015_Highlights.pdf)

- The second line of policy intervention covers the measures required to address the issues arising from irregular movement, effective management of borders and prevention and prosecution of smuggling and trafficking. Ultimately, the international community is faced with two competing modes of migration: (a) which is sanctioned by states and is intended to enable people to move in a safe and orderly manner; and (b) which is kept in operation by lucrative smuggling and trafficking networks. Migrants are the victims who, in effect, pay for the services they wish to have but end up being the targets of exploitation or abuse. The problem requires urgent attention.
- The third area of reflection covers international responses to mobility arising out of crises and emergencies, whether man-made or natural. There is just one authoritative reference in this area, i.e. the 1951 Refugee Convention, which covers the situation and protection needs of refugees. Recent experience has, however, shown that there are many vulnerable migrants who have left their countries of origin driven by a wide range of factors, including conflict, social and political unrest, environmental degradation and entrenched poverty.

There is one common dimension to these three areas of investigation, one that forms an essential platform for the three pillars: the issue of the human rights of migrants. The question of protection and well-being of migrants must be at the centre of all discussions of migration governance.

It is generally recognized that migration is an integral part of our globalized world. It is further agreed that migration can contribute significantly to peace, stability and growth. In order for us to attain this objective, the international community must develop a comprehensive framework for the governance of migration, bearing in mind that it is first and foremost a human experience.

### **Guiding questions**

- 1) What gaps exist in migration governance? How can these gaps be addressed?
- 2) What are the current limitations of existing principles, processes and institutions governing migration at the global and regional levels?
- 3) How can we shift the discourse from the focus on security-related aspects of migration to looking at how to bring stability and growth for both the migrants as well as to the host society?
- 4) How can a balance be achieved between State responsibilities versus a global governance regime on migration?
- 5) How can capacity be built at various levels – local, regional, national, international – so as to enhance policy formulation and implementation?

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