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Round table on the theme: Social and human impact of international migrations

SUMMARY

This document was prepared to provide relevant information concerning UNESCO's activities related to the theme of the Round Table "Social and Human Impact of International Migrations", that will take place during the Committee on International Non-Governmental Organizations at the 186th session of the Executive Board. It aims to serve as a background document to facilitate discussions during the Round Table.

UNESCO'S ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION

International migration is high on the political agenda in many countries throughout the world. The number of international migrants has doubled since 1960 to pass the threshold of 200 million and the number keeps growing. While migration has long been framed within bilateral or regional contexts, current flows are characterized by a growing complexity, in terms of directions, volumes and composition (including factors like gender, age, skill level, or legal status). However, there is very little cooperation between States regarding their respective migration policies – leading to incoherence and fragmentation in decision-making processes. Within the United Nations, migration has long been a controversial topic. In recent years, however, several major initiatives have been taken to develop a new approach to migration at the international level. These include the publications of an important report of the Global Commission on International Migration, the organization of a high-level dialogue at the United Nations, as well as the creation of the Global Migration Group (GMG), which UNESCO joined in 2007 and will chair between July and December 2011. The task for UNESCO is therefore to take part in the global rethinking of migration policies at the United Nations and international level, in cooperation with its partners, and to elaborate its distinct contribution to this debate.

I. UNESCO'S MANDATE

UNESCO's mandate to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, natural and social sciences, culture and communication is highly relevant to the issue of international migration and development. Already in 1952 the General Conference adopted a resolution calling on the Director-General to "continue studies of and activities relative to the social and cultural aspects of population and migration problems, and to cooperate for this purpose with the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation, the other Specialized Agencies concerned, and appropriate international organizations". Throughout the years migration has been in the work plans of the Organization in a variety of programmes while in recent decennia the issue was prominently present in Major Programme III, Social and Human Sciences.

The main functions that UNESCO has to offer to the understanding and policy development of international migration are:

- A laboratory of ideas, addressing, with the cooperation of various partners, migration issues linked to education, social science, communication and culture and identifying appropriate strategies and policies to deal with them.
- A clearing house, by gathering, transferring, disseminating and sharing available information, knowledge and best practices in international migration and development, and to identify innovative solutions and policies.
- A standard-setter, through its conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications and through its major normative instruments that provide standards in terms of cultural diversity and human rights.
- A capacity-builder and initiator of international cooperation for researchers and policy-makers in the area of international migration.
- A promoter of anti-discrimination policies through but not limited to the coalition of cities against racism.

II. FIELDS OF WORK

UNESCO has initiated policy-oriented research projects on a number of issues that are high on States' agenda, with the purpose of proposing carefully-documented views that challenge standard policies and foster innovative thinking on how to address some of the challenges raised by migration. Topics include: the migration-education linkage and the challenges raised by the mobility of skilled professionals, mobility, and the international recognition of qualifications; the migration-development nexus, with a particular emphasis on the development of knowledge of diasporas through the use of ICTs; the impact of global environmental change on migration; social inclusion of migrants in host societies, recognition of discrimination and intolerance practices in host societies with particular attention to the role of gender and to the balance between their cultural integration and the respect for cultural diversity; the promotion of better cities for newcomers; and the creation of research networks and of innovative platforms enabling exchanges between researchers and policy-makers. It does so by cooperating with a wide range of partners, including intergovernmental organizations, civil society groups and universities. Mobility due to environmental causes or post-disaster situations in particular in South-South movements.

A. MIGRATION AND EDUCATION

Migration and education are deeply intertwined processes. Education is a key factor among the forces that drive migration. People may migrate because they have acquired skills that can be used in foreign labour markets, or because they wish to study and acquire training abroad to enhance their professional opportunities, or because of family reunification they need to follow their academic or training preparation or children and youth migrants. Alternatively, underdeveloped training opportunities may undermine people's socio-economic perspectives, thereby encouraging them to seek opportunities abroad.

A central issue in the international mobility of workers regards the recognition of qualifications and of technical training. As the Bologna Process has illustrated in the EU, this is a powerful way of enhancing the quality of education and international cooperation in this field. UNESCO's activities in recognition are centred around its six Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications. These UNESCO conventions are legal agreements between countries agreeing to recognize academic qualifications issued by other countries that have ratified the same agreement.

- African States – Regional Recognition Convention (1981)
- Arab States – Regional Recognition Convention (1978)
- Asia and the Pacific – Regional Recognition Convention
- European Regional Convention – Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997)
- Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional Recognition Convention (1974)
- Mediterranean Region – Regional Recognition Convention (1976)

Regarding recent developments, Member States in the Asia-Pacific are in the process of updating their regional Convention; a meeting is planned for November 2011. In Africa, Member States have similarly expressed their aim to do so and have yet to determine their programme of work in this respect. At the request of Norway, a report was prepared on Migration and Education: Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (2009), which was the summary of an Expert Group Meeting held on 22-23 September 2008 in UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The report provides best practices and policies based on nine country audits and discussed by experts from UNESCO, WHO, IOM, UNCTAD, the Commonwealth Secretariat, OECD and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP). The nine case-study countries were Australia, Canada, China, France, Malaysia, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal, and the United Kingdom.

Another domain of activity at UNESCO regards the mobility of students and the statistical work thereon by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Mobile students are students who have crossed a national border and moved to another country with the objective to study. Three operational definitions are widely used to identify mobile students – (1) by students' country of permanent or usual residence, (2) country of prior education, or (3) country of citizenship. UIS runs annual surveys among Member States to collect data on all levels of education, from preliminary to tertiary. Results are published in the annual *Global Education Digest*. In 2009, the GED focused on higher education and provides evidence surrounding the growing number of mobile students. Since 1975, the number of mobile students has grown by almost 3.5-fold, from 0.8 in 1975 to 2.8 million in 2007. The report provides in-depth statistics on sending countries, host countries, preferred destinations and types of programme, most common fields of study, etc.

B. SKILLED MIGRATION AND DEVELOPPEMENT

A central feature of contemporary migration flows is skilled migration. While this corresponds to the current context of economic globalization, it also raises major concerns for sending countries in terms of brain drain. States that and actual policies that promote it (like EU blue card) invest in education resent their citizens' departure to developed countries and the loss of skills this generates. UNESCO Science Report 2010 provides ample evidence and detailed analysis of the impact of skilled migration on R&D, and on development at large.

The report analyses the trends and developments that have shaped scientific research, innovation and higher education over the past five years, including the impact of the current global economic recession. It depicts an increasingly competitive environment, characterized by intense and multidirectional flows of information, knowledge, personnel and investment. With respect to migration, the report notes that countries are training many more scientists and engineers than before, but that graduates are having trouble finding qualified positions or attractive working conditions at home. As a result, migration of highly qualified researchers, especially but not only from South to North, has become the characteristic feature of the past decade.

Yet, despite voluminous literature on migration, it is almost impossible to draw a systematic, quantitative picture of long-term migration of the highly skilled worldwide. Moreover, not everyone perceives the phenomenon in the same way. Some refer to brain drain, others prefer the term brain strain or brain circulation. Whatever the preferred terminology, several chapters in the report highlight the serious issue that brain drain has become and the barriers that this flow of knowledge out of countries creates for domestic R&D (especially in India, South Asia, Turkey or sub-Saharan Africa).

Data further show that South to North and North to North are dominant directions for migration but that, overall, a much more varied array of destinations is emerging: South Africa, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Malaysia and Jordan, for example, have also become attractive destinations for the highly skilled. In addition, the report outlines how diasporas act as a useful departure point for the design of policies for more effective technology transfer and knowledge spill-overs. This phenomenon motivates countries to elaborate policies to lure highly skilled expatriates back home. This was the case in the Republic of Korea in the past and can be seen in China and elsewhere today. The aim is to encourage the diaspora to use the skills acquired abroad to bring about structural change at home. Moreover, the diaspora may be invited to participate "from a distance", if the prospect of a permanent return home is unlikely.

C. MIGRATION AND GENDER

UNESCO is aiming to make migration of women both more visible and better understood in research and policy-making discussions. Many issues, especially how migrant women fare in terms of their human rights and empowerment, have not fully been addressed. To accompany ongoing work on migration and gender at the international level, which often focuses on economic aspects, UNESCO is taking a human rights approach by exploring migration outcomes for women. It does

so by initiating a dialogue on how women themselves evolve throughout migration, ultimately gaining or losing from the experience in terms of personal security, decision-making power, access to jobs and social services, and other rights-related issues.

UNESCO brings together perspectives of gender specialists, researchers involved with migrant associations, and policy specialists from United Nations agencies in the *Diversities* journal issue on “Female migration outcomes: human rights perspectives” (March 2011). In addition, UNESCO will launch a thematic programme on “women’s rights in post-conflict situations and prevention of violence against women” to support women’s role as agents of progress in post-conflict societies, and to advance the elimination of violence against women, including in the context of migration and forced displacement.

D. MIGRATION AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Climate change is one of the major concerns for the international community. Among its social and human dimensions, its impact on migration is the object of increasing attention from both policy-makers and researchers. Greater resource scarcity, desertification, risks of droughts and floods, and rising sea levels could drive millions of people to migrate. Yet, despite the interest in the links between climate change and migration, the amount of research and the policy development on the issue remain limited.

There are uncertainties surrounding the mechanisms at stake, the number of persons affected and the geographical zones concerned and there is disagreement between those who stress the direct impact of the environment on population flows and those who rather insist on the social, economic and political contexts in which such flows occur. Most importantly, the impact on policy-making remains largely unexplored.

UNESCO has brought together researchers from all over the world to provide a comprehensive overview of the climate change – migration nexus. This will result in a volume providing empirical evidence on the links between climate and migration and bringing together case studies and analyse from different disciplines. It investigates the key policy issues raised by climate change and migration, including states’ policy responses and the views of different institutional actors; critical perspectives on the actual relationship between the environment and (forced) migration; the concepts and notions that are adequate to address this relationship; gender and human rights implications, and finally international law and responsibilities. Results of such research will feed policy-making and help draft sound and effective responses to one of the greatest challenges of our time. UNESCO will publish the first ever comprehensive book on this issue in 2011, in partnership with Cambridge University Press.

To follow up on this report, UNESCO will develop toolkits addressing the relevance and efficiency of resettlement and migration as a disaster risk reduction measure, as well as its articulation with broader disaster risk reduction plans. Case studies will document recent practices and lessons learned on this topic in Africa and Asia/Pacific in order to systematize these experiences and develop a methodology to manage resettlement as an option to reduce the risk of disaster due to climate change. The practical toolkit will help policy-makers prepare and implement resettlement programmes through a wide range of policy orientations and best practices surrounding human rights, cultural issues, governance and the role of stakeholders.

In addition, an extrabudgetary funding proposal has been elaborated (for a requested total of \$650,000), with the purpose of establishing a network of experts to monitor the existing evidence on climate change and migration and to share information. Current evidence on the topic remains scarce, hence the need to promote policy-relevant research. In addition, research capacities in less developed states are underdeveloped, which calls for capacity-building initiatives to improve the ability of societies to understand the challenges they face. The network would gather experts from both natural and social sciences and its participants would be called to work on the social and

human dimensions of climate change, with a special focus on the link between climate change and human movement as one of the main adaptation mechanisms to environmental degradation.

E. MIGRATION AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

In cooperation with the United Nations University, UNESCO has launched a world survey of regional organizations' attitudes towards migration and increased freedom of movement. The project explores the perspectives for agreements of migration governance within regional integration processes. This is largely a new idea as regional integration has long addressed predominantly the free movement of goods and services. Yet, as the example of the EU shows, migration management can gain enormously from a regional perspective. The project will lead to the publication of a world report on regional integration and migration. The volume will contain an overview of the issues at stake with policy recommendations, along with chapters dedicated to the situation in several regions of the world.

F. URBANIZATION: PROMOTING BETTER CITIES FOR NEWCOMERS

The majority of migrants head towards cities, which is both a cause and consequence of the growing urbanization that keeps occurring worldwide. Local governments have to create sustainable environments by balancing cultural diversity and social cohesion with economic development. Although international migration and the resulting growing multiculturalism is becoming an increasingly crucial issue for urban governance, local governments are seldom prepared to implement the ad hoc policies needed to integrate people with different cultural, social and religious traditions into the urban society.

During major United Nations events such as the World Urban Forums, the gap between research results and decision-makers is to be reduced by way of high-level dialogues, training workshops and networking events: in Rio in March 2010, during the World Urban Forum 5, UNESCO promoted at the United Nations level the need to include cultural diversity in our cities in order to build sustainable, equitable and inclusive urban development.

Questions such as the social and spatial integration of newcomers, the cultural diversity and the respect of human rights into urban planning, housing, the public spaces in the city that allow the expression of cultural differences of those migrating and the role of women in promoting cultural urban diversity and in bridging the increasing urban inequalities and poverty, are the core of the cooperation with UNESCO chairs and our international cities associations partners. UNESCO's Field offices like Brasilia, Beijing or New Delhi are as well contributing to give reply to these questions within their respective regional perspectives to assist Member States in anticipating the consequences at local level of the increasing migration flows towards megacities and capital cities where day-to-day living conditions are directly impacted.

II. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

A. PUBLICATIONS

UNESCO regularly publishes high-quality books, reports or journal issues on matters relating to migration. Books include *Migration without Borders* (2007), *Democracy and Human Rights in Multicultural Societies* (2007), *Migration and Human Rights* (2009) and *Migrating Alone* (2010). Forthcoming books will address the relationships between global environmental change and migration, regional migration agreements, and skilled migration. In addition, UNESCO publishes an online journal entitled *Diversities*.

Migration Without Borders Essay on the Free Movement of People (2007)

UNESCO is exploring a scenario of free migration agreements at both the regional level and world level with focus on the ethical, human rights, economic and social dimensions of such an approach. As a background to this policy development, UNESCO published a work on Migration without Borders. Essays on the Free Movement of People (UNESCO/Berghahn), which was widely disseminated and well received with a prestigious award of a leading Canadian-based migration research association and the Italian prize for “Mediterraneo senza Frontiere”. This contributed to putting UNESCO on the map at the international level for innovative policy-oriented research in migration.

To follow up on this publication UNESCO has established a partnership with the United Nations University (UNU) to investigate the opportunities and challenges for the establishment of free movement within regional organizations throughout the world. To a large extent this is a new idea as regional integration has long been mostly thought of as pertaining to free movement of goods and services only. Yet, there is considerable interest in migration agreements in several regional organizations – and hence the need to analyse the obstacles to such agreements and the policy options to bring them forward and better implement them.

Democracy and Human Rights in Multicultural Societies (2007)

By unanimous adoption of the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity, the UNESCO Member States accepted a new ethical approach to respect diversity as a guiding principle for democratic societies. While support for the Declaration remains strong, there is a general awareness that the democratic management of multicultural societies needs rethinking and further development. This volume presents an important contribution to this debate. Democracy and human rights in multicultural societies examines the political governance of cultural diversity, specifically how public policy-making has dealt with the claims for cultural recognition that have increasingly been expressed by ethno-national movements, language groups, religious minorities, indigenous peoples and migrant communities. Its principal aim is to understand, explain and assess public policy responses to ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Adopting interdisciplinary perspectives of comparative social sciences, the contributors address the conditions, forms, and consequences of democratic and human-rights-based governance of multi-ethnic, multilingual and multifaith societies.

Migration and Human Rights, The United Nations Convention on Migrant’s Workers Rights (2009)

UNESCO has been one of the main promoters of the United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, a major international human rights instrument that has been ratified by some 42 States (and by no major Western receiving States). Adopted in 1990 and entered into force in 2003, this treaty is the most comprehensive legal instrument in the field, but suffers from misunderstandings and reluctance coming from Western countries. It is to address these obstacles and promote ratification that UNESCO has launched country studies throughout the world, part of them have been published in a book entitled *Migration and Human Rights. The United Nations Convention on Migrant Workers’ Rights* (UNESCO/Cambridge UP, 2009). UNESCO is widely recognized for its expertise on this Convention, being for example a member of the International Steering Committee for the Campaign for Ratification of the Migrant Rights Convention.

Migrating Alone, Unaccompanied and Separated Children’s Migration to Europe (2010)

The essays that make up this book tackle the question of child migration from legal, sociological and anthropological perspectives, examining the situation in both countries of origin and receiving countries. The planned, forced or spontaneous decision to abandon home and country takes on a new dimension when those involved in the migration adventure are just in their teens. Despite common features and many links with the migration of adults, the independent migration of

children has emerged as a specific phenomenon all over the world. Since the early 1990s, most European countries have notably been destination and/or transit points for such young migrants.

Faced with the migration of unaccompanied and separated children, European national government policies do not always coincide with the legal instruments (national or international) created for the care of children 'in need' regardless of origin or nationality. Child migrants tend to be considered migrants before they are considered children.

Diversities (online journal)

UNESCO publishes an online journal entitled *Diversities*, in cooperation with the Max-Planck Institute for the study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity of Göttingen (Germany), which constitutes a platform for international, interdisciplinary and policy-related social science research in the fields of migration, multiculturalism, and minority rights. Established by UNESCO in 1998, *Diversities* (formerly the *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*) is a scholarly and professional journal that provides a platform for international, interdisciplinary and policy-related social science research in the fields of migration, multicultural policies and human rights. Twenty-four issues have been published so far. It aims at improving the linkages between academic communities in various regions and across different social science disciplines, with an emphasis on the policy-relevance of social science research. Each issue is devoted to a coherent thematic debate on a key issue in the field of migration and multicultural society. Articles published in *Diversities* are refereed in external peer-review. (The journal has established itself as a leading journal in the field with a broad readership through innovative electronic dissemination.)

B. THE MIGRATION MUSEUMS NETWORK

Established in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration in 2006, the Migration Museums Network aims at enhancing the cooperation between migration museums around the world in order to promote a better understanding of the social, cultural and historical role of migration in the countries concerned. It now has 41 members from all continents and serves as a platform to exchange information, initiatives and current expositions.

NGO TESTIMONIES

(Compiled by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee)

During the debate on this theme held by the NGO Committee of the Executive Board (186th session) on 5 May 2011, a number of NGOs described their action in this field. Most of them operate in Europe. Indeed, since the fall of communist regimes after 1989, and owing to the large gap in standard of living within Europe and between it and neighbouring countries, Europe has become the destination of significant east-to-west and south-to-north migratory flows, which have increased during the recent crisis and have considerable social and human consequences.

During an important symposium held in Cluj, Romania, Pax Romana conducted an analysis of the situation, focusing on that country. The emigration of Romanians, often generations-old and primarily seasonal, has been rising constantly over the last 20 years, with Germany, and then mostly Italy and Spain, as destinations. This emigration tripled with the opening of the Schengen zone in 2002. Emigration is essentially rural, and male (70%). While it is a source of income for families, its negative impact on family structures and the many children left behind was rapidly felt. The economic crisis has led to a rise in returns to the country, whether voluntary or forced. However, poor organization and lack of assistance do not help skill transfer benefit the country of return.

Pax Romana also studied the integration of migrants in Germany. Germany has a national integration plan for all those who reside there legally and permanently. The criteria for successful integration are knowledge of the language, economic stability, and knowledge of and compliance

with civic rights and duties. However, this approach to integration is often rejected by public opinion whose prejudice is sustained by a mass media that gives little voice to immigrants. A more positive portrayal of integration in television, film and the press, with emphasis on the role of women, would help to define a new form of “living together”.

In the same spirit, two leading NGOs, Soroptimist International and the International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), are concerned by the situation in Moldova.

Soroptimist International recalls that Moldova, with 4 million inhabitants and the poorest country in Europe, has half a million citizens living abroad. Their regular remittances to the country exceed its GDP. However, this has led to the emergence of a new social category in Moldova – social orphans – 27% of whom have one parent living abroad and 9% have both living abroad. While some of them (12,500) are cared for in specialized institutions, these children are in precarious, often traumatic situations, and at risk of all kinds of abuse. Furthermore, the migration rate of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in Moldova is the highest in Europe. Since 2005, Soroptimist International has been working to protect young women and girls, a particularly vulnerable category, especially after the school-leaving age of 16. The project, involving “life learning” classes, targets four boarding schools for young girls.

BICE is also concerned by the situation in Moldova and the protection of abandoned children: 15% of the victims of sexual trafficking and abuse are children who have been brought up in orphanages or whose parents are migrants (50% towards Russia). The project “Abandoned Children of Moldova” is steered jointly with partner organizations. It aims to reduce the negative impact of pendular migration on abandoned children in five regions of Moldova: an assistance programme has been set up for migrant parents (in France, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States), to help parents and children to deal with their separation and to maintain the bond between parents and the children they left behind. A handbook for the project is available in French and Russian.

ATD Fourth World focuses on the extremely precarious living conditions of undocumented migrants, who often live in abject poverty. In Europe, the organization’s combat is to help the destitute; individuals, families and communities who have been displaced and exiled because of violence, war, and poverty in their countries of origin. The organization also works for the recognition of illegal immigrants (some 4.5 million in Europe), in the name of human dignity as enshrined by European countries, and fundamental rights. It has called for an alliance so that migrants will no longer be considered a threat, but as an asset for destination countries.

The International Federation of Women in Legal Careers (IFWLC) held an Enlarged Council Meeting in Buenos Aires from 8 to 12 November 2010 on migrant women with the following sub-topics: the feminization of migration; violence and migrations; social, economic and cultural rights; and human rights and citizenship. A final declaration was adopted, with recommendations on the following main points:

- The vulnerability of migrant women, victims of trafficking, abuse and exploitation, that are often reinforced by restrictive State policies;
- The need for protection and dignity in destination countries, and thus a need for easier access to citizenship, provided they respect the laws and traditions of the host country;
- The link between migration and the fight against poverty;
- The importance of schooling for the integration of migrant populations.