

**FOURTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

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**International Migration and Development\***  
**Key aspects for the High-Level Dialogue 2006**

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\* The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Migration has become one of the major issues of concern in the world in the last few years. The accelerated pace and impact of international migration on countries of origin, transit and destination is a phenomenon foreseen to continue: international migration is likely to further develop itself as a part of the global transformations affecting today's world. Migration can be a chance to foster development and increase intercultural relationships. However, migration is often understood as a problem. And indeed, the increased population flows across borders of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds give rise to a number of challenges in both host States and States of origin. It is becoming increasingly clear that unilateral approaches will not be sufficient to address these challenges and that the international community must collectively find ways of making the most of migration.

**The basic premise of UNESCO's work in the field of migration is that human rights should be at the core of any approach to human mobility.** All initiatives taken to address the challenges of migration should above all consider the priority of the human rights of migrants. There is abundant evidence that migrants represent a highly vulnerable group of people. Not being nationals of the country in which they live, they seldom have the same degree of legal protection as national citizens. They are made further vulnerable because of the frequent but erroneous belief that only national citizens are entitled to the full protection of human rights law.

Moreover, migrants who find no legal channel to migrate often become undocumented, becoming exposed to a very high degree of vulnerability. They are notably the main victims of severe human rights violations such as trafficking. For them, migration may even have fatal consequences, as many die on their way to receiving countries. Such tragic outcomes of migration flows are incompatible with human rights and with the core values of the international community. They call for an approach of migration based on an international dialogue that will better ensure the respect for human rights.

It is vital to stress that promoting the respect for the human rights of migrants is not only a matter of improving their living and working conditions. It is also a matter of fostering their harmonious integration in receiving societies, which will ultimately guarantee social cohesion and the respect for core values such as peace and democracy. The respect for the basic human rights of all persons in each society is an essential basis for addressing and resolving the tensions and potential conflicts between people who have different interests and sociocultural backgrounds. In a world in which more and more people are on the move, ignoring migrants' rights would seriously jeopardise the welfare, not only of migrants, but of all human beings. Ensuring the full application of human rights to migrants is therefore an essential step in ensuring global justice and social cohesion.

Along with human rights, UNESCO also stresses that migration has a crucial cultural dimension that should not be ignored. **Migrants are not only workers but also human beings and migratory flows**

migrants' different socio-cultural background must indeed be balanced with the need for social cohesion. Receiving countries must be able to incorporate migrants in a way that enables them to maintain the degree of social cohesion that is necessary to the respect of core values such as democracy.

Successfully addressing the issues of migrants' human rights and of cultural diversity calls for the development of new approaches to international migration that enable a multilateral and harmonious management of people flows. The likelihood of continued international migration indeed calls for the elaboration of such new frameworks, which require, among other things, imaginative thinking about the future of migration. Migration is a fast-evolving process and the international community must be prepared to address the future challenges raised by human mobility in the next decades. Successful policies also need to adapt to the changes that constantly take place in the nature and direction of migration flows. UNESCO therefore stipulates that the international community should devote time and energy in the elaboration of scenarios on the future of migration. Only by critically challenging conventional opinions will it be possible to envisage the solutions to migration developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Given the fact that there is currently no lead agency for international migration within the UN System, UNESCO believes that strong cooperation between international agencies concerned with migration and national governments is indispensable to promote better migration policies. National migration strategies developed in isolation are unlikely to result in effective migration management as migration has an inherently international character. Recognising the scale of the challenge and task, United Nations partners, including UNESCO, are to work closely together within the UN system as well as with other multilateral and bilateral stakeholders. We should aim at a greater level of cooperation between partners and international bodies in order to foster a better management and policy making in international migration to make it a truly beneficial process for all – receiving countries, sending countries and migrants themselves.

## B. UNESCO'S PRIORITIES IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

UNESCO has two main priorities in the field of international migration. First, it aims at promoting the respect for the human rights of migrants, notably through the UN Convention on Migrant Workers' Rights. Second, it aims to develop scenarios for the future of international migration, in order to better understand the directions the migration phenomenon may take in the following decades and to prepare policies that can cope with ongoing trends.

### *1. Main priorities*

#### *a. The human rights of migrants*

Migrants represent one of the most vulnerable groups in society. UNESCO therefore recognises the need to better understand the specificity of the human rights situation of migrants. In recent decades, the international community has acknowledged the need to develop human rights instruments addressing specifically the situation of particularly vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and victims of discrimination and torture. With the UN Convention on Migrants' Rights, migrants have been among the last category recognised as vulnerable and deserving special protection. Because of this recent recognition, little analysis has been dedicated to this issue and there is a need to better analyse the specificity of their situation. Migration is a fast-evolving process and changes in migration patterns modify the ways in which migrants are vulnerable to human rights violations. Such evolutions call for careful examinations of migration developments and of their impact on the human rights of migrants. UNESCO plays a role in promoting research, intellectual reflection and debate on obstacles preventing the full implementation of human rights in the field of migration. The results of these activities should

serve to inform policy-making at all levels and support standard-setting, capacity-building and technical assistance.

African States (ECOWAS). These initiatives recognise the need to lessen restrictions on migration flows in accordance with the aim of regional integration. Human mobility is indirectly recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which article 13-2 states that ‘everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country’.

Very little thinking has so far been devoted to the scenarios along which patterns of international migration will evolve. So far, no single UN agency has taken up this major issue of social transformations. There is therefore a need for the elaboration of creative thinking on possible evolutions of international migration.

The elaboration of scenarios for the future of migration requires debates between all stakeholders, including academics and researchers, non-governmental organisations and policy-makers, with the purpose of bringing together their views and of sharing their experiences. UNESCO functions as an intellectual platform for these debates and the exchange of views, thus enabling the elaboration of scenarios for the future of migration.

UNESCO recently completed a project entitled ‘Migration without Borders’ that investigates the implications of a regime of freedom of movement, and will further develop scenarios for the future of migration, notably in relation with human rights and cultural diversity. The broad and future-oriented scope of these projects are to enable a better understanding of the priority theme of the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development concerned with ‘the effects of international migration on economic and social development’.

*c. Contribute to the fight against human trafficking and exploitative migration*

Despite increased spending on enforcement measures in major destination countries, the number of migrants in an irregular situation has not declined and trafficking of human beings remains a global reality. Trafficked persons are victims of serious human rights' violations. Smuggling and trafficking also undermine security because of links with organised crime, violence and corruption. In addition, irregular migrants are often stereotyped and regarded as criminals.

UNESCO runs a pilot project aiming at inspiring effective and culturally appropriate policy-making to fight the trafficking of women and children, particularly in Western and Southern Africa. It carries out policy-oriented research on factors related to the trafficking, collects best practices in fighting trafficking at its roots, and organizes training workshops for policymakers, NGOs, community leaders and the media. UNESCO's projects on trafficking may clearly constitute a source of inspiration for policy-makers.

*b. Strengthen the capacity, sustainability and effectiveness of Diaspora networks*

Since the beginning of the 1960s, brain drain has been identified as a serious problem affecting developing countries in their capacity for development. Recently, however, there is a strong emphasis on the potential to reverse this trend and achieve brain gain, based on the idea that the expatriate skilled population may be considered as a potential asset instead of a definite loss. Migrants' international experience, which includes notably the acquisition of skills and of foreign languages, can be very useful to sending countries. While distance has long been an obstacle to migrants' implication in their country of origin, today's information and communication technologies (ICTs) bring the opportunity to empower Diaspora networks and enhance their impact on international co-operation policies.

*c. Improve statistical data on migration related to Higher Education*

The increasing globalisation of Higher Education, the new trade in higher education services, the use of distance learning and overseas campuses are leading to more demand for data and statistics on student mobility, mobility of educators and related issues. Furthermore the strong impact of migration on 'brain drain' and 'brain gain' requires well documented statistical data to allow monitoring and analysis. UNESCO cooperates with OECD to collect better data on international mobility of highly qualified people.

*d. Increase the relevance of migration research for policy making*

UNESCO recently published a special issue of the International Journal on Multicultural societies, devoted to 'The links between academic research and public policies in the field of migration and ethnic relations'. The issue calls for a systematic reflection on the particular links between academic research and public policy in the field of migration and ethnic relations. It adopts a comparative perspective by analysing research-policy links in several countries, leading to two major conclusions. *First*, the impact of social science on migration policy seems to vary within one and the same country as a function of typical policy cycles; the direct impact seems to be highest in initial stages of policy development, i.e. before the topics at hand have become strongly politicised. *Secondly*, social science research seems to have the highest potential of influencing public policy, if it is not only addressed directly to policymakers, but also indirectly to larger audiences, thus contributing to public democratic deliberation. The Journal is available in full text on the UNESCO website.

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