EIGHTY-FOURTH SESSION
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WORKSHOPS FOR POLICY MAKERS

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

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1.     Migration is an issue of great importance on the political agenda of many States for various reasons, depending on the different aspects of the phenomenon that countries face. Consequently, the viewpoints from which governments and societies look at the challenges posed by, and the possible approaches to, the movement of people, are diverse.  At times, the policies of different governments appear irreconcilable.  Bringing together stakeholders with divergent perspectives can serve to enhance understanding of the issues and facilitate the search for common and mutually beneficial approaches.

2.     With increasing globalization, free trade and economic interdependence, the issue of the movement of people will gain in relevance.  The need for people to move in search of better prospects, or of a chance for survival for themselves and their families, puts to the test the effectiveness of different migration policies.  Global terrorist threats already pose new challenges for balancing internal security concerns with respect for migrants' human rights. As the issue grows in complexity, an individual State's isolated response will decrease in effectiveness and it will be progressively less able to tackle concerns that extend beyond that State's borders.  This is all the more evident in view of the move towards models of regional economic and social integration that are being witnessed in many parts of the world, North and South alike.  In today's migration scenario, for example, migration to a Western European country has an impact on the European Union region as a whole.  Similarly, return, brain drain or remittance flows involving a country in West Africa may have a direct impact on the overall balance of that subregion.

3.     In view of this context, concerted approaches to migration are becoming increasingly important.  Partnership among States in devising actions and solutions has now become a priority topic on the international as well as internal political agendas of governments.  Over recent years, an important increase has been witnessed in regional processes on migration, aimed at finding concerted, coordinated and balanced regional answers to the challenges posed by migration.  States have come to realize that, while some aspects of migration remain within their sovereign sphere, other aspects require interaction and coordinated efforts with other States and other relevant actors.

4.     It is within this context of a growing need for concerted analysis and partnership in action that the IOM Council, at its Eighty-second Session in November 2001, launched an international dialogue on migration policy.  The purpose of this international dialogue is twofold:  (a) to enhance understanding of the complexity of the migration phenomena;  and (b) to enhance inter-State cooperation in managing migration.

5.     This session of the Council will explore three workshop themes.  The sections below briefly introduce each of the workshop topics and pose a series of relevant policy questions. The descriptions and questions are offered to set the scene for the workshops at the Council and to stimulate debate.  Participants are encouraged to bring additional perspectives and questions to the discussion.  The workshops are designed to advance the debate on the selected migration themes by introducing a range of perspectives through inter-State dialogue and to lead to common understanding of the issues and dynamics relevant for policy makers.

**INTEGRATION**

6.    While effective integration is particularly important for the cohesion and stability of societies, integration policies are not well developed in most countries, with the exception of some countries with long-standing immigration traditions.  Such policies do not derive from a uniform concept of integration.  Policy responses therefore tend to vary as they take into consideration both the specific aspects of societies in countries of destination, as well as the divergent characteristics of the newcomers in these societies.  Different national communities in the same host country may have different integration needs and experiences, rendering difficult the application of a single model.

7.    Integration is a two-way process, with the migrant adapting to the conditions in the host country, and the latter gaining from the diversity immigration brings.  In this era of global communications and networking, integration can begin even in the country of origin prior to emigration and continue in the host country.  Partnerships with countries of origin can help promote understanding of the issues that can create or dissipate tensions.

8.    While the successful integration of migrants is of direct benefit to the persons concerned and the host societies, there are other positive outcomes to be considered.  For instance, countries of origin can also benefit from a successful integration process of their nationals in the host country, and through the acquisition of experience, knowledge, know-how and training the diaspora can contribute to the development of their countries of origin.

9.    Many States' immediate reaction to the events of 11 September 2001 was to strengthen border security and enhance measures to prevent terrorism.  Together with this reaction, however, has come a growing awareness of the importance of integration for social stability.  Community education and awareness are being recognized as means to combat racism and social exclusion, and prevent the alienation of ethnic communities from their host society.

10.    These considerations raise the following questions:

➢    **What are the known effective practices in integration? Can they provide a basis for the development of common/uniform policies and measures?  Can globalization be conducive to common approaches in this area?**

➢    **Are new integration initiatives needed in countries with long-standing immigration traditions, which are currently reviewing their immigration and asylum policies? What does integration mean for countries with limited immigration traditions and what particular integration challenges are therefore posed?**

➢    **When does the integration process start, and what is the critical period after which or criteria by which a foreigner should be considered socially and economically integrated?**

➢    **What are the factors/circumstances that lead to social exclusion or marginalization? How can they be overcome?**

> ➢ **Are education and labour insertion sufficient to ensure the successful integration of second and third generations of migrants?**

> ➢ **What contribution can civil society organizations bring to integration processes? As integration is a two-way process, to what extent should migrant community organizations actively participate in/support it?**

> ➢ **What impact do policies in host countries have on the society's attitude towards and perception of migrants and/or minorities?**

## COMPREHENSIVE AND SOLUTIONS-ORIENTED APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING IRREGULAR MIGRATION

11. It is universally acknowledged that migrants have contributed significantly to the development of societies. However, the continuous flow of migrants in an irregular situation, their vulnerability to exploitation, and the association of irregular migration with smuggling and trafficking networks, are issues of enduring concern. This perspective obscures the broader picture in which properly managed migration can bring benefits both to migrants and societies, and is both a natural and necessary feature of modern life.

12. The number of migrants in an irregular situation has not declined, despite increased spending on enforcement measures in major destination countries. This is because push factors in countries of origin – including poverty, unemployment and crises - and pull factors in countries of destination – including higher wages, job opportunities and safety - have not changed. Furthermore, frameworks and mechanisms are lacking for regular migration to address the labour shortages of expanding economies, and inadequate or inconsistent attention is being paid in development assistance programming to building capacities in transit countries and new destination countries in order to effectively manage migratory flows.

13. While a tighter immigration system is part of a legitimate response by States to irregular migration, if confined to that alone, the effect may be to push more people into the hands of smugglers and traffickers, which in turn increases vulnerability. Smuggling can and quickly does lead to exploitation and trafficking and can undermine security because of links with organized crime, violence and corruption.

14. Many labour markets in destination countries clearly allow for the absorption of large numbers of migrants in an irregular situation, which acts as a pull factor, notwithstanding governmental migration management measures. Addressing the issue of irregular migration effectively entails making linkages between the economic, social, trade, labour, cultural, security and development policy spheres.

15. These linkages point to the importance of partnerships in developing effective policies to address irregular migration. Such partnerships would not only allow for legitimate channels of migration, but also for return arrangements which would facilitate the safe and dignified return of unauthorized migrants.

16. The scenario briefly outlined above raises the following questions:

> **Which <u>concrete, realistic and efficient goals</u> can be agreed upon, and which actions set in motion, that address the different aspects mentioned in paragraph 14 above, without creating improvement in one sphere to the detriment of another?**

> **What measures are required (legislative or otherwise) to ensure the employment sector's positive participation in efforts to reduce irregular migration while at the same time ensuring respect for the rights of migrant workers, whether or not they are legally in the destination country?**

> **Migrants in an irregular situation often use asylum systems as an entry point. What steps can be taken to counter this practice?**

> **In what way, and to what extent, can the opening up of legal channels help reduce irregular migration?**

> **The return of migrants in an irregular situation is a controversial yet important issue. How can countries of origin and destination best cooperate to identify solutions and reconcile different (at times opposed) needs and viewpoints?**

## DIASPORA SUPPORT TO MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

17. The issue of the relationship between migration and development has been the subject of considerable study and debate, much of it inconclusive. For instance, in their efforts to create specialized skills for utilization in their development programmes, governments of the South have, for many decades, encouraged their nationals to seek education and training in countries of the North. The North has, in turn, often encouraged this process for a number of reasons, including the possible beneficial impact on the economy of the host country. As a result, sending countries have lost much of their qualified manpower to destination countries.

18. The most direct effect of skilled emigration has been to reduce the number of people critical for the productivity and economic growth of a developing country. It could, however, also set in motion a number of forces which could instead increase economic growth. Returning migrants could bring back their skills and work experience from abroad, thereby boosting productivity. Expatriates who remain abroad may contribute money via remittances, and many claim that their transfer of knowledge or technology to developing countries can increase productivity and economic development. By facilitating information exchange, technology transfer and business expansion, migration has become an important means to link the country of origin to the global economic system and bring to it a new development dynamism.

19. Remittances from diasporas have a significant economic and social impact in many countries of origin and could represent a fundamental tool for accelerating the development process in the country of origin. The flow of remittances is estimated to exceed USD 100 billion per year worldwide, with more than 60 per cent going to developing

countries. Until the end of the 1980s, Western Europe was the most important source region for remittances to countries in the developing world, but Asia has now taken over that position.

20. Remittances are important to the economies of the countries of origin and to the individual households receiving them. For the countries of origin, remittances can help reduce poverty, contribute to closing the trade gap, facilite debt servicing, produce foreign exchange and ease credit constraints. Household expenditure of remittances for consumption has multiplier effects on the wider local, regional and national economies, but the potential for remittances to contribute to sustainable development can be magnified even further by policies which support productive investment. However, there are some dangers: if remittances stimulate imports, they may affect the balance of payments, and if the flows are suddenly disrupted, remittance-dependent economies can be severely affected.

21. Within this context, the following questions are of particular importance:

➢ **What can be done to help transform the negative "brain drain" into "brain circulation" or "brain gain" for countries of origin?**

➢ **Which policies and concrete measures are needed to facilitate remittance flows and to encourage the flows to become a catalyst for development?**

➢ **A crucial element of the diaspora network is an effective system of networking to facilitate the transfer and exchange of information between network members and their counterparts in the country of origin. Which measures could be devised to take advantage of new technology to foster and strengthen the above knowledge exchange and circulation?**

22. This brief outline is obviously not intended to be an exhaustive list of issues for consideration in the three workshops. Rather, it is meant to offer elements for discussion and a frame of reference for a more in-depth analysis and debate among IOM's membership.