

**FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat
New York, 20-21 November 2006

**UN-HABITAT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORK OF THE
UNITED NATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

*Axumite Gebre-Egziabher**

*Director, UN-HABITAT, New York Office

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

**FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING
ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

UN-HABITAT has been working on migration and urbanization for a very long time. It is important to understand that the growth of cities is not just a phenomenon of migration from rural to urban areas. It also entails international migration - people seeking a better life in other countries both in the north and in the south. Whether they are fleeing conflict, disasters or simply seeking a better life somewhere else, the number of people on the move today is greater than ever before.

During the preparatory process for the High Level Dialogue on Migration, UN-HABITAT has worked on the following:

In one of UN-HABITAT's flagship reports – *The State of World's Cities 2004/2005 on Globalization and Urban Culture*, Chapter 4 is on “International Migration: Socio-economic and Cultural Implications.”

UN-HABITAT in cooperation with the Italian Technical Cooperation and the University of Venice has published a book on “*International Migrants and the City*” (June 2005) – Bangkok, Berlin, Dakar, Karachi, Johannesburg, Naples, Sao Paulo, Tijuana, Vancouver and Vladivostok.

UN-HABITAT in cooperation with IOM organized a Ministerial Roundtable breakfast on “*the Millennium Development Goals and Migration*” during the High Level Segment of ECOSOC on 1 July 2005;

In preparatory meeting for the 2006 ECOSOC High Level Segment, UN-HABITAT in cooperation with ILO, IOM, World Bank, UNCTAD, UNFPA and others has organized a Roundtable on “*the Challenge of globalization – labour migration , brain drain and brain circulation*” on 5 April 2006.

During the High Level Dialogue of ECOSOC 2006, UN-HABITAT in cooperation with ILO, UNCTAD, IOM and others, UN-HABITAT has organized the High Level Dialogue on “Globalization and Labour Migration.”

Every year on the first Monday in October, UN-HABITAT uses the World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of the world's growing cities and the rapid and irreversible urbanization. The theme this year was “Cities – magnets of hope.” UN-HABITAT has published its Habitat Debate on “Cities – magnets of hope, A look at Global Migration Problems” as a special issue after the High Level Dialogue.

The destination of international migrants is increasingly towards cities, particularly large cities, where they have more chances of finding income-earning opportunities. Often times, in such conurbations, migrants strive to gain access to the large and expanding informal sector and to provide for the demand for low-paid service workers. A significant number of them, particularly those in developing countries, end up living in informal settlements that are generally devoid of adequate housing and basic services. It is also common for those who end up in developed countries to settle in neighbourhoods with sub-standard levels of facilities.

The spatial distribution of immigrant populations results from choice as well as lack of choice. The cultural, social and religious traditions of migrants often differ from those of the host country or city. This makes their integration in the host society a difficult process. While many

International immigrants must be considered as development agents for the bridges they build between their home countries and their adoptive communities.

In many countries, international migrants constitute a growing group of urban residents that are victims of exclusion. They are often denied access to housing and urban services and have no voice in decision-making. If we want to build inclusive societies, we have to pay much more attention to building inclusive cities. Including migrant populations in governance structures at the local level are essential to this task.

International migration can no longer be considered a question of national security alone. Its implications at the urban level must be assessed and governed. While UN-HABITAT, within its mandate, assists local authorities to adopt more inclusive governance and management, there is an urgent need for a coordinated approach across all spheres of government to overcome inconsistencies in policies and practices.

Finally, we need to devote more attention to research on the urban dimension of international migration, to better understand what works, why, and in which circumstances. Such an evidence-based approach will enable all of us to develop the right policy options, to implement more effective strategies, and to learn from each other in our common quest to uphold human rights, contribute to peace and security, and to be able celebrate the true sense of our humanity - our cultural diversity.

Thank you for your attention.