Introduction

On April 23rd the International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) organized a preparatory roundtable for Permanent Missions at UN Headquarters in New York as a side-event to the 46th Session of the Commission on Population and Development. The roundtable was intended to help prepare for the upcoming General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (3-4 October 2013). The meeting was co-chaired by the Governments of South Africa and Sweden. The substantive focus for this meeting was the topic for the third of four roundtables at the High Level Dialogue, on ‘Strengthening partnerships and cooperation on international migration, mechanisms to effectively integrate migration into development policies, and promote coherence at all levels’. This report presents a summary of the main points made by the co-chairs and three panelists – all of whose complete presentations are available at: http://unobserver.iom.int/index.php/hld-series/81-events/108-hldroundtable4.

In his introductory comments, Ambassador Jeremiah Mamabolo, Permanent Representative from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations, highlighted the importance of addressing common misperceptions about migrants and migration by emphasizing the positive contributions that migration can make to development in both origin and destination countries. Equally he recognized that migration can pose challenges, and stressed that it is the responsibility of states, supported by the international community, to find effective responses to these challenges while respecting the rights of migrants. The protection of the rights of migrant women and children is a
particular priority, as is combating trafficking in persons. In this respect, his own country, the Republic of South Africa, approaches migration from a rights-based perspective. Ambassador Mamabolo viewed the forthcoming High-Level Dialogue as an opportunity to renew political commitment to advancing the international agenda on migration and development through concrete action. At the same time it should provide the opportunity to integrate into the debate the perspectives of other stakeholders in migration and development, including civil society, diaspora communities, and the private sector. Looking to the future, Ambassador Mamabolo identified environmental change as a new challenge, and emphasized the importance of helping populations to adapt to their changing environments. The interaction between migration and environmental change is one reason why migration should be integrated in the post-2015 development agenda.

Ambassador Mårten Grunditz, the Permanent Representative from the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations, explained how Sweden is framing its policy towards migration and development as current Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and as it prepares for the High-Level Dialogue. Sweden has adopted a policy that integrates migration and global development goals, and explicitly adopts a ‘whole-of-government’ approach. It views the relationship between migration and development as part of a wider set of socio-economic processes that include security, livelihoods, and human rights, and ultimately is about individuals seeking to realize their full potential. Ambassador Grunditz welcomed the initiative of these roundtables, and felt that the coming months represent a critical juncture for shaping a global approach towards migration and development.

The panel was moderated by Ms Kate Gilmore, Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA, who introduced the panel as representative of the multi-stakeholder and multi-dimensional approach that is necessary for cooperation, collaboration, coherence, and commitment to international migration and development.

The first panelist was Mr Tobias Billström, Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Ministry of Justice, Government of Sweden. Mr Billström started by identifying migration as a key driver of human progress and development, which should form a central component of development strategies at the national, regional and global levels. He considered the Global Forum on Migration and Development to be a model for global cooperation – it has been a unique initiative that has helped build confidence and trust between states and civil society around sensitive topics, through its non-binding and informal character. As chair of the GFMD, Sweden intends the Forum to become more development-oriented, more dynamic by engaging a wider range of stakeholders, and more durable by focusing on concrete outcomes and funding mechanisms. The Global Forum should provide an opportunity for states to realize the value of partnerships, with other states as well as with civil society and the private sector. Beyond its chairmanship of GFMD, in recent years Sweden has reformed its labour market policies to admit more migrants from outside the European Economic Area (EEA), and has established a Parliamentary Committee on circular migration. Ms Gunilla Carlsson, Sweden’s Minister for International Development Cooperation, is a member of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability, and is promoting the incorporation of migration into the post-2015 development agenda. Potentially this outcome will require more effective partnerships and a more coordinated response to migration and development, at the national, regional and global levels, including through the Global
Migration Group (GMG). To succeed, these partnerships will need to include all the relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

The second panelist was Mr William Lacy Swing, Director General, International Organization for Migration (IOM). Mr Swing focused his presentation on three main points. First, he emphasized that we are currently living in the greatest period of human mobility in history. Significant global drivers underlie contemporary migration, including demographic divergences, complex migration crises, and the digital revolution. Migration has been overwhelmingly a positive force for human progress. The scale of migration, the power of its underlying forces, and its largely positive outcomes, emphasize the importance of recognizing migration in the post-2015 development agenda. In order to realize the potential of migration, second, Mr Swing suggested that we need to move from a ‘low road’ to a ‘high road’ scenario. The ‘low road’ scenario, which holds sway in many states today, marginalizes migrants, propagates myths about them, and focuses on restrictive policies which risk driving migrants into the hands of migrant smugglers and human traffickers. In contrast, the ‘high road’ scenario recognizes the potential of migrants and migration, facilitates mobility in an orderly and humane manner, and debunks many of the myths that abound about migrants. It is based on an understanding that migration is relevant for the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as well as for peace and security. Third, Mr Swing insisted that the ‘high road’ scenario cannot be achieved without partnership, cooperation, and coherence, at the national, regional, and global levels. It depends on strengthening capacity on all aspects of migration management; developing multi-sectoral synergies; mainstreaming migration into development strategies and planning; and enhancing consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Although substantive and institutional progress has been made, there is still a long way to go, making the High-Level Dialogue particularly timely, necessary and pertinent. IOM has prepared a Position Paper which contains six key policy recommendations for the High-Level Dialogue, including the need to factor migration into development planning which is pre-eminently a partnership and cooperation challenge.

The third panelist was Mr Johan Ketelers, Secretary General, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC). He began by providing the two key headlines of his intervention: first that around the world civil society is converging, and second that this provides the opportunity to build genuine partnerships based on shared responsibility. In regards to the first point, Mr Ketelers stressed that the convergence of civil society in the realm of migration has been based not on a motivation to confront or challenge states and international organizations, but on the recognition of the importance of working with them to improve the lives of migrants, their families, and the communities they leave behind them and amongst whom they settle. With regards to building more effective partnerships, Mr Ketelers stressed the need for more effective cooperation in particular based on the principle of solidarity; for improving mechanisms, including the more effective implementation of existing legal and normative frameworks; and for translating convergence into coherence, not least in the field of development. As a result, civil society has submitted a ‘five-year-seven-point-plan’ to the High-Level Dialogue requesting a commitment to collaboration between states and civil society as an outcome. This plan identifies the following seven issues as challenges that can only be addressed through effective collaboration: regulating the migrant labour recruitment industry; addressing the protection needs of migrants in
distress, including migrants in transit; ensuring appropriate recognition of migrants and migration in the post-2015 development agenda; guaranteeing labour rights and decent work for migrant workers; addressing vulnerabilities and rights of migrant women and children; promoting the implementation of national legislation reflecting international standards regarding migrants and their families; and redefining the interaction of international mechanisms for protection of migrants.

The final panelist was Ms Shamshad Akhtar, Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). She began her presentation with a reminder of the challenges to achieving meaningful cooperation and partnerships in the field of migration and development – at national, regional, and global levels, including at the United Nations, which had often proved ineffective. But this in Ms Akhtar’s view should be a reason to redouble – not abandon – efforts to build a stronger basis for partnership. Only through partnerships can the full potential of migration be realized, and its challenges effectively addressed. Specifically, Ms Akhtar mentioned the recommendations for a renewed global partnership for development made by the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, and she further identified four areas where partnership can practically enhance the human development outcomes of migration: reducing the transfer costs of remittances; strengthening migration data collection and knowledge-sharing; reducing the costs of migration; and improved global cooperation on migration.

Conclusions

In her closing remarks, Ms Gilmore distilled three main messages from the panel. First, migration is and always has been part of the human condition. Second, there is a global appetite to manage migration effectively in order to realize its full potential while minimizing its negative consequences. Finally, new models of partnership and leadership are required proactively to confront the realities of contemporary migration.

Further information

The agenda, statements and presentations, and a background paper prepared for the meeting are available at: http://unobserver.iom.int/index.php/hld-series/81-events/108-hldroundtable4