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**Follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International  
Conference on Population and Development****Report of the Technical Symposium on International  
Migration and Development of the Administrative Committee  
on Coordination (ACC) Task Force on Basic Social Services  
for All****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The Commission on Population and Development, in its resolution 1997/1, took note with interest of the holding of a technical symposium of experts on international migration under the auspices of the Working Group on International Migration of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Task Force on Basic Social Services for All and requested the Chairperson of that Task Force to report back to the Commission at its thirty-second session in 1999. The present report responds to that request. It summarizes the deliberations that took place during the Technical Symposium on International Migration and Development, which was held in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 29 June to 3 July 1998.

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\* E/CN.9/1999/1.

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## Introduction

1. The Technical Symposium on International Migration and Development was held in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 29 June to 3 July 1998. It was organized by the United Nations Working Group on International Migration of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Task Force on Basic Social Services for All as part of the follow-up activities for the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). The Government of the Netherlands hosted the Symposium, which was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The Governments of Austria, Norway and the Netherlands provided financial support. The Symposium was attended by 49 invited experts from 33 countries; representatives of the organizations and agencies organizing the Symposium, namely the United Nations Secretariat (the Population Division, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); representatives of other intergovernmental organizations; representatives of the host country, the Netherlands; representatives of non-governmental organizations; and scholars from universities and research institutes in the Netherlands and other countries. The Symposium was chaired by Dirk van de Kaa (Netherlands) and Stephen Castles (Australia) served as Rapporteur. High-level representatives of the organizing agencies addressed the opening session, which was highlighted by a keynote address delivered by a senior official of the Netherlands Government.

2. The Symposium examined salient policy issues on international migration and development; considered ways of improving knowledge on the causes of migration; and assessed the effectiveness of migration policies and related measures at the country level. With respect to migration for employment, the Symposium discussed the problems arising from the irregular employment of international migrants and provided insights about the effectiveness of measures taken by countries of origin to protect their migrant workers abroad. The social and cultural situation of long-term migrants in a variety of contexts was analysed and measures to prevent their marginalization were assessed. Recognizing the importance

of return migration, the Symposium examined its implications for the development of countries of origin and the problems posed by large and unexpected return flows. Lastly, the Symposium devoted particular attention to forced migration and the changing responses to it in the various world regions. By covering such a variety of issues and paying particular attention to the assessment of migration policy, the Symposium made a significant contribution to the review and appraisal process of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.<sup>1</sup> A total of 30 substantive papers were presented to the Symposium, including various country case studies. The annex to the present report provides a list of the papers presented. By undertaking a thorough examination of salient policy issues, the Symposium sought to advance the knowledge required for a better management of orderly migration in ways that would prove beneficial to both sending and receiving countries.

3. The Symposium underscored the fact that international migration posed major challenges to the international community, challenges made all the more daunting by the pervasiveness of negative public perceptions about international migration and the generally limited recognition of the significant contributions made by migrants to the host societies. A factor that contributed to common misapprehensions about international migration was the deficiency of international migration data.

## I. The dimensions of international migration

4. The most recent worldwide estimates of the number of international migrants, dating from 1990, indicated that there were 120 million international migrants at that time, accounting for about 2 per cent of the world's population. Between 1965 and 1990, the number of international migrants had grown at a moderate rate of 1.9 per cent a year, although the pace of growth increased between 1985 and 1990. Overall, international migrants accounted for 4.5 per cent of the population of developed countries in 1990, compared with a relatively stable 1.6 per cent for developing countries. However, international migrants tended to be unevenly concentrated in certain countries and subregions. A number of developed countries, including Germany and the United States of America, had been receiving large numbers of migrants since 1985. In the developing world, in addition to the flows of refugees in Africa and Asia, significant numbers of migrant workers had been converging on the oil-producing countries of Western Asia since 1985, and Japan and the

newly industrialized countries of the Pacific Rim became important magnets for labour migration. Furthermore, the disintegration of nation States during the aftermath of the cold war resulted in substantial population movements among the newly independent States and these movements were also directed to third countries. Female participation in international migration, while it did not increase markedly in percentage terms at the global level (the proportion rose from 47 to 48 per cent of all migrants between 1965 and 1990), became more evident in some regions and in certain types of flows.

## II. International migration and development

5. The examination of the interrelations of international migration and development suggested that the stage of development in which countries found themselves, by determining the degree of their articulation with the world economy, had a significant influence on the international migration that they experienced. The globalization of capital and trade flows as well as the emergence of regional economic cooperation mechanisms was already having an impact on migration. Moreover, there was evidence that when regional trading blocs included countries at different stages of development, economic integration was likely to stimulate migration. Thus, in the case of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico and the United States, migration flows from Mexico to the United States were well established and had not abated since the Agreement was ratified. Furthermore, even assuming that Mexico's economy would grow at a robust pace, migration was expected to continue at moderate levels until at least 2030. Consequently, it was considered important to seek bilateral solutions to the problems such migration raised and to find ways of accommodating it. In Southern Africa, the Republic of South Africa had long been the main magnet of migration in the region, although the problems facing the country in the post-apartheid era were reducing its capacity to absorb migrant labour. The reduction in legally sanctioned labour migration to South Africa was having deleterious effects on the development prospects of neighbouring countries, many of which depended on the remittances generated by labour migration. Economic cooperation among countries in the region was being pursued through various intergovernmental organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SADC had also attempted to coordinate efforts for the management of international migration but with little success so far. South Africa had

unilaterally taken measures to tighten its borders and reduce undocumented migration, although it still favoured the admission of migrants with needed skills. Regional cooperation on the management of international migration was considered to have serious limitations when, as in Southern Africa, countries with 40-fold income differentials had a common border.

6. The Symposium examined the extent to which such factors as poverty and environmental degradation caused South-to-North migration. An econometric analysis relating, *inter alia*, income levels and deforestation in countries of origin to their rates of emigration to developed countries showed that low income levels reduced emigration while incomes beyond a certain threshold increased emigration. In addition, growing levels of deforestation tended to increase emigration. These findings and a review of those from other studies indicated that the links between poverty or environmental degradation and international migration were complex. Because of the high costs involved in international migration, poverty generally reduced the capacity to migrate unless other factors forced people to engage in "survival migration". Environmental degradation was mainly expected to have an indirect effect on migration by affecting economic conditions which in turn could stimulate departure. However, environmental crises could be the direct cause of population movements, most of which tended to occur within State borders.

## III. Analysis of factors generating international migration

7. It was noted that the analysis of the causes of international migration was hampered by the lack of adequate data. The Symposium took note of the specialized migration surveys carried out by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) under the auspices of the European Union (EU) to gather the data needed to assess both the proximate and the root causes of migration from developing to developed countries. The surveys, which covered both countries of origin and countries of destination, gathered comparable information on both international migrants and persons in the countries of origin who did not migrate, thus providing the ideal reference group for the analysis of the causes of migration. They also made an effort to gather information at the individual, household and community levels, thus allowing the analysis of both the micro- and macrolevel factors leading to migration. The surveys were carried out on statistically representative samples so that their results would have the generality that

many other studies lacked. The survey results were expected to be available for analysis by the end of 1998.

8. Remittances were recognized as an important mechanism through which international migration could influence development. The Symposium reviewed the high levels of remittances received by the main countries of origin and took note of efforts made to incorporate the use of remittances into a revised economic theory of migration (the “new economics of labour migration”) according to which migration was seen as a means by which households could diversify risk and gain access to the capital needed for productive investment in contexts where local financial institutions could not make capital available at reasonable cost. From this perspective, remittances were expected to play a key role in improving the productive capacity of households with members abroad. To test this hypothesis, information on the allocation of the full income received by households, whether from migrants or not, was necessary. The Symposium noted that studies relative to communities with the requisite data had corroborated that remittances had a positive effect on the allocation of household income to productive activities; that is to say, remittances were indeed being used to enhance productive capacity and could therefore have a positive effect on the economic development of the communities of origin. However, the possibility that the economic environment that encouraged out-migration might also tend to limit the potential of remittances to stimulate development could not be discarded. Poor market infrastructure and lack of credit facilities made it difficult to realize the development potential of remittances. The Symposium noted that, by dealing with such constraints, countries of origin could increase the potential positive contributions of remittances to broad-based income growth.

9. The high levels of participation of women in international migration since at least 1960 were underscored by the Symposium. Growing opportunities to secure employment abroad had been responsible for increasing the visibility of female migrant workers, especially in Asia. Although the rising participation of women in labour migration implied that they had the opportunity of earning better salaries abroad, it remained true that most female migrant workers tended to be concentrated in low status occupations that provided minimal or no prospects of socio-economic mobility in the receiving State. Furthermore, women working in certain occupations, such as domestic and entertainment services, were particularly vulnerable to exploitation and harassment. In Asia, a complex set of institutions had developed to organize and manage the migration of workers, including female workers. Aware of the risks faced by women migrating on their own to work abroad,

Asian countries of origin had adopted a series of measures to protect female migrants. However, their enforcement was difficult and violations continued to occur. In developed regions, the migration of women had taken place, mostly under family reunification but this did not mean that migrant women were devoid of economic motivations for migration. In fact, the labour force participation of female migrants in developing countries was usually moderate to high despite the fact that, in certain countries, women who had been admitted as dependants did not automatically have the right to work. The risks involved in international migration notwithstanding, the Symposium considered that the migration experience had the potential of enhancing the status of female migrants and contributing to their empowerment.

10. Having noted that economic globalization had important implications for the international movement of workers, the Symposium focused on developments regarding the migration of highly skilled personnel. Such migration, which had become a major element of contemporary flows, took many forms, including the movement of professional transients, business transfers and the permanent migration of highly skilled persons. However, the data on the issue were poor, inconsistent and seldom differentiated by sex. Yet there was evidence that both developed countries and the newly industrializing economies of the developing world had been taking special measures to attract workers with needed skills. Nevertheless, there were still many instances in which receiving countries set barriers to the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, thus preventing skilled migrants from practising the occupations for which they were best suited. There was also growing concern among developing countries about the loss of skilled personnel vital for their development. Because skilled persons tended to migrate to countries with flourishing economies, developing countries with stagnant economies had difficulty in both attracting and retaining skilled personnel. International collaboration was judged necessary to ensure that developing countries were not deprived of the skills needed to sustain development.

11. The Symposium noted that the free temporary movement of persons as service providers had been formally accepted under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)<sup>2</sup> and that labour-abundant countries might consider developing their human resources so as to enhance their service providing capabilities and thus reduce migration pressures. In addition, developing countries might consider cooperative arrangements among themselves to develop service packages that could strengthen their position in bidding for international contracts.

#### **IV. Addressing the employment of migrants in an irregular situation**

12. Noting that many countries had been experiencing a growing informalization of their economy, the Symposium focused attention on the interrelations between irregular employment (that is to say, employment violating the standards set by labour laws and regulations) and international migration. The cases of five countries — Germany, Hungary, Italy, South Africa and Venezuela — were considered. Although irregular employment could involve national workers, foreigners had a higher propensity to take up such work because of their weak legal position and social vulnerability. Both irregular migration and the irregular employment of migrants resulted from the conflict between a real demand for unskilled workers and restrictive migration policies that banned or hindered their admission. In countries with economies in transition, the political and economic transformation that they were undergoing also contributed to the increase of irregular migration. Governments' attempts at using further regulation to reduce irregular employment had often failed and increased the vulnerability of migrants. Despite the fact that migrants taking up irregular employment were contributing to the economic prosperity of the host society, public perceptions about irregular migration were often extremely negative and were fuelling xenophobic or racist reactions. By continuing to target irregular migrants as if they were the sole source of the problem, Governments might be exacerbating the problem. To be effective, policies to combat irregular migration should take a holistic approach based on a better understanding of the economic role of the informal sector, the need for unskilled labour, and the interests of employers engaged in hiring workers under irregular conditions. Further preconditions for more effective policy formulation included improved monitoring of irregular movements and irregular employment, and more information on the employment and social situation of irregular migrants.

13. Given the continued significance of migration for employment, the Symposium examined the effectiveness of the special institutions and procedures that had been established by a number of countries of origin to protect the basic rights of their workers employed abroad. The case studies considered focused on Bangladesh, Mexico, Morocco and the Philippines. The need for protection arose because of different circumstances in diverse settings. In some cases it was necessary because of the weak labour institutions in the countries of destination, while in others it stemmed from the irregular status of migrants in the country of employment. Exploitation of migrants when in the hands of labour recruiters and other intermediaries was also a common

problem requiring State intervention. Countries of origin varied in the extent to which Governments had adopted proactive policies for the protection of migrant workers. In the Philippines, where institutional arrangements to organize and control the recruitment of migrant workers were well developed, an assessment of their efficiency as perceived by policy makers, non-governmental organizations and the migrant workers themselves was carried out. Though preliminary and still subject to methodological improvement, the study revealed that there was considerable satisfaction with the institutions and policies in place. In other countries where such institutions were either lacking or less developed, similar assessments did not seem possible. Furthermore, it was pointed out that countries of origin were often in a weak position to protect their migrants abroad, since the authorities in countries of destination generally had the power to establish conditions of work and, in case of violations, might not have the will or the means to protect the migrants involved. Countries that considered the export of labour a vital part of their economic strategies often lacked the market power or the political will to demand effective protection of their citizens as a condition for deployment. Employers keen on minimizing costs as well as recruitment agents and labour brokers required close supervision to prevent their abuse of power and the consequent mistreatment of migrants. The Symposium considered that the best framework within which to ensure the effective protection of migrant workers was a partnership between the Governments of countries of origin and those of countries of employment, since their common interest ought to be the equitable treatment of migrant workers. Countries of employment, in particular, had an interest in preventing the exploitation of foreigners which was often at the root of their unfair competition with national workers and which might lead to the polarization of the host society. Ensuring the protection of the rights of migrants was considered a key precondition for migration to be mutually beneficial. In achieving that goal, heed had to be paid to the standards set by existing international human rights instruments and ILO conventions on the rights and treatment of migrant workers. The Symposium stressed that, where actively pursued, policies by countries of origin did have a positive effect on the protection of migrants abroad and contributed to making migration more orderly.

#### **V. Improving the position of immigrants and foreign residents in receiving countries: social and cultural issues**

14. Aware that, because of the increasing number of international migrants and the diversification of migration flows, more countries were hosting sizeable populations of long-term foreign residents, the Symposium decided to focus on the issues raised by their status in the host society. Particular attention was given to the economic integration, social mobility, educational opportunities and cultural identity of resident foreigners, immigrants and their children. The studies considered focused on Australia, Canada and the United States; France, Germany and the Netherlands; Japan; and Malaysia. The main issue addressed was how to prevent the economic, social and cultural marginalization of resident foreigners, especially when such marginalization was linked to ethnicity or race. Experience had proved that, whatever the original intentions of migrants, employers and Governments, migration often led to the settlement of some proportion of all the international migrants admitted by receiving countries. Therefore, migration policies should take this outcome into account, especially because the short-term ad hoc measures that had been common in many countries were failing to prevent marginalization. A comprehensive long-term strategy was needed to ensure the socio-economic integration of long-term foreign residents, mainly in regard to their position in the labour market, their access to educational opportunities, and their prospects of social mobility. It was also necessary to recognize and respect the desire of foreigners to maintain their linguistic, cultural and religious practices. The experience of countries of immigration provided evidence regarding which policies were most likely to bring about satisfactory results, although it was recognized that policies and practices needed to be adapted to each context. Public information and education aimed at increasing the public's tolerance were considered crucial, since even the best policies could not succeed where there was a lack of public understanding and support for them. The Symposium warned that the lack of appropriate social and cultural policies having broad-based public support could lead to social tensions by making the local population feel threatened and the foreigners feel insecure and excluded.

## **VI. Releasing the development potential of return migrants**

15. Despite the tendency of some migrants to settle abroad, many others had returned to their countries of origin; but, although return migration was recognized as an important process, there was limited information on its magnitude and public authorities did not attach sufficient importance to the conditions of return. The Symposium aimed to call attention

to the impact of return migration by considering the cases of Jamaica, Jordan, the State of Kerala in India, Senegal and Turkey. Ideally, return migration should occur on a voluntary basis. However, there were many circumstances in which return was less than voluntary, particularly when changed conditions in the country of employment, such as those resulting from a recession, political instability or war, produced a large outflow of return migrants. Not only did the conditions of return vary, but so did the impact of return migration on the countries of origin: In some cases, returning migrants appeared to have made almost no contribution to development; in others, positive effects appeared to have occurred. Because countries had generally not taken explicit measures to facilitate the reinsertion of returnees, an assessment of policy interventions could not be carried out. It was suggested that the provision of counselling and information, as well as assistance in obtaining access to credit, was a factor conducive to a successful reinsertion and to the maximization of the positive effects of return migration. However, equity considerations (*vis-à-vis* non-migrants) often precluded the establishment of special credit schemes for returning migrants. It was noted that returnees were more likely to prepare and plan for their return if advised and supported by governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. Maintenance of social networks in the country of origin appeared to be crucial to ensuring a successful reintegration. Cooperation between the Governments of countries of origin and those of countries of destination, with the assistance of international organizations and non-governmental organizations, was considered a means of developing better strategies to facilitate return and ensure a beneficial reintegration process, especially in cases where large numbers of migrants returned simultaneously.

## VII. Responding to the arrival of asylum-seekers

16. Recognizing the growing importance of forced migration and, particularly, the issues raised by the rising numbers of persons in need of protection who did not qualify as refugees, the Symposium considered the changing responses to the arrival of asylum-seekers in different regions of the world. It was recognized that people were generally impelled to migrate by a complex mix of factors, which might include individual persecution as well as economic needs, family ties, environmental problems and other considerations. One of the key problems confronting the institution of asylum was considered to be the very real difficulty in deciding in the case of each particular asylum-seeker whether individual persecution was the major cause of flight. Developed countries faced with rising costs from the processing of asylum claims were reluctant to continue supporting refugees abroad. Developing countries, in turn, were becoming less generous in admitting and protecting refugees and asylum-seekers. In order to safeguard the institution of asylum, it seemed essential to ensure compliance with basic human rights norms and to safeguard fundamental principles such as the right to asylum in the event of individual persecution and the principle of non-refoulement. To address the new situation, it seemed necessary to search for a range of measures that responded to the diversity of protection needs, including the use of flexible responses such as the granting of temporary protection. It was also crucial to make return feasible, both for asylum-seekers whose claims for asylum had been rejected and for those whose period of temporary protection had ended. To achieve this end, receiving countries needed to engage countries of origin in a constructive dialogue with a view to negotiating practical solutions. It was noted that a number of receiving countries had already concluded readmission agreements with selected countries of origin. In implementing return movements, it was important for the authorities of receiving countries to ensure the legality and legitimacy of their return practices.

17. In developed countries, asylum procedures had become the operational mechanism for resolving the dilemma of migration control versus refugee protection. The rising costs of processing asylum claims had compromised the availability of funds to support refugees in poorer countries. To reduce those costs, receiving countries were adopting increasingly stringent non-admission policies that had the potential of preventing bona fide refugees from seeking asylum. In developing countries, not only was there a growing reluctance to admit refugees but, in addition, the physical security, dignity and material safety of those admitted could not always

be guaranteed. In Africa, the economic hardships that many countries were undergoing had reduced their willingness to share scarce resources with others. The continued availability of asylum options depended not only on burden-sharing but also on a new understanding of the security concerns of the countries involved. In both developed and developing countries, public support for refugee and asylum-seeker protection had been eroding. It was important for Governments to change public perceptions. Public education plus effective and well-managed refugee and asylum-seeker programmes seemed essential to restore public confidence.

## VIII. Panel session on future policy directions

18. The Symposium concluded with a panel discussion that highlighted the main findings and policy implications of the debates. The importance of international cooperation based on an appropriate balance of the concerns of the various parties was stressed. The international harmonization of migration and asylum policies seemed a long-term goal which was most likely to be reached at the regional level. Attention was drawn to the gulf between formal rights and the actual treatment of migrants. The need to create conditions favouring the full participation of migrants in society was underscored. Despite globalization, States still had considerable power to control international migration. However, ill-conceived control mechanisms or disproportionate focus on control might be contributing to the rise in irregular migration. It was stressed that nobody wanted to be an illegal migrant. The challenge was to create conditions that made this unnecessary.

19. The Symposium helped to highlight the need for better collection and analysis of data on various aspects of international migration. Lack of reliable information often led to the perpetuation of myths about migration that were a weak basis for policy formulation. International migration had clearly become a major concern in domestic and foreign policy. A better understanding of its complexities and dynamics was needed to maximize the benefits of migration for all concerned.



## IX. Dissemination of the results of the Technical Symposium

20. A detailed report of the deliberations taking place during the Symposium was published as part of the activities of the Working Group on Migration of the ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. It has been distributed among both government officials and interested scholars. In addition, the unedited papers presented at the Symposium have been collected in a bound volume that is available upon request. Selected papers were accepted for publication in a special issue of the journal *International Migration*, where they will appear in revised form in 1999.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

<sup>2</sup> See *Legal Agreements Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, done at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994* (GATT secretariat publication, Sales No. GATT/1994–7).

## **Annex**

### **List of documents**

#### **Session 2. The dimensions of international migration**

1. International migration levels, trends and what existing data systems reveal

#### **Session 3. International migration and development**

1. Poverty and environmental degradation as root causes of international migration: a critical assessment
2. Regional economic integration and international migration: the case of NAFTA
3. Sub-Saharan Africa: is regional integration a relevant factor affecting the changes taking place in international migration?

#### **Session 4. Analysis of factors generating international migration**

1. A multi-country approach to studying the determinants of migration
2. The new economics of labour migration and the role of remittances in the migration process
3. The processes generating the migration of women
4. The need to import skilled personnel: factors favouring and hindering its international mobility

#### **Session 5. Addressing the employment of migrants in an irregular situation**

1. The case of Hungary
2. The case of Germany
3. The case of Italy
4. The case of South Africa
5. The case of Venezuela

#### **Session 6. Enhancing the capabilities of emigration countries to protect men and women destined for low-skilled employment**

1. The case of the Philippines
2. The case of Bangladesh
3. The case of Morocco
4. The case of Mexico

**Session 7. Improving the position of immigrants and foreign residents in receiving countries: social and cultural issues**

1. The case of traditional settlement countries: Australia, Canada and the United States of America
2. The case of long-standing receiving countries in Europe: France, Germany and the Netherlands
3. The case of a new receiving country in the developed world: Japan
4. The case of a new receiving country in the developing world: Malaysia

**Session 8. Releasing the development potential of return migrants**

1. The case of Jordan
2. The case of Senegal
3. The case of Jamaica
4. The case of Kerala, India
5. The case of Turkey

**Session 9. Responding to the arrival of asylum-seekers**

1. Migrants and asylum-seekers: comparative policy responses
  2. Control versus protection in asylum procedures
  3. Unsuccessful asylum-seekers: the problem of return
  4. The end of asylum? The changing nature of refugee policies in Africa and other developing regions
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