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FAX: (961-1) 981510 - TEL: (961-1) 981301, 981311, 981401
P. O. BOX 11-8575 - BEIRUT, LEBANON

**Workshop on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region:
Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies**
Beirut, Lebanon,
19-22 July, 2010

As part of its two-year project on “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impacts”, ESCWA, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is organizing a back-to-back four-day workshop on “International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies” in Beirut, from 19-22 July 2010. In line with the objectives of this project, the workshop has a twofold aim:

- To enhance national-level skills and capacities to design and implement policies and programmes which maximize the gains and minimize the challenges of international migration for development
- To contribute to increasing the availability of data and information

1. The Global Migration and Development Debate

i) Mainstreaming Migration into Development Strategies

The question of international migration and its impacts on the development of both countries of origin and destination of migrants is continuing to gain in prominence in international arenas. Governments now meet annually at the Global Forum on Migration and Development to discuss how migration can be managed to ensure that it is beneficial for all actors involved – countries of origin, destination and migrants themselves. Following meetings in Brussels in 2007 and Manila in 2008, at its latest session in Athens in November 2009, the GFMD gathered over 140 governments, and 35 international organizations to share best practices in linking migration to development and chart out mutually-agreed ways forward.

The theme of this latest GFMD was “Integrating Migration into Development Strategies for the Benefit of All”. A key outcome of previous discussions on migration and development has been the recognition that migration’s outcomes for development are

complex, multi-sectoral and multi-directional, affecting both micro- and macro-level development in different ways in different contexts. For example, the emigration of highly-skilled personnel could lead to high levels of remittances which help reduce poverty in a country, yet these remittances, if not well-managed, could have negative impacts on equality within and between communities.

Positive development outcomes from migration are therefore not automatic, but rather require active and coherent cross-governmental policy action based on the best-possible data to achieve. It is now widely recognized that in order to properly ensure that all of the different effects of migration are fully-considered and that policies and activities are formulated and implemented in a comprehensive and appropriate way to maximize migration's contributions to development, and minimize the negative effects, it is essential to integrate migration into cross-governmental development and poverty reduction strategies. These evidence-based strategies provide a conceptual and policy framework around which government actions to fight poverty and promote goals such as decent employment and investment for development can be organized and implemented over a certain period of time, identifying key areas of need and the appropriate measures to be taken.

By integrating the specific dynamics of migration into these frameworks, their effectiveness in promoting development can be increased: migration policies can be designed with development impacts in mind, while development-related policies can take into account the role of migration in supporting their objectives.

Human rights considerations are an essential part of the mainstreaming process. It is increasingly recognized that development is not simply an economic phenomenon but must also focus on broad human development goals which include the fulfilment of human rights, including the rights of migrants.¹ Migrants, as human beings, are not simply resources which can be exploited for the benefit of the economy of the country of origin or destination; rather, they are granted with indivisible and inalienable rights, including civil, political and labour rights, such as the right to education, and the right to non-discrimination in treatment by authorities. Beyond this, it is increasingly recognized that empowered migrants who are able to exercise their human rights are more highly-skilled, healthier, and therefore are more productive and better-able to promote economic development in countries of origin and destination. Development processes in countries of origin or destination should therefore also focus on integrating migrants' core human rights into policies.

ii) The importance of data

Accurate, comparable data are an essential support to the mainstreaming process, in order to ensure that the integration process addresses the specific country context of migration and its impacts. When governments are able to answer such questions as who is moving, how they are moving, where they are moving from and to, whether they are returning or

¹ Government of the Philippines and Government of the United Arab Emirates, *Protecting the Rights of Migrants – A Shared Responsibility*, Global Forum on Migration and Development 2008 Background Paper

not, what skills they possess and so on, then it is possible to fully-appreciate the challenges and opportunities for development that migration affords. Such data can be obtained through existing measures, for example censuses and specialized surveys such as the Living Standards Measurement Surveys or Labour Force Surveys, as well as through migration-specific surveys, and through one-off, multiple-round or longitudinal data-gathering methodologies. In order to facilitate a rapid integration process, they should be gathered before the integration of migration into development strategies. However, these data are often not collected, or, where they are, they are not disseminated. Less is known about migration flows than about trade and investment flows; according to the Center for Global Development, this is “the biggest blind spot in our view of the world economy”.² This prevents migration’s impacts being recognized in the development process.

iii) *The role of regional cooperation*

In order to effectively put mainstreaming measures into operation, cooperation between countries of origin and destination is required; migration inevitably requires cooperation, as it involves more than one country. Where these countries have different priorities and goals in this area, discussion at a regional level may provide a means of enabling states to develop coordinated measures to manage migration for the benefit of all.

Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) provide informal, non-binding state-owned and -led forums of discussion, which have proved successful in building trust between countries with very different migration profiles, and enabling free and open discussions on otherwise-controversial issues. RCPs throughout the world have enabled states to, *inter alia*, better-understand migratory phenomena, to build consensus, networks and capacities to manage them, and to learn from one another’s experiences to inform their own policy-making.³

2. Migration and Development in the Arab Region

In the Arab region, the potential for migration to contribute to development is large. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council constitute some of the most important countries of destination for migrants in the world, both by absolute numbers of migrants and in terms of migrants’ share of the population. These migrants, primarily labour migrants, form an essential part of the labour pool of these countries and contribute to economic growth, while sending large amounts of money to their countries of origin: remittances from the four countries of the GCC which reported figures in 2008 amounted to over USD 34 billion, almost 12 per cent of the remittances recorded as being sent in that year in the whole world.⁴ An increasing number of these migrants are occupying highly-skilled positions, enabling them to put into practice and develop skills which could be of assistance to their countries of origin.

² Center for Global Development, *Migrants Count: Five Steps Toward Better Migration Data*

³ IOM, 2010, *An Assessment of Principal Regional Consultative Processes on Migration*

⁴ World Bank, *Migration and Development Brief 11*

Given the different opportunities available in the countries of the region, along with their geographical and cultural proximity, many of these migrants to GCC countries of destination come from the non-oil exporting countries within the region; migrants also move between these countries.⁵ Others leave to live in Europe, North America and Oceania. These emigration flows have important development consequences: the World Bank estimates that Lebanon and Egypt both received around USD 7 billion in remittances in 2009, putting them in the top 20 remittance recipient countries in the world. In Jordan and Lebanon, remittances constitute respectively 20 and 25 per cent their Gross Domestic Product.⁶ Much of this emigration, meanwhile, is made up of highly-skilled migrants: nearly 50 per cent of Egyptian migrants in OECD countries for example hold a tertiary degree.⁷ This profile creates opportunities and risks for development; opportunities as these migrants may be able to further develop their skills and develop networks in their countries of destination which could be brought to benefit their countries of origin; risks because emigration may deprive their countries of origin of these skills.

At present, however, it is hard to say what the impact of migration on development in the region has been, as “data on migration in the region is outdated, scattered and unreliable ... depriving policymakers of the information that is vital for sound analysis, projections and adequate policy decisions”.⁸ There is therefore a clear need for a consolidated effort for improved data gathering, dissemination and analysis in the region.

Moreover, while almost all ESCWA countries are involved in dialogues which do deal with migration and development among other issues in different contexts, there is no systematic dialogue between all the countries of the Arab migration system focusing on holistic, cooperative regional approaches to migration management and development, despite the obvious potential in this area. Other dialogues, while extremely valuable, involve a few countries from the region and issues relating to other migration systems. So the Abu Dhabi Dialogue involves the GCC countries and Yemen, but focuses on discussion with Asian countries of origin and destination; the Mediterranean Transit Migration Dialogue (involving Egypt, Lebanon and Syria) focuses on irregular migration to Europe, as well as migration and development; while the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime involves Iraq, Jordan and Syria but does not discuss migration and development; and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Regional Consultative Process on Migration involves Egypt, Yemen and Sudan, but focuses on issues relating to migration in East Africa.⁹ As a result, policies may be made and implemented in isolation and without a consideration of their impact on other countries in the Arab region.

⁵ Based on calculations from the University of Sussex *Global Migrant Origin Database* (2007), migrants from ESCWA countries in other ESCWA countries account for 4.8 million of the 16.1 million migrants in the ESCWA region

⁶ World Bank, *Migration and Development Brief 11*

⁷ UN/POP/EGM/2006/11

⁸ UN/POP/EGM/2006/09

⁹ IOM, 2010, *An Assessment of Principal Regional Consultative Processes on Migration*

3. The Workshop on Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies

The back to back workshop will aim to address these linked issues of migration and development, migration data and regional cooperation. The workshop will provide participants with an opportunity to understand the current regional situation in relation to migration and development, discuss common definitions and activities in the framework of global best practices, as well as providing a chance for them to actively consider how migration can be mainstreamed into development strategies in a practical way.

In particular, the workshop will focus on national experiences, in order to identify best practices and discuss ways forward in terms of:

- Identifying the areas where migration has an impact on development and integrating these considerations into development strategies
- International migration definitions and data requirements, in terms of gathering and disseminating data;
- Discussing potential forms of regional cooperation on migration and development

The workshop will have the following expected outputs:

- Enhanced capacity of national-level participants in the management of migration for development
- A toolkit for participants
- A regional report on International Migration and Development in the Arab Mashreq and the GCC Countries: Challenges and Opportunities.
- A set of recommendations to guide future action in this area

Participants in the workshop will comprise national counterparts identified in the course of this project from the ten member countries targeted by the project.¹⁰ These national counterparts are both experts involved in data-gathering and policymakers from relevant government ministries and departments in the ten target countries. Other UN organizations and non-UN international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development will also participate, providing their expertise to help lead the debate and discussion. Regional organizations, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Labour Organization will also participate. Consultants involved in the preparation of the regional report on *International Migration and Development in the Arab Mashreq and the GCC Countries: Challenges and Opportunities* will also present the findings of their research. Selected academics will also be invited to participate.

The workshop will cover the following areas:

¹⁰ These countries are: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates.

- **Session 1: International Migration and Development in the Arab Mashreq and the GCC Countries: Challenges and Opportunities**
 - Presentation and discussion of a study on migration and development in the ESCWA region. The following papers will be presented:
 - A regional profile of labour mobility in the ESCWA region
 - An outline of remittances volumes and trends, and their socioeconomic impact;
 - An exploration of the potential of transnational communities to contribute to development in their countries of origin;
 - A study of the impacts of brain drain and circular migration in the region;
 - A review of current understandings of migration and development in general, and existing institutional arrangements and national migration policies in the Arab region.
- **Session 2: Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning, in addition to Regional Consultative Processes on Migration** (organized in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development)
 - Presentation from the International Organization for Migration on the rationale for and importance of mainstreaming migration into development strategies;
 - Presentation from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development on their work on measuring the brain drain from the Arab region;
 - Presentation from the International Organization for Migration on the nature and importance of RCPs;
 - Presentation from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development on experiences in RCPs in the Arab region;
 - Presentation from a country representative (TBD) on the prospects and potential role of a future Regional Consultative Process for the Arab region.
- **Session 3: Presentation of Reports on Migration and Statistical Policies**
 - Presentation and discussion of the country reports prepared by participants, focusing on the integration of migration into development strategies and the state of migration data.
- **Session 4: Hands-On Session on Integrating Migration into Development Strategies**
 - A hands-on training session on migration and development in the Arab region. Participants will be divided into four groups to focus on the following areas:
 - Mainstreaming migration into labour, investment and poverty reduction strategies;

- Data and statistics;
 - The goals of a Regional Consultative Process in the Arab region.
- Presentation of the results of the working groups;
- **Session 5. Conclusions and Recommendations**