

# Migration in the post-2015 process: Analyzing key trends

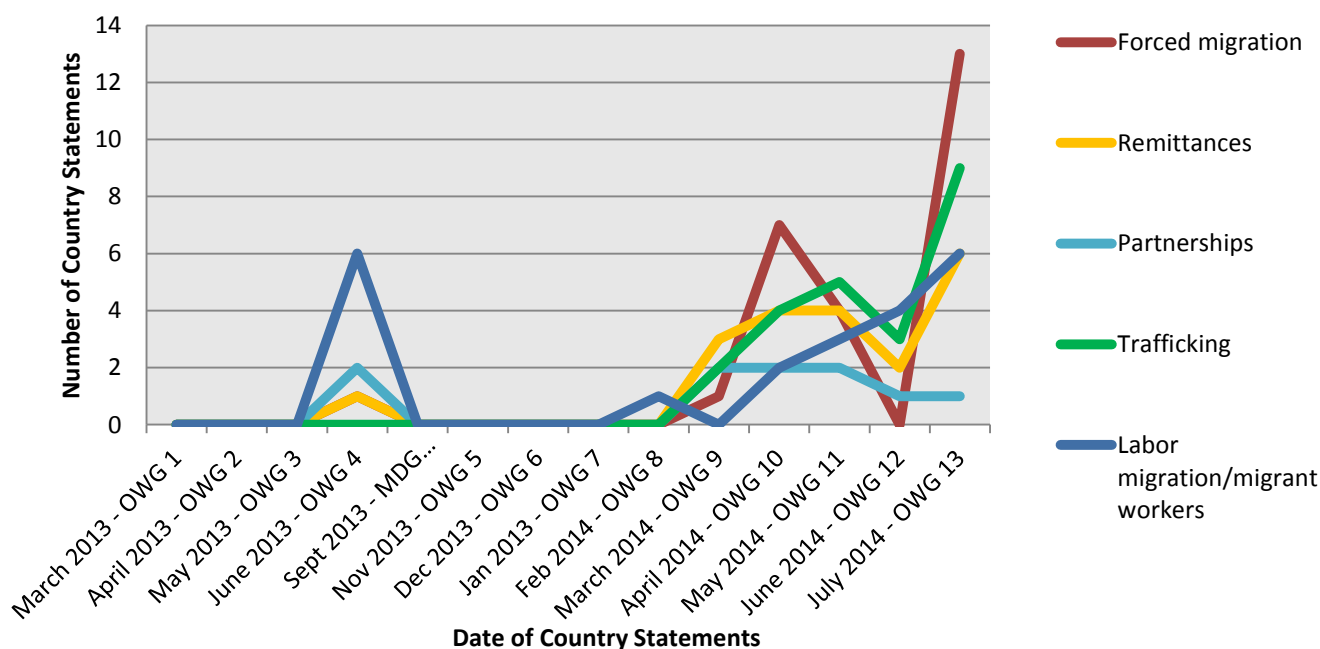
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With the conclusion of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) and adoption of its Outcome Document on 19 July, 2014, the post-2015 process finds itself in a phase of transition, providing an important opportunity to review comprehensively the work that has been done over the past year and a half. For IOM, this includes taking stock not just of the manner in which migration has been captured in the OWG’s Outcome Document, but also analyzing more thoroughly specific trends and trajectories in the way migration has been discussed. Events of particular significance for this analysis are the thirteen sessions of the OWG, as well as the UN General Assembly’s High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) and associated side events held in October 2013.

### Looking at themes: frequency, trajectories, and distribution of discussion

## Discussion of key themes over time



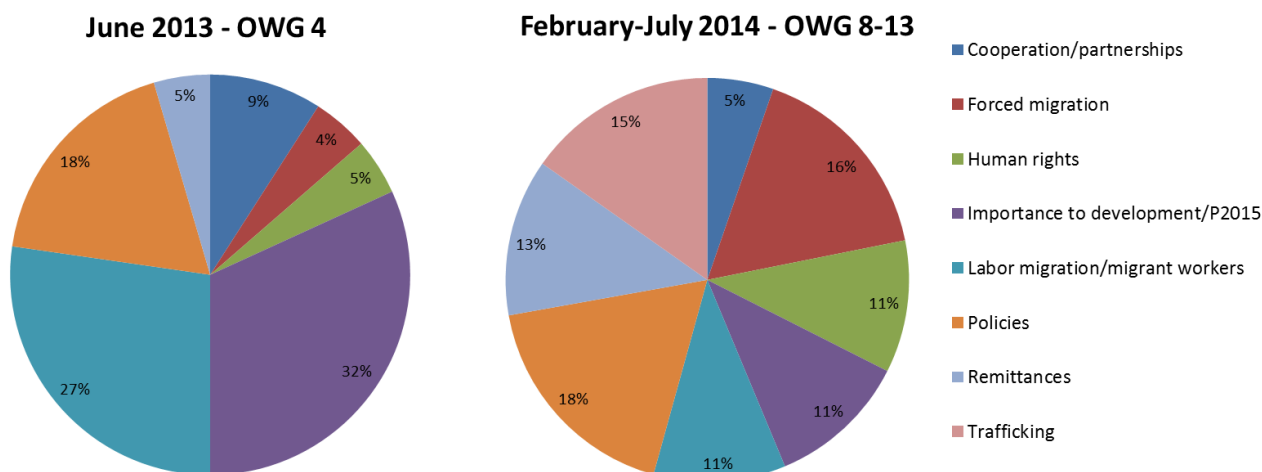
Broadly speaking, discussion of migration increased in frequency over the course of the OWG sessions, beginning with OWG 8 in February 2014. From January through July of this year, almost all OWG sessions saw an increase in the number of delegations addressing migration-related issues in their statements. Two additional peaks in discussion of migration occurred in June 2013, at OWG 4 dedicated to population dynamics, and in October 2013, for the HLD.

As OWG negotiations progressed to the context of specific goals and targets, Member States began pushing for inclusion of particular issues, meaning that overall frequency of migration references rose as a function of the number of concrete areas of consideration. Beyond regular but broad statements on the important role of migration in development, certain substantive migration-related themes emerged most commonly in later OWG sessions. These included, in order of frequency, well-managed migration policies, human rights of migrants, forced migration, labor migration, international partnerships on migration issues, and reducing remittance transaction costs.

Several of these major themes demonstrated clear trajectories in their consideration over the course of the later OWG sessions. Forced migration, for example, first saw a peak in discussion during OWG 10, in the context of delegations' consideration of a goal on peaceful societies. Within this context, several Member States noted the importance of including a target on refugees and IDPs. While mention of these issues declined sharply in OWG 11 and 12, the removal of the refugee and IDP target from a draft presented in OWG 13 triggered another spike in Member State interest in addressing forced migration, with higher levels of discussion than in any previous post-2015 event. While the target was ultimately not reinstated, OWG 13 provided an important demonstration of a broad level of support for reducing numbers of forcibly displaced persons.

The inclusion of migration within a new global partnership for development followed a downward trajectory in later OWG sessions. Despite receiving substantial attention at the HLD, the issue of partnerships was raised only twice over the course of OWG 12 and 13. A proposal by a small number of governments to introduce a subheading on migration within the global partnerships goal gained little traction among other Member States and was not taken up.

## Distribution of key themes over time





In addition to changes in the frequency of statements on particular issues, the overall distribution of themes under consideration became more balanced with time, moving toward equilibrium from OWG 4 through OWG 13. While broad issues such as the importance of migration to development, international cooperation, and human rights were the subject of discussion in both earlier and later OWG sessions, as well as within specifically post-2015 focused components of the HLD, specific or technical issues such as trafficking, remittances, and labor migration came to receive similar levels of focus only in later deliberations, perhaps reflecting a more nuanced understanding by delegations of the links between migration and development, or a clearer expression of political priorities, or both.

It is interesting to note that forced migration, the only major migration-related area whose target was removed from the Outcome Document, was discussed primarily in later OWG sessions and did not receive any significant mention within the context of post-2015 at the HLD, though it was subject to broader consideration at that time. The issue of human trafficking, which has a presence in the Outcome Document, was also not discussed in earlier OWG sessions.

### **Looking at tone: statement positions on migration**

In considering both the HLD and OWG sessions, it may be said that delegations' statements on migration-related issues were of a generally positive nature.

According to IOM analysis of these events, approximately 30 percent of statements expressed strong support for including migration in the post-2015 agenda, citing particular areas of importance and commitment. An additional 61 percent of statements expressed support for retaining specific goals and targets relating to migration or included general mention of a relationship between migration and development. This category proved most common, as delegations would frequently chime in to echo one another's support for an issue.

Approximately 7 percent of statements were either neutral or posed a question on migration. During the HLD, these generally consisted of calls to further explore and clarify the relationship between migration and development. During the OWG sessions, delegations requested clarification on specific issues in the draft document, leading to IOM interventions in some cases. A question on the basis for reducing remittance costs to 5%, for example, allowed for IOM clarification and encouragement of the more ambitious target of 3% that now appears in the Outcome Document. In response to questions on the meaning and measurability of facilitating orderly, safe, and regular migration, IOM was able to provide examples of specific, relevant indicators, and the target was ultimately retained.

The remaining 2 percent of statements, which expressed a more negative tone, primarily reflected one of two concerns. The first, seen in the HLD, related to a perceived lack of clarity on the precise link between migration and development. Other statements revealed the sensitivities of particular governments on certain issues, including sovereignty, brain drain, and forced migration, evidencing a reluctance to address such themes within a universal development agenda.

### **Looking forward**

Ultimately, discussion of migration-related issues over the past eighteen months of the post-2015 process has proven to be a diverse and shifting phenomenon. By analyzing the specific themes at hand and their relative



frequency of consideration throughout the process, it is possible to gain some insights into the nuances of Member State positions, aims, and concerns with regard to migration. This information will allow IOM and other stakeholders to move forward productively and positively, and to refine their advocacy strategies, as the post-2015 process continues to evolve.

One key question that emerges is that of implementation. While Member States have demonstrated an obvious interest in including migration in the post-2015 agenda, it is less clear that they have a sense of how best to reflect relevant issues, in all their diversity and technicality, in a concrete and measurable way. Although the shift in specific themes over the course of the OWG sessions demonstrates increasing nuance in delegation statements over time, basic questions on measurability and remittance levels still emerged in the final OWG session. Such questions, as well as the limited discussion of issues such as skills recognition and portability of rights, suggest a need for further technical guidance on the types of policies and programmes that can truly catalyze intended effects and amplify the positive linkages between migration and development.

An additional question moving forward relates to those major migration themes that have not been retained in the Outcome Document. While a target on forced migration may be difficult to reinstate given the political sensitivities surrounding it, and while discussion of migration partnerships diminished significantly in the final OWG sessions, both topics are of crucial importance to any development agenda. As was noted in a joint statement from OCHA, UNHCR, and IOM in July, protracted displacement is a driver of inequality and may hinder the sustainable development of both individuals and host communities, in addition to triggering conflict relapses. With forced displacement at its highest level since World War II, this is not a concern to be overlooked.

With regard to partnerships, the broader picture of global cooperation that the Outcome Document paints will remain incomplete without incorporation of global mobility, a phenomenon that is inherently impossible to address unilaterally. Noting their essentiality, it remains now to determine how actions to build partnerships and address displacement can and should play into the post-2015 agenda, despite their absence in the OWG's proposed set of goals and targets.