

Session 3
Migration for work, within borders and internationally:
Securing the benefits, diminishing the risks of worker mobility

I had the honor of serving on the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and again this week - the honor of continuing the important work of the commission by chairing the discussion on cross border migration.

I want to thank:

Mr Giuliano Amato ,	Minister of the Interior of Italy
Mr Jesús Caldera Sánchez Capitán ,	Minister of Labour of Spain
Ms Jacqueline Mugo ,	Ex Dir, Federation of Kenyan Employers
Ms Caridad Sri Tharan ,	Member and Advisor, Migrant Forum in Asia
Mr John Bingham ,	International Catholic Migration Commission

As Chair, I opened up the panel by making two main points that were repeated throughout the session.

First, that freedom of association for workers crossing borders is a basic human right and second, that migrant workers must have the opportunity to secure regularized legal status.

A rich and informed discussion took place during the session.

1. Regular migration:

- International labour migration is a feature of globalization.
- It can be beneficial for countries of origin and countries of destination, which need migrant workers.
- Therefore, channels of regular migration should be expanded and legal job opportunities offered to migrants.
- Recruitment procedures should also be regulated
- These were considered as effective ways to curb irregular migration.

2. Irregular migration and the informal economy:

- Demand for labour is the primary reason for migration.
- If it is not met regularly, it will be met irregularly.
- This demand acts as magnet for irregular migrants.
- An informal employer corresponds to every informal worker.
- Labour inspection needs to be enforced to avoid exploitation of irregular migrant workers.
- Informal employment exposes workers to blackmailing by unscrupulous employers.
- It also subjects them to horrible housing and other living conditions.
- Thus, informal employment of irregular migrant workers is an attempt against their human rights.

3. Temporary and circular migration:

- Examples were given of novel programmes of temporary and circular migration under which increasing numbers of regular migrants are admitted annually.
- These programmes, nevertheless, were put into question by two panelists and a participant from the floor.
- One argument suggested that these programs led to settlement – as opposed to seasonal migration – which is only temporary.
- The other point was that temporary migration undermined the rights of migrants and their integration in receiving countries.

4. Regularization:

- Regularization of irregular migrant workers employed in occupations where there is a demonstrated shortage of native workers was in the best interest of countries of destination.
- An example from Spain was given, where regularization improved the working and living conditions of migrant workers and redressed the social security system.
- Social dialogue was instrumental in leading this regularization.

- Social dialogue, as a means to formulate policy, and the right to freedom of association of migrant workers were repeatedly emphasized.

5. Women and migration:

- The special plight of women migrant workers was emphasized.
- They suffer from accumulated discrimination: as women and as migrants.
- They often work in occupations, such as domestic workers, which are not covered by labour laws.
- Therefore, they are entitled to policies that ensure them rightful protection.

6. International legal and policy framework:

- Ratification and implementation of the two ILO conventions on migrant workers and of the International Convention on the Protection of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families was called for.
- The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration is associated with the Decent Work agenda and should be implemented in national policy as a concrete step to achieve a Decent Life for workers.

7. Brain drain:

- Brain drain was strongly denounced.
- The loss of skills in some particular sectors, such as health care and education, undermines a country's efforts at development.
- In one country, the health care sector is about to collapse.
- In the same country, education is threatened by the departure of teachers in disciplines, such as science and math.
- The provision of services, especially in poor and in rural areas, is severely compromised. Some compensating mechanisms should be devised.

8. Remittances and development financing:

- There was general recognition that remittances have greatly increased.
- They help reduce poverty and facilitate access to services to families and returnees.
- However, policies of sending countries should not be about maximizing remittances or else they would only work toward increasing the numbers of workers sent abroad.
- Remittances should not exempt governments from formulating policies for development and allocating sufficient resources to finance them.
- Neither should they remove industrialized countries responsibility for meeting the target of 0.7 per cent of GDP as Official Development Assistance.
- Policies should aim at dealing with the deep roots of international migration – poverty and the lack of decent work in sending countries.
- Migration should become a choice, not a necessity.

9. International cooperation:

- Cooperation between international organization, national governments, trade unions and social partners and NGO's will be essential to move forward in the years ahead.
- This panel and the work of the ILO and the Decent Work Agenda will greatly contribute to realizing the hopes and dreams of the millions of workers who travel across borders in search of a Decent Life for themselves and their families.