



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)  
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## THE ROLE OF MIGRATION IN THE POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA SUMMARY

On 28 April 2014, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) held a briefing on “The Role of Migration in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda”. This event was part of the New York Migration Series consisting of two briefings and three trainings, organized by IOM to enhance knowledge and raise awareness of migration amongst Permanent Missions, representatives of United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society and other stakeholders at UN Headquarters. This briefing was co-chaired by the Governments of Mexico and Turkey.

### Introduction

Ambassador Jorge Montaña, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, underlined the importance of human mobility as a key factor for sustainable development. As such, it is imperative that migration is integrated in an inclusive, people-centered manner in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. He stated that one of the most relevant results of the Declaration of the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development adopted by the General Assembly in October 2013 was addressing international migration in a comprehensive way.<sup>1</sup> He stressed that Member States should build on the Declaration because of the scope and impact of international migration.

Ambassador Y. Halit Çevik, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, reiterated Turkey’s support for the inclusion of migration in the Post-2015 Agenda. He noted that although migration is referenced in the latest working document of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals<sup>2</sup>, more work needs to be done to ensure migration and the positive contributions of migrants at home and abroad is acknowledged. In conclusion, Turkey called for greater cooperation between regional, national and global stakeholders on migration, as it is an issue which should not be addressed in isolation.

### Session I: High-Level discussion on migration and the Post-2015 Agenda

The first panel was moderated by Mr. William Lacy Swing, Director General of IOM. The two speakers were Mr. Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration and Development and Mr. Paul Ladd, Head of the Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP.

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<sup>1</sup> A/68/L.5

<sup>2</sup> The working document for the Open Working Group session from 5-9 May 2014 is available at:  
[http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3686WorkingDoc\\_0205\\_additional supporters.pdf](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3686WorkingDoc_0205_additional supporters.pdf).



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Mr. Swing underlined the significant role migrants play as agents and enablers of development. He stressed that alarmist, racist and xenophobic rhetoric on migrants and migration are harmful and need to be addressed. Greater political courage, as well as more balanced discourse on the issue is the way forward. Before handing over to the panel, Mr. Swing made three points: migration has significant, complex and multi-directional links to development; effective policies that enhance the quality of migration can and do make a difference; and, finally, as we move into the next stage of discussions, it is vital that governments continue to be champions of migration in the Post-2015 Agenda. The link between properly managed migration and development can no longer be overlooked: migration must be adequately reflected in the Post-2015 Agenda.

Mr. Sutherland noted the growing xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance towards migrants across the globe. That being said, there has also been some positive recognition of migration which has created new possibilities for cooperation. Policy makers are increasingly acknowledging the contributions of migrants and migration, which goes some way towards addressing negative perceptions and protecting the human and labour rights of migrants in host countries. He stated that international frameworks are important in order to maximize the benefits of migration for all parties involved in the migration process. It is an area which requires cooperation and acceptance from all stakeholders. He cited the ILO's landmark Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, as an example of this. He noted the positive impact of the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in moving the migration debate forward. The process of articulating common challenges, identifying particular allies and developing practical responses and approaches to migration is fundamentally important, especially with regards to protecting migrant workers' rights. Migration has to be included in the Post-2015 Agenda, especially when the significance of remittances is taken into account. In conclusion, he stated that negative attitudes towards migration are often based on the notion that the presence of migrants is problematic. However, their presence itself does not pose the problem but rather the absence of clear and coherent policies to integrate migrants, as well as a lack of accurate and unbiased data. While enormous progress has already been made in ensuring migration is included in the Post-2015 development goals, it is imperative that advocates clearly frame migration and forcefully articulate the positive impact of migration on development.

Mr. Ladd gave a status update on the latest working document produced by the co-chairs of the Open Working Group. He outlined several explicit references to migration in the most recent iteration, including references to promoting scholarships, reducing remittance transfer costs, combatting trafficking, and a footnoted reference to migrant health. He acknowledged that while significant progress has been made on referencing migration, more work needs to be done, as migration is relevant to key aspects influencing development. Reflecting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Mr. Ladd noted that the MDGs have been a mobilizing framework which has encouraged cooperation between stakeholders on a positive, shared agenda for reducing different facets of poverty. However, he argued that the first five years (in terms of implementation) were lost. There were legitimate critiques around the substance of the MDGs: for example, it steered away from topics that were either



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difficult to include politically or difficult to measure. The UN now recognizes the benefits of participation and creating spaces that allow the private sector, civil society and governments to talk openly about these issues. In conclusion, he emphasized the importance of building on the MDGs in order to create a more sophisticated, holistic and relevant agenda. Migration is relevant to a great number of issues that are growing exponentially in importance and will be a defining factor of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It would only be sensible to include migration in the Post-2015 Agenda, not for the least because this would ensure a seat at the table in the coming 15 years.

## **Session II: Assessing the evidence – How migration is related to development**

The second session focused on the linkages between migration and development, and was moderated by Ms. Jane Stewart, Special Representative to the UN and Director, ILO Office for the UN. The two speakers were Mr. Bikash Chowdhury Barua, President of BASUG - Diaspora and Development and Ms. Claire Melamed, Head of Programme - Growth, Poverty and Inequality, Overseas Development Institute.

In her introductory remarks, Ms. Stewart underlined the important linkages between migration and development that were touched upon in the previous session. While people migrate for a variety of reasons, the search for economic improvement is a key driver of migration. She noted that the merging of migration with certain focus areas in the latest working document of the OWG reduces the opportunity to properly reflect the importance of migration and migrant related issues. She argued that the depth of the contribution of migrants and migration towards the development of a universal agenda should not be understated.

Mr. Chowdhury Barua shared with the audience some practical examples from Bangladesh and the Netherlands that weaved together migrant contributions in their countries of origin and destination. One example highlighted the role of Bangladeshi diaspora communities in the United Kingdom and the United States, who came together to set-up a hospital in Sylhet, Bangladesh. In addition, he stated that while migrants make significant financial contributions towards development in their home countries via remittances, the focus should go beyond the economic aspects of migration. He advocated for the global recognition of the role the diaspora plays in democratization, peacebuilding, mediation, the transfer of knowledge and promotion of equality. Mr. Chowdhury Barua stressed that real, effective engagement with migrants and the diaspora in positive policy environments is necessary to promote sustainable development, both in countries of origin and countries of destination. In conclusion, he echoed the importance of global partnerships on migration in order to facilitate sustainable economic growth and that migration must be incorporated into the Post-2015 Agenda.

Ms. Melamed explored the widening gap between evidence on the one hand and public perceptions and policies on the other, and how the Post-2015 Agenda can close the gap between the myths and realities of migration and development. She argued that development is simply about giving people more freedom, choices and opportunities. As such, the fact that many people around the world are migrating



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is enough reason to support the inclusion of migration in the Post-2015 Agenda.<sup>3</sup> She noted the report published by IOM in partnership with Gallup, *The World Migration Report 2013: Migrant Well-being and Development*, which presented a holistic picture of the ways in which migration affects quality of life and human development.<sup>4</sup> However, the reality is often overshadowed by negative perceptions and policies. Ms. Melamed highlighted how cautious civil society has been in proposing migration to be part of the Post-2015 Agenda: of the 367 proposals identified by ODI for goals and targets, only 14 mention migration. Similarly, migration was omitted from the goals and targets suggested in the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda report in 2013.<sup>5</sup> Although some progress has been made by the OWG, more work needs to be done. Given the importance of migration to development, the fact that it still continues to occupy a small space in the list of goals and targets in the post-2015 agenda is worrying, as it can inadvertently create inequalities via its failure to establish standardized, agreed-upon definitions. Ms. Melamed listed three ways in which the Post-2015 agenda could bridge the gap between myths and realities: implementing policy incentives in order to protect existing migrants, while also defining them as a distinct group; improving public services in host countries in order to reduce fear of migration; and, finally, measuring the process of changing norms on migration and development.

## Conclusions

Brief concluding remarks were provided by Ms. Stewart. She re-articulated the relationship between migration and development, while also noting the importance of using language that provides the broadest capacity to look at marginalized groups, especially those that need direct identification and understanding. Overall, throughout the briefing there was an overwhelming consensus that migration should be given prominence in the Post-2015 Agenda

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<sup>3</sup> There currently are an estimated 232 million international migrants around the world. UN DESA, Trends in International Migrant Stock, the 2013 revision:

<http://esa.un.org/unmigration/TIMSA2013/migrantstocks2013.htm?mtotals>.

<sup>4</sup> IOM's 2013 World Migration Report is available at: [http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/WMR2013\\_EN.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/WMR2013_EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The report of the High Level Panel is available at: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf>.