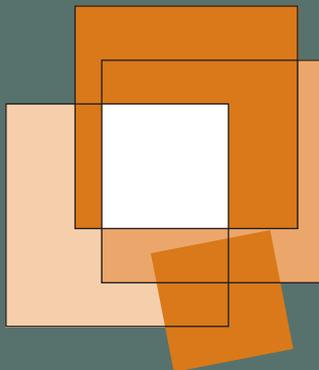




International
Labour
Office
Geneva

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE ILO PERSPECTIVE



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION BRIEF

International
Migration
Programme



Foreword

*The ILO's concern with international migration stems from its mandate on labour issues. It is specifically concerned with international labour migration – that is, international migration as it relates to **workers**. Thus, as early as 1919, the ILO expressed the need to protect migrant workers by including in the Preamble to the Constitution as one of the objectives of the Organization, “the protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own.” The ILO's mandate, articulated in the Decent Work agenda, includes respect of rights at work and international labour standards, employment promotion, social protection and social dialogue. The ILO approach to international labour migration combines interests in ensuring global economic growth and employment, including through international mobility of labour, and the protection of migrant workers. Migrant workers are protected by rights, international labour standards, and other economic and social policies. Social dialogue in the formulation and implementation of international and national action and policies is promoted.*

In 2004, the International Labour Conference (ILC) adopted by consensus a resolution providing for an ILO Plan of Action for Migrant Workers, which encompasses all areas of the ILO's mandate. The General Discussion on Migrant Workers at the Conference and the Resolution it adopted under the title “Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy” express a renewed international interest in migration. This interest has essentially and rightly centered on promoting the linkages between migration and development. Interest in promoting migration and development linkages was reaffirmed in the setting up and the report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), in the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2006 and the summary of its Chair, as well as in the first Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), held in July 2007, and its conclusions.

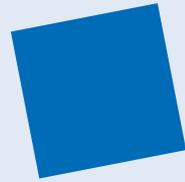
The ILO Plan of Action provides a perspective on promoting these linkages while reinforcing the protection of migrant workers. The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration, the first element in the Plan of Action, adopted in March 2006 elaborated on this perspective. The Multilateral Framework is a set of principles and guidelines intended to assist countries in the formulation and implementation of labour migration policies. Drawing upon the expertise accumulated in different areas of ILO's mandate, including international labour standards in migration and other fields, its premise is that the interests of sending and receiving countries and the rights of migrant workers are compatible.

This brief presents the ILO's perspective on the increasingly recognized crucial relation between international labour migration and development. It briefly reviews the importance of migrant workers to development in destination and origin countries, including through the needed services they perform in destination countries, the remittances they send home, the beneficial transfer of skills back to home countries but also the loss of skilled workers by those countries (“brain drain”), and the need to expand legal avenues of migration. In addition, the brief outlines the importance of protecting migrant workers from abuses and providing them with rights as contained in the international normative framework, rights which they deserve as workers and, in particular, workers employed in countries other than their own. Finally, it describes how more effective labour migration processes and greater development benefits are obtained through international cooperation and multilateral approaches.

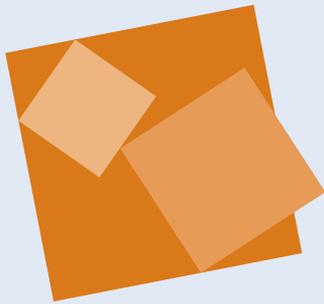
In publishing this perspective, the ILO International Migration Programme wishes to place before interested audiences the parameters of the Office's approach and activities in international labour migration.

*Ibrahim Awad
Director
International Migration Programme*

I. Introduction



The 'Resolution and Conclusions concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in a global economy', adopted by consensus at the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference in 2004 defined the broad agenda for ILO's work on labour migration. It highlighted the unique obligations of the organization in this respect: *"The ILO's mandate in the world of work as well as its competencies and unique tripartite structure entrust it with special responsibilities regarding migrant workers. Decent work is at the heart of this. The ILO can play a central role in promoting policies to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of work-based migration"*.¹ The Resolution added: *"Promotion of policies that maximize the contribution of migration to development is another essential component of a comprehensive policy to address the global context of migration."* The purpose of this note is to highlight ILO thinking on the issue of migration and development which has acquired primary focus in the global agenda in recent years.



Each year millions of women and men leave their homes and cross national borders in search of greater security for themselves and their families. *"Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life."*² A large number of migrants are motivated by the quest for higher wages and better opportunities, responding to the demand for their skills abroad, but many are forced to move because of lack of decent work, famine, natural disasters, violent conflict or persecution.³ The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) described the driving forces in international migration in terms of 3Ds: Development, Demography and Democracy.⁴ Labour migration has increasingly become a livelihood strategy for women and men because of the lack of opportunities for full employment and decent work

¹ ILO (2004). *Resolution concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy*, adopted at the 92nd session of the International Labour Conference. Geneva, in: Report of the Committee on Migrant Workers, Provisional Record 22, International Labour Conference, Ninety-second Session, International Labour Office, pp.55-64.
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/realm/ilc/ilc92/pdf/pr-22-pdf>

² United Nations (2006). *International migration and development: Report of the Secretary-General*. New York, A/60/871, United Nations, June 2006.
http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/hld/Text/Report%20of%20the%20SG%28June%2006%29_English.pdf

³ ILO 2004. *Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy*, Report VI, 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference, ILO, Geneva, June 2004.
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/realm/ilc/ilc92/pdf/rep-vi.pdf>

⁴ GCIM (2005). *Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action*. Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, Geneva.
<http://www.gcim.org/attachements/gcim-complete-report-2005.pdf>

in many developing countries. Almost half of the international migrants are women, now mostly migrating on their own and not as family members. In the face of numerous immigration barriers in destination countries, an increasing proportion choose to, or are forced to migrate under irregular situations, which has been a cause of concern for the international community.⁵

Most of the world's migrants, estimated at 191 million in 2005,⁶ are migrant workers – those who migrate for employment – and their families. The ILO has tentatively estimated economically active migrants to number some 94 million in 2005, who, with their families, accounted for almost 90 per cent of total international migrants. Refugees and asylum-seekers account only for about 7-8 per cent of migrants. Thus, global migration is mainly a labour market issue, rather than a refugee, asylum seeker or public security issue. The ILO views migration as a labour market and decent work issue within the overarching framework of its Decent Work for All agenda.

Recent globalization trends have been characterized by greater integration of global markets for goods, services and capital across borders, while their impact on the cross border movement of people and labour remains much more restricted, regulated by a complex web of immigration laws and policies that uphold the principle of state sovereignty.⁷ Yet globalization has had important implications for international labour migration, acting as a 'push' and 'pull' factor. It has facilitated linkages of international labour markets through vast improvements in information and communications technology. The demand for high end skills has expanded opportunities for mobility of skilled labour. Concurrently, expanded trade would reduce the need for migration by creating jobs in source countries. Virtual mobility enabled by ICT has similarly promoted outsourcing and more jobs in source regions.

At the same time, it is clear that globalization has led to widening disparities in employment opportunities, incomes and living standards, and human security across the globe.⁸ In some countries, globalization has adversely affected jobs and livelihoods in traditional sectors. The failure of globalization to create new jobs where people live is a prime factor in increasing migration pressures. *"When people cannot find work at home in their communities and societies they look elsewhere."*⁹

Global economic, social, political and demographic trends clearly indicate that international labour migration is likely to increase in the future and thus, the challenge is how to manage migration in such a way that its positive effects are maximized, making it a win-win phenomenon for all concerned.

This particular brief highlights four areas: migration and development linkages, protection of migrant workers, international cooperation, and the way forward.

⁵ Piyasiri Wickramasekara (2006), *Theme paper on Globalization, International Labour Migration and Protection of Migrant Workers*, International Migration programme, ILO, Geneva. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/download/pws_new_paper.pdf

⁶ United Nations Population Division (2006), *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision*, New York, 2006.

⁷ See WCDSDG (2004), *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all*. World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (WCDSDG) and International Labour Office, Geneva, February 2004. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/wcdsdg/docs/report.pdf>

⁸ Ibid; ILO 2004. *Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy*, op. cit.

⁹ *"Dealing with the Global Jobs Crisis"*, Opinion piece by Juan Somavia (Director-General of the International Labour Office) at the World Economic Forum, Davos (25 January 2006) <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/speeches/somavia/2006/davos.pdf>

II. Migration and Development

There is increasing international recognition of the links between migration and development, partly triggered by the phenomenal rise in migrant remittances. A number of global initiatives by the ILO and other institutions have contributed to exploring these links. The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration has recognized this association in its Principle 15: *“The contribution of labour migration to employment, economic growth, development and the alleviation of poverty should be recognized and maximized for the benefit of both origin and destination countries.”*¹⁰ The United Nations High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held on 14-15 September 2006 in New York and the Global Forum on Migration and Development held on 10-11 July 2007 in Brussels¹¹ can be considered milestones in promoting the issue at the global level. There is broad international consensus that migration issues need to be integrated and mainstreamed into national employment, labour market and development policies.

Labour migration has the potential to serve as an engine of growth and development for all parties involved – host and source countries and the migrant workers themselves. In destination countries, it has rejuvenated workforces, rendered economically viable many traditional sectors like agriculture and services, promoted entrepreneurship, supported social security and welfare schemes, and met the demand for skills for emerging high technology industries. In the developing regions where most migrants come from, positive contributions of migration are reflected in high remittance flows, and transfer of investments, technology and critical skills through return migration and transnational communities (diasporas).¹² In its report, *Global Economic Prospects 2006*, the World Bank predicted \$356 billion gains in real income to the global economy if the labour force of high-income countries were to be increased even by a modest level (3 per cent during

2001-2025) through migration – much more than what could be achieved through trade liberalization.¹³

The World Bank estimated remittances to developing countries at \$207 billion in 2006, and total remittances including informal transfers at about \$300 billion.¹⁴ Migrant remittances to developing countries have increased from \$57 to \$189 billion between 1990 and 2005, and more than doubled between 2001 and 2006. Recorded remittances are now more than double the level of official development assistance (ODA), and are second only to foreign direct investment (FDI) flows. For some countries, remittances constitute the main source of foreign exchange earnings. The World Bank has described remittances as *“an important and stable source of development finance”*.¹⁵ Yet it has to be stressed that remittances are private household transfers, and should not be viewed as substitutes for ODA or FDI or investments in public services. Migrant remittances usually go towards improved housing, nutrition, schooling and health care. As the ILC 2004 Resolution on Migrant Workers pointed out: *“Many of these activities have a significant multiplier effect, with the potential to reduce poverty and expand decent work.”* Increasing attention should be focused

¹⁰ ILO (2006). *ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration*, International Labour Office, Geneva. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/download/multilat_fwkw_en.pdf

¹¹ GMFD, Summary Report, First Meeting, Global Forum on Migration and Development, Brussels, July 9-11, 2007. http://www.gfmd-fmmd.org/en/system/files/Rapport+GFMD_EN+_3_.pdf

¹² ILO (2004), *A fair deal for migrant workers*, op. cit.; IOM (2005). *World Migration Report 2005: Costs and benefits of international migration*, IOM, Geneva.; GCIM (2005); Global Commission on International Migration (2005), *Migration in an interconnected world*, op.cit.

¹³ See World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects 2006, Economic Implications of Migration and Remittances*, Washington, D.C. <http://go.worldbank.org/CGW1GG3AV1>

¹⁴ See World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, Development Prospects Group, The World Bank, Washington DC, 2007. <http://go.worldbank.org/QGUCPJTOR0>

¹⁵ The World Bank, *Global Development Finance 2003*, Washington DC.

on reducing transfer costs of remittances (by facilitating accessible financial services, reducing transaction fees, providing tax incentives and promoting greater competition between financial institutions), motivating greater transfers through formal mechanisms, and promoting migrant savings and productive investment of remittances through incentives, and through financial intermediation.

Return migration and transnational communities present other contributions of the migration process to development.¹⁶ Return migrants bring back human (skills and knowledge), financial and social capital (contacts and access to networks). Policies for their proper reintegration in labour markets and societies in countries of origin are needed. These policies should include measures to make productive use of savings, acquired skills and networks of returning migrants. Since not all migrants return, transnational communities represent another potential development resource to countries of origin.¹⁷ They contribute to home country development through transfer of skills, technology and knowledge, capital and investments, and influencing positive policy changes as in India. The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration has called for the promotion of linkages with transnational communities and business initiatives.

One important source of concern is the growing emigration of skilled persons from developing nations - *brain drain* - which can have dire consequences for sustainable development in the countries of origin, especially the least developed countries (LDCs). It involves the loss of scarce national economic resources that have been invested in education and training. Increasingly developed countries have targeted admission of skilled workers from developing countries in their immigration policies. According to the WHO, 57 countries, 36 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, have severe shortages of health

workers.¹⁸ Many countries, especially in Africa, can no longer maintain adequate public health services because of the exodus of health workers attracted by much better prospects abroad. This seriously affects their capacity to meet the Millennium Development Goals. It is important to adopt measures to mitigate the loss of workers with critical skills through cooperation between countries of origin and destination.

At the same time, there are many barriers to movement of low and semi skilled persons, in which developing countries have a surplus, despite observed labour market demand for such workers in many destination countries. There is growing consensus that legal avenues for labour migration need to be expanded, and the 2007 Global Forum on Migration and Development has *“enabled a shift of the migration and development paradigm by promoting legal migration as an opportunity for development of both origin and destination countries, rather than as a threat.”*¹⁹ Yet, there is still much controversy surrounding the modalities, rights of migrant workers, and policies to ensure return. Temporary labour migration schemes have become increasingly popular in a number of destination countries, including those which traditionally welcomed migration for settlement. These programmes could open up more legal migration avenues and promote opportunities for circular migration - a mutually beneficial situation. Such schemes can also create opportunities for the deployment of low skilled workers as in seasonal worker programmes. They thus help in reducing irregular migration as well. Yet temporary migration programmes also raise issues of protection of rights of workers. The temporary movement of service providers under Mode 4 (movement of natural persons) of the General Agreement in Trade in Services (GATS) has some potential in promoting temporary and circular migration. However, the achievements in this respect are very limited as yet, and confined to skilled categories only.

III. Protection of migrant workers

Reinforcing the migration-development linkages may involve a number of policy interventions to expand legal avenues for labour migration, promote circular migration, monitor recruitment to promote ethical recruitment practices, in addition to promoting investments in critical skills, ensuring recognition of skills, facilitating remittance flows, and reviewing possible compensation mechanisms. Cooperation among States at the regional and international levels is imperative to realize the potential for making labour migration a win-win phenomenon.

The ILO's view is in concordance with the view of the Global Commission on International Migration, that migration should be undertaken *"by choice, and not by necessity."* Therefore, a major emphasis must be placed on generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, especially in countries of origin. The ILO's Decent Work for All agenda works towards this by supporting Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) at national levels.²⁰ This would reduce migration pressures, especially among youth in countries of origin.



¹⁶ Piyasiri Wickramasekara, *Policy responses to skilled migration: Retention, return and circulation*, Perspectives on Labour Migration 5E, Geneva, International Migration Programme, International Labour Office <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/download/pom/pom5e.pdf>

¹⁷ Kuznetsov, Y. (2006). *Diaspora networks and the international migration of skills : how countries can draw on their talent abroad*. Washington, DC, World Bank.

¹⁸ WHO, *Health Worker Crisis*, Media Centre, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2006. http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2006/g8summit/health_workers/en/index.html

¹⁹ GMFD, *Summary Report*, op. cit.

²⁰ See the ILO webpage for detailed information: <http://www.ilo.org/intranet/english/bureau/program/dwcp/>

Despite the positive experiences of many migrant workers, a significant number face undue hardships and abuse in the form of low wages, poor working conditions, virtual absence of social protection, denial of freedom of association and workers' rights, discrimination and xenophobia, as well as social exclusion.²¹ This erodes the potential benefits of migration for all parties, and seriously undermines its development impact. The workers most vulnerable to abuse of human and labour rights are women migrant workers, especially domestic workers, migrant workers in irregular status, trafficked persons and youth migrants. Low skills add to the vulnerability of migrant workers, while skilled workers are in a better position to protect their rights.

Mr. Juan Somavia, ILO Director-General stated that the: *"... gains from migration and protection of migrant rights are indeed inseparable. Migrant workers can make their best contribution to economic and social development in host and source countries when they enjoy decent working conditions, and when their fundamental human and labour rights are respected"*.²² The Final Conclusions and recommendations of the Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (Brussels, 10-11 July 2007) echoed these thoughts in the statement that: *Respect for human rights and gender equality should be mainstreamed throughout the migration and development debate*.²³ Accordingly, labour migration policies need to be supported by measures to prevent abusive practices and promote decent and productive work

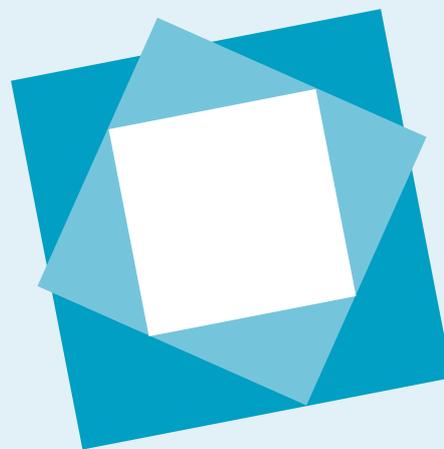
²¹ ILO, *A fair deal for migrant workers*, op. cit., Chapter III.

²² *Statement by the Director-General of the International Labour Office, Roundtable 3 on Globalization and labour migration, 2006 ECOSOC High-Level Segment, Geneva, 5 July 2006* http://www.ilo.org/pubcgi/links_ext.pl?http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2006/hls2006/documents/DG%20ILO-RT3.pdf

²³ *Final Conclusions and Recommendations of the Chair* by Ambassador Regine De Clercq, Global Forum on Migration and Development, 12 July 2007. http://www.gfmd-fmmd.org/en/system/files/Summary+Conclusions+July+12_1.pdf

for women and men migrants. Such policies should also aim at eradicating all forms of discrimination and gender inequality and at tackling other vulnerabilities. The adverse impact of migration of women, especially mothers, on the family unit and on children and the social costs of such migration should also be addressed. The growing commercialization of migration processes makes it urgent to establish effective supervision and regulation of the activities of private recruitment agencies.

The ILO position is that the proliferation of temporary migration schemes should not lead to the curtailment of the rights of migrant workers in the work place, especially regarding the principles of equality of treatment on par with national workers and non-discrimination. In contrast, the view that such programmes necessarily involve a trade off of migrant numbers with their rights undermines the framework of migrant protection and rights elaborated in international instruments. Negotiations on the movement of temporary service providers under WTO GATS Mode 4 as a trade issue also run the risk of ignoring the rights of such migrants. Trade unions and NGOs are keen that these negotiations are transparent on the rights to be accorded to service providers. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has also remarked that: *it is extremely important that those programmes [temporary and circulation migration] are in strict compliance with the relevant international human rights instruments, in particular to ensure non discrimination with regard to remuneration and other conditions of work.*²⁴ The ILO Multilateral Framework has provided some guidelines on this issue as well. The most relevant is Guideline 5.5, which reads as: *“ensuring that temporary work schemes respond to established labour market needs, and that these schemes respect the principle of equal treatment between migrant and national workers, and that workers in temporary schemes enjoy the rights referred to in principles 8 and 9 of this*



Framework.” The principles 8 and 9 mentioned here relate to human and labour rights of migrant workers. Guideline 9.9 attempts to ensure that *“restrictions on the rights of temporary migrant workers do not exceed relevant international standards”.*²⁵

Equal opportunity and integration are among the most difficult challenges raised by international labour migration today. Discrimination against migrant workers is reflected in their poor integration in host societies, in their high unemployment rates, in the lack of recognition of their skills and experience, long catching up periods with natives of similar qualifications, growing xenophobia, as well as in serious problems faced by second generation migrants and migrant children. The growth of temporary labour migration in many parts of the world poses special problems with regard to the integration of temporary migrant workers in destination countries.

Respect for migrant rights in destination countries, especially regarding equality of treatment and non-discrimination, has a direct bearing on the prosperity and growth of those countries as well. Protecting migrant rights serves to protect national workers in host country labour markets by not undercutting the cost of labour and promoting overall competitiveness

and productivity in the long run, and preventing the emergence of migrant-dependent economic sectors. Tolerance of substandard working conditions and pay affects labour market opportunities for national workers.

International instruments constitute the most important building blocks for the protection of migrant workers at the international level. All ILO labour standards, including core Conventions enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, apply to migrant workers unless stated otherwise in the instruments. The two ILO migrant-specific Conventions —the ILO Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97) and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) – together with the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families – provide a comprehensive legal framework for migration policy and practice covering most issues of treatment of migrant workers and of inter-State cooperation on regulating migration. Ratification of these instruments and their enforcement would be instrumental in the protection of migrant workers, and thereby to realizing benefits of migration. The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration – a negotiated outcome among tripartite partners – has drawn upon these and other international instruments and best practices to compile a set of principles, guidelines and best practices to guide countries in the formulation and implementation of labour migration policies. It offers all countries considerable scope to apply the principles, guidelines and good practices contained in the above instruments for improving their migration policies and practices.

It would be unbalanced to talk about migrant rights without raising the issue of migrant obligations. The International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families refers to migrant obligations, as well as rights, including the obligation to respect the laws, regulations and “cultural identity” of states where migrants work and live. Learning the language of the country where migrants work and live and acceptance of the fundamental values of host societies are major steps in their effective integration and contributions.

The Resolution concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy adopted by the 92nd Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2004²⁶ recognised that certain categories of migrant workers were inadequately covered by the two ILO instruments: women migrant workers, migrant workers in irregular status and temporary migrant workers. It urged that member states give due consideration to the gender dimension in the application of relevant international labour standards, as well as to the various categories of temporary migrant workers, including seasonal workers. The Resolution also stressed that it is important to ensure that the human rights of migrant workers in irregular status are protected.

²⁴ OHCHR (2006), *Migration and Development: A Human Rights approach*, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva. <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cmw/docs/HLMigration/MigrationDevelopmentHC'spaper.pdf>

²⁵ *The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration* (2006), op.cit.

²⁶ ILO (2004). *Resolution concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy*, op. cit.

IV. International cooperation and multilateral approaches to governing migration

While states have the sovereign right to determine their own migration policies, closer cooperation among them, such as through bilateral agreements and multilateral treaties, can contribute towards more effective labour migration processes and greater development benefits from labour migration. As the UN Secretary-General stated: *“Only through cooperation – bilateral, regional, and global – can we build the partnerships between receiver and sender countries that are in the interests of both; explore innovations to make migration a driver of development; fight smugglers and traffickers effectively; and agree on common standards for the treatment of immigrants and the management of migration.”*²⁷

Regional and bilateral cooperation can facilitate the development of policies and programmes that can benefit concerned governments and migrant workers by providing effective protection and support services to migrant workers and their families, foster economic and social development, and promote legal forms of labour mobility as an alternative to irregular migration. Regional Consultative Processes²⁸ have emerged as a useful framework to address issues related to regular and irregular migration, information exchange, and consultation amongst governments. From the ILO’s point of view, it would be necessary to make them more transparent and consistent with international norms, to focus less on security issues, and to broaden the membership to include social partners and civil society organizations.

There is increasing convergence of ideas on the need for a multilateral regime to govern international labour migration. As the UN Secretary-General stated: *“... since migration is a global phenomenon, which occurs not only between pairs of countries or within regions but from almost every corner of the world to every other, it requires our collective*

*attention”*²⁹ The report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, the activities of the Global Migration Group, the International Agenda for Migration Management of the Berne Initiative, the report of the Global Commission on International Migration, the ILO Resolution on Migrant Workers (92nd Session of the ILO International Labour Conference 2004), the report and conclusions of UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, and the 2007 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) have all underlined the need for international cooperation and policy coherence to maximize the potential benefits of labour migration and minimize its drawbacks. The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration presents a non-binding framework – negotiated by a tripartite meeting of experts and subsequently endorsed by the ILO Governing Body – which addresses issues of governance, protection and development, and provides a useful tool kit for guiding labour migration policy towards this end.

At the international level, the Global Migration Group (GMG), formed in 2006, represents an attempt at ensuring greater coherence and coordination in approaches to the issue of international migration within the United Nations system and the International Organization for Migration. The Global Forum on Migration and Development is a consultative forum among governments that aims to foster cooperation between States in promoting migration and development linkages. The first meeting of the GMFD was held in Brussels in July 2007. The second Forum will be hosted by the government of the Philippines

²⁷ United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s Address to the European Parliament upon receipt of the Andrei Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, Brussels, 29 January 2004.
http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/sk/article_3178_sk.htm

²⁸ The Puebla Process in the Americas, the Budapest Process in –central and Eastern Europe, the Bali process in Asia are some examples.

²⁹ United Nations (2006). International migration and development: Report of the Secretary-General, op. cit.

in 2008. The process does not directly involve social partners and civil society.

The ILO's unique tripartite structure distinguishes itself from the work of many other agencies working on issues of labour migration. Social dialogue involving the three parties most affected by migration – the governments, employers and workers – is a major pillar of the ILO approach. Social dialogue is essential to the development of sound labour migration policy and therefore, to the formulation and implementation of migration-development policies. It is also important to involve migrant associations and other concerned civil society groups in broad-based consultative processes. This approach ensures that labour migration and development policies will be based on national consensus to the extent possible. Structures and regular mechanisms for social dialogue on migration policy are necessary for meaningful involvement of representative employers' and workers' organizations and civil society and migrant groups.

V. The way forward

While labour migration has the potential to generate positive development benefits, as highlighted above, it should not be regarded as an alternative to sound policies for home country development. The long run solution to low incomes, unemployment and poverty in home countries is through rapid growth and development which will serve to generate decent work opportunities so that their citizens migrate out of choice and not necessity as highlighted by the Global Commission on International Migration. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development had also observed that: *"The long term manageability of international migration hinges on making the option to remain in one's country a viable one for all people."*³⁰

The Plan of Action for Migrant Workers contained in the 2004 ILC Resolution has defined the broad agenda for ILO's activities on labour migration. One major component of the ILO Plan of Action is *"support for implementation of the ILO Global Employment Agenda at national level"* with the objective of creating decent jobs at home to reduce migration pressures. The ILO Decent Work Country Programmes address decent work deficits that should eventually allow workers to exercise the right to work in their own countries. They also incorporate migration and development issues as needed in specific contexts.

The global community has increasingly recognized the crucial role of migrant rights in promoting development benefits of migration. The realization of these gains and their equitable distribution is crucially dependent on mainstreaming migrant rights in migration and development policies. Wider applications of international labour standards and other relevant instruments protecting migrant workers – another component of the 2004 ILO Plan of Action for Migrant Workers – is therefore, crucial to the maximization of development benefits of migration in today's globalizing world.

The ILO stands ready to work together with all its constituents including tripartite partners consisting of governments, employers' and workers' organizations, other migrant associations and concerned civil society groups, academics, the mass media, and other concerned international organizations – in promoting migration by choice and maximizing development benefits of labour migration consistent with protection of the rights of all migrant workers in the new millennium.

³⁰ United Nations (1995). *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development*, Cairo, 5-13, September 1994. <http://www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/offeng/poa.html>

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION PROGRAMME

International Labour Office

4, route des Morillons

1211 Geneva

Switzerland

Tel. +41 22 799 6667

Fax. +41 22 799 8836

migrant@ilo.org

www.ilo.org/migrant