

# High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development

Philip Martin,\* Susan Martin\*\* and Sarah Cross\*\*

## INTRODUCTION

The recent United Nations (UN) High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development was hailed as a historical confirmation of “the clear linkage between migration and development and the various opportunities and challenges concerning this issue, [and] a platform to move forward; and essentially mobilize the political will and build effective partnerships to realize the potential migrants can have in developing both countries of origin and destination whilst safeguarding their rights” (UN, 2006a). The High-level Dialogue (HLD), held by the General Assembly on 14-15 September 2006 in New York, brought together leaders of more than 130 countries to deliver statements in plenary sessions and participate in roundtable discussions. While the HLD produced broad consensus that the dialogue should continue, there was a similarly broad agreement that moving beyond talk to mutual action was premature.

The Secretary-General, in a report prepared in advance of the HLD, had proposed the establishment of a Global Consultation mechanism that would permit states to meet regularly to discuss migration issues. Belgium’s offer to hold the first Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2007 was widely endorsed by the participating states at the HLD. The Forum, to be hosted by countries, is designed to discuss best practices to maximize the development benefits of

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\* Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California at Davis, USA.

\*\* Institute for the Study of International Migration, Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA

moving people over national borders, sending home remittances, and returning or staying abroad but forging additional trade and investment links to their countries of origin. Its goal is to “make new policy ideas more widely known, add value to existing regional consultations, and encourage an integrated approach to migration and development at both the national and international levels” (UN News Centre, 2006).

While the assembled states expressed support for the proposed Forum, they avoided discussion of any mechanism to follow up dialogue with concrete action. Further, they offered different visions of the structure of such a dialogue, disagreeing over whether it should be informal and voluntary or be incorporated into the UN system. This outcome reflected the tension between, on the one hand, states’ genuine desire to move forward on these issues, but on the other, a profound reluctance to make new binding international commitments on migration.

This paper discusses the context in which the HLD was convened, and then identifies the major themes discussed at the HLD, highlighting areas of consensus and differences among states. We then review the positions of states with regard to follow-up to the HLD, and end with an assessment of the HLD’s achievements and challenges.

## EARLIER EFFORTS AT INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The 2006 HLD was the culmination of a series of regional and international efforts to increase cooperation in addressing migration and development. The UN had last dealt with these issues together in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, which produced a 20-year Plan of Action. The emphasis in Cairo was on how developing countries could accelerate development to make emigration unnecessary, with the cooperation of industrial countries via “financial assistance, reassessment of commercial and tariff relations, increased access to world markets and stepped-up efforts ... to create a domestic framework for sustainable economic growth with an emphasis on job creation” (UN, 1994).

Following the ICPD, there was a split among states regarding the benefits or value of convening a conference on international migration and development, with many reluctant to support global discussions of migration. As an issue that almost defines sovereignty – who enters and remains on a state’s territory – international migration tends to inspire protection of national prerogatives and unilateral action.

In 1997, after consulting with member governments about the desirability of an international conference on migration, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan found insufficient consensus to plan such a meeting, concluding that it would be more expedient to pursue regional or subregional discussions rather than global ones.

Despite states' ongoing hesitations, global discussions of international migration issues ultimately got underway. The Berne Initiative, launched by the Swiss government in 2001, was "a states-owned consultative process with the goal of obtaining better management of migration at the regional and global level through cooperation between states" (IOM/Swiss Federal Office for Migration, 2004). Through regional and international consultations, the Berne Initiative developed an International Agenda for Migration Management, including "common understandings for the management of international migration" and "Effective Practices for a Planned, Balanced, and Comprehensive Approach to Management of Migration" (IOM/Swiss Federal Office for Migration, 2004).

The Berne Initiative was followed by the Global Commission for International Migration (GCIM). Organized at the request of the UN Secretary-General and with the financial support of Switzerland and Sweden, it was mandated to "provide the framework of a coherent, comprehensive and global response to the issue of international migration" (GCIM, 2005). The Commission brought together 19 members from source, transit, and destination countries. All experienced leaders in their own countries and internationally, the Commissioners engaged in a consensus-building initiative, holding regional consultations, engaging the expertise of researchers, consulting with the governments that formed a core group of supporters, and wrestling with many difficult issues that had no easy or ready solutions.

The Commission extolled the benefits of bilateral and regional cooperation before getting into the thornier issues of international cooperation. The Commission was launched at least partially to help the Secretary-General determine what forms of international cooperation made most sense and what role the UN should play in the migration arena. In the long term, the Commission determined, a fundamental overhaul would be required to bring together the disparate migration-related functions of the UN into a single organization. The Commission set out various options for this single organization, but did not make recommendations on its mandate, size, or shape.

For the short term, GCIM recommended enhanced coordination among the existing UN international organizations with migration responsibilities, via an Inter-agency Global Migration Facility that would coordinate policy planning and analysis in areas that cross the mandates of several institutions. This recommendation led to the expanded Global Migration Group.

## THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE AND THE DEBATE THAT TOOK PLACE

It is in this context that discussion got underway regarding the HLD, which had been proposed before Berne and the GCIM but deferred until the GCIM reported. The HLD formally arose from General Assembly resolution 58/208 in December 2003, which agreed to devote a high-level dialogue to international migration and development in 2006. In 2005, the Secretary-General reported on the organizational details of the HLD to the General Assembly, which then adopted resolution 60/227 to convene the HLD on 14-15 September 2006 in New York. The resolution directed the HLD to explore the “overall theme of the multi-dimensional aspects of international migration and development in order to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize its development benefits and minimize its negative impacts” (UN, 2006b).

The tone for the HLD shifted subtly but markedly from the ICPD. Whereas the migration section of the Cairo Plan of Action began with the assertion that all governments “should seek to make the option of remaining in one’s country viable for all people” (UN, 1994), the HLD preparations recognized the reality of international migration and sought to explore the ways in which it might speed up development.

The General Assembly also settled on the structure of the HLD, including four plenary meetings for statements by leaders of participating states, and four interactive roundtables. To assist in the preparation of the HLD, Peter Sutherland was appointed in January 2006 as Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN on International Migration and Development. He emphasized the need for “a non-adversarial, non-finger-pointing dialogue where you [source and destination countries] can exchange best practices, learn how best to deal with the issues” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2006).

In anticipation of the HLD, there were several preparatory events around the world during 2006, including the July “Informal Interactive Hearings with NGOs, Civil Society, and the Private Sector” in New York; the June and July “Panel Discussions on International Migration and Development” in New York and Geneva, respectively; the June “International Symposium on International Migration and Development” in Turin; the April Thirty-Ninth Session of the Commission on Population and Development in New York; and the May “Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities” in Beirut, Lebanon.

At the HLD, four roundtables were organized around the following themes: the effects of international migration on economic and social development;

measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants and to prevent and combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons; multidimensional aspects of international migration and development, including remittances; and promoting partnerships and capacity-building and the sharing of best practices at all levels, including the bilateral and regional levels, for the benefit of countries and migrants alike. Participants included the high-level state representatives, officials from UN agencies and programmes, the Executive Secretaries of two regional commissions, the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and representatives of various non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, and the private sector.

While the issues covered in the roundtable discussions were at the heart of the HLD, the statements delivered during the plenary sessions often went well beyond the designated roundtable topics. The statements of each delegate reflected the particular concerns of individual states and often provide useful insights into national policies. Thus, during the plenary meetings, perspectives of states became discernible through the topics they chose to address (or not address), the weight they placed on the various issues, and the ways in which they framed their concerns. We believe there is considerably more agreement than disagreement among states on substantive issues, but they differ significantly in deciding on the process of promoting cooperation. This section will explore the varying perspectives articulated during the roundtables and plenary sessions with regard to the major substantive themes.

### **Understanding the causes of migration**

There is general consensus that, as described in the European Union (EU) statement, “With globalization and significant demographic change we are facing a new era of international mobility”<sup>1</sup>, states agreed that the age-old “need to search for livelihood and security” amidst persisting disparities between rich and poor nations has escalated the movement of people over national borders. A large number of participants recognized the importance of addressing the root causes of migration, including poverty; underdevelopment; good governance; and access to health, education, and employment.

Most countries acknowledged that migration is also increasing because, in the words of the Australian representative, “knowledge of opportunities around the world has increased and improved means of transport have given people the ability to move long distances at relatively low costs”. They emphasized the relationship between migration and development, highlighting the importance of tackling both simultaneously. There was much discussion of the reasons for expanded migration, and therefore what factors will prove important in reducing irregular migration and improving legal frameworks for managing migration.

A large number of countries, primarily in the developing world, cited the widening gap between wealthy and poor countries as a major cause of migration. As the People's Republic of China (hereinafter China) asserted: "The cause of migration lies in unbalanced economic and social development of different countries. ... Therefore, to seek a lasting solution, it is necessary to gradually narrow the gap between the rich and poor countries, and realize common economic development and comprehensive social justice".

In discussing South-North migration, some source countries pointed to "pull factors", such as the demand for cheap labour, that encourage labour migration. A few source countries suggested that a global order that privileges wealthy states (the Iranian representative cited, for example, "inequalities in the international trading system") further fuels migration.

Many destination countries, primarily in Europe, expressed their commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). By reducing poverty, they believe, people will be able to migrate out of choice, and irregular migration will be reduced. While recognizing that disparities between developed and developing nations are a major impetus for migration, destination countries also pointed to political root causes of migration, such as the absence of democracy, human rights, and good governance. They asserted that governments have a responsibility to create domestic conditions that enable their citizens to thrive at home, rendering migration a matter of choice.

Although forced migration and its causes were outside the designated purview of the HLD, a number of states pointed to the conditions that give rise to involuntary migration. The Secretary-General's report had noted: "Because the report focuses mainly on the migration and development nexus it does not cover some important aspects of the movement of people. In particular, it does not discuss forced migration or issues related to the protection of asylum seekers or refugees" (UN, 2006c). Nonetheless states raised the issue of forced migration, as it often affects development as well as protection concerns. As the representative from Mozambique noted, many movements of people today are the result of "natural disasters, armed conflicts, political instability, and vulnerability of national borders". Several delegates also took the opportunity to highlight current problems they perceive to be causing forced migration within (in the case of internal displacement), from, or into their respective countries, including foreign occupation, "ethnic cleansing", "rebel war", and border disputes.

### **The migration-development nexus**

In two roundtables, participants explored the migration-development nexus, highlighting the "substantial positive impacts of international migration on social and

economic development, while noting certain negative impacts as well” (UN, 2006d). In this regard, participants “called on countries of origin to take a more proactive approach to enhancing the development impact of migrants’ contributions and savings” (UN, 2006e). Collaboration with civil society and the private sector in this endeavour was encouraged.

In plenary statements, states generally agreed that well-managed migration could be a positive force for development. In particular, they stressed the potential of co-development, that is, the cooperation between receiving and source states to improve the economic and social conditions in both places, especially by enlisting migrant communities in development efforts. With proper national policies and active engagement of the diaspora, migration could be an engine for development. Participants discussed the numerous ways in which this might occur.

Remittances, estimated at US\$232 billion in 2005,<sup>2</sup> were a major focus of discussions in this area. Rapidly increasing remittances inspired many states suggest that remittances create a win-win-win situation for migrants and countries of origin and destination and that it is important to find ways to maximize the developmental impact of remittances.

A large number countries, both source and destination, called for efforts to make the transfer of remittances cheaper, faster, and more reliable. Many noted their own progress, such as through working with banking or other financial institutions to improve the access of migrants and their families to banking services and to reduce the cost of wire transfers. In order to maximize the developmental impact of remittances, many countries of origin also recognized, as the Albanian delegate declared, that because “sound policies will stimulate remittances and channel them into productive investments”, it is necessary to “provid[e] facilities for investment...and shorten the procedures for establishment of private enterprises”.

Because remittances go to migrants’ families and are used primarily for consumption, rather than investment, many states stressed that such funds are private and therefore should not be seen as a substitute for official development assistance. Some countries, primarily in the North, added that remittances are “not substitutes for national development efforts”, and that, in the words of the US representative, they “will have a greater overall impact on development in countries of origin when those countries undertake economic and social reforms that create an environment conducive for asset building, entrepreneurship, and investment”. At the same time, many countries, such as those of the Group of 77 and China, call for continued “investment, trade, foreign aid, and debt relief” to bolster the development impact of remittances.

Many source countries pointed out that remittances would not offset losses from brain drain. As the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) representative observed, “the *total losses* due to skilled emigration outweigh the recorded remittances for the Caribbean Region on average, and for almost all the individual Caribbean countries”. This reference to the problem of brain drain was echoed by many states, particularly with regard to the loss of professionals in the health and education sector. A number of destination countries acknowledged the brain drain problem and highlighted the importance of trying to minimize its negative impacts through “more ethical and disciplined recruitment policies”, as the EU representative urged. Some states pointed to their efforts to help countries retain needed professionals: “A priority of the Irish government aid programme is to support our partner countries to improve management and working conditions of health workers so that they are encouraged to continue working in their own countries”.

While many countries dwelled on the negative impacts of brain drain, several also highlighted initiatives underway to promote “brain gain”. Source and destination countries agreed that this could be achieved by engaging migrants in development through improved diaspora relations, policies to encourage return or circular migration, and the transfer of skills and knowledge to countries of origin.

Source countries highlighted the importance of their diasporas, and many, like the Albanian representative, pointed to progress in their “efforts in creating the necessary conditions and incentive structure for the engagement of diaspora in the country’s development”. Many agreed that because the temporary return of migrants to their countries of origin can provide brain gain and stimulate development, it is important, as the Mexican representative urged, to “develop new schemes that allow for the mobility and circularity of people”.

To maximize further the developmental benefits of migration, some countries called for increased portability of pensions. In a similar vein, there was a call for destination countries to encourage the return and reintegration of migrants, as the representative of the Philippines urged, “by helping the sending country who absorbs all the burden of providing for its elderly and previously productive nationals”.

In order to ensure that migration and development are addressed jointly, numerous countries called for the further integration of migration policies into national poverty-reduction strategies. Noting, as the British delegate did, that “donors are more likely to get behind countries’ efforts to manage migration effectively if it appears in national strategies”, governments urged increased coordination of such policies and pointed to successful examples.



## Addressing irregular migration, including human trafficking

Many countries expressed concern about the rise of irregular migration, often calling for more holistic approaches that target the root causes of unauthorized migration. Some of the differences between states were visible in this discussion. Destination countries highlighted border control, security, regulating flows and return policy issues, while source countries raised the issue of irregular or “illegal” migration primarily in the context of trafficking (or other transnational crimes). Many source countries objected to “unreasonable” border control policies.

As the Belgian representative asserted, “we need to display more efforts for the dissuasion of illegal migration by spreading objective information and increased awareness as to the risks of human trafficking that are inherent to irregular migration. The dissuasion also needs to take place by means of increased control of the borders, by the negotiation of a readmission agreement, and by the fight against trafficking of human beings”. The delegate from the Russian Federation, another receiving country, underscored, “We regard illegal migration as a threat to our national security”.

Several states called for more legal channels into destination countries, so as to diminish recourse to irregular migration, or as the Chinese representative put it, to “adhere to the principle of ‘opening up legal channels and blocking illegal tunnels’”. Destination countries, such as the United States, articulated the priority of promoting legal, orderly, and humane migration”, but also acknowledged the importance, in the words of the Italian delegate, of “revising migration control policies so as to safeguard the dignity of migrants”. Many states identified recent or pending domestic legislation to address migration, both regular and irregular.

Some delegates from source countries requested assistance from the international community to help countries in transition, as the representative of Belarus put it, “implement on their own programmes aimed at regulating migration processes, creating a national shelter system and confronting illegal migration”. In addition, a number of statements, particularly those by source countries, called for mechanisms to regularize migrants in the countries of destination. Many argued that migrants should be regularized, rather than criminalized.

Several states took the opportunity to object to what they described as policies that criminalize migrants. In one of the more forceful arguments against such policies, the Brazilian representative declared: “Restrictive immigration policies have proven ineffective in containing these migratory flows. ...Electronic and

biometric means of identification are devised in several countries, coupled to rigorous visa interviews, mandatory information checks, and the establishment of shared immigrant rejection databases. Yet, none of these measures has yielded satisfactory results". These sentiments were echoed by the Cuban representative, who asserted that the "flood will not be stopped by criminalizing migration, building up massive walls at the borders or creating administrative or even military barriers".

With regard to trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, roundtable participants agreed that international cooperation and coordination were essential to confront the challenge. They noted that while trafficking and smuggling were crimes, migration itself was not, and should therefore not be criminalized. The summary of the roundtable went on to note, "Some delegates argued that restrictive migration policies were at the root of increased irregular migration and that they made people more vulnerable to fall prey of trafficking" (UN, 2006f).

Most countries addressed trafficking at least briefly in their plenary sessions, and a number dwelled on it at great length. There was general consensus on the urgency of dealing with trafficking, the heightened vulnerability of women and children, the need to protect victims of trafficking, and the desirability of prosecuting the perpetrators. Many states affirmed the importance of the international legal instruments that deal with trafficking, and pointed to their ratification of such instruments. While many states identified the particular need to protect women and children, a number did not address these vulnerable migrants explicitly.

Participants highlighted the need for international cooperation to fight trafficking. As the Albanian representative noted, "International cooperation is essential for combating trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants. As a transnational phenomenon, it cannot be dealt by one country only". A number of states highlighted the national initiatives they (often with the help of IOM) have undertaken, such as the implementation of national action plans, the provision of hotlines and shelters for victims, and the adoption of bilateral and regional agreements.

Furthermore, there was widespread concern expressed for women and children. As the Group of 77 and China urged, "we must be sensitive to the circumstances and experiences of female migrants who tend to be disadvantaged in the migration experience. We must therefore adopt measures to reduce the vulnerability, exploitation and abuse of female migrants".

## Migrant rights

The second roundtable tackled the issue of human rights of migrants, beginning with recognition that migrants were first and foremost human beings possessing fundamental rights. “Human rights should be considered part of the necessary under-girding linking international migration to development since, as delegates stressed, only when the human rights of migrants were recognized and safeguarded could the positive contributions of migrants to countries of origin and destination be fully realized” (UN, 2006f). All states had the obligation to protect the rights of all migrants, regardless of status, participants agreed. There should be particular concern for migrants more vulnerable to exploitation, such as women and children. In addition, states addressed the crucial role of social, economic, and cultural rights in the successful integration of migrants in receiving countries, pointing out that governments had the obligation to oppose discrimination and xenophobia and to promote tolerance. Toward that end, roundtable participants urged governments to ratify and implement relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Conventions that provide protection for human rights, including the Migrant Workers Convention.

Plenary statements acknowledged that migrants are human beings endowed with inviolable rights that all Governments are obligated to protect. While most countries expressed at least passing concern for migrant rights, a division emerged between source and destination countries in emphasis, with source countries more frequently and more forcefully asserting the sanctity of migrant rights than their receiving counterparts. A number of source countries listed human rights as a top priority of migration policy, and some argued that concern for human rights should trump state sovereignty. A sizeable number of states, source and destination, made little or no mention of rights at all. Some countries with questionable human rights records themselves made quite forceful claims that countries hosting their migrants should respect human rights.

By and large, the destination countries that addressed migrant rights did so by affirming their long-standing commitments to human rights. “The respect for human and labour rights of migrants is essential. The EU instruments are in this regard clear and unequivocal”, said the EU delegate. Many pointed to their ratification of the major international human rights instruments.

A few source countries urged increased ratification of the Migrant Rights Convention. One such appeal came from the Turkish representative, who reported, “We are not happy to see that except few countries, many migration receiving states have not yet ratified ‘The UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families’”.

Several countries expressed concern about potential discrimination against migrants and called for equal protection of migrant rights by destination countries. Source countries in particular, like Azerbaijan, called attention to the “urgent issue [of] the provision of the rights of migrants. We...are deeply concerned at recently increased facts of racism and xenophobia towards migrants”. Moreover, several took the opportunity to highlight the existing discrimination and denial of rights facing migrants in destination countries. In the words of the representative from Turkey, “In many parts of the world immigrant populations are experiencing irksome difficulties in accessing education, housing, and job opportunities. Unbearable discriminations, racism, and cultural discrimination are becoming a major problem”. The Nigerian delegate offered a similar perspective, noting that his country was “concerned with the degrading treatment of migrants, in particular, the vulnerable groups, and calls on states to fulfil their human rights and labour obligations to migrants”.

Some destination countries echoed the importance of preventing discrimination, xenophobia, and exploitation in host societies. Expressed by destination countries, however, this sentiment was usually framed in the affirmative, confirming commitment to equality. For example, the EU statement declares, “Labour migration policies need to be supported by measures of integration including equal treatment and the prohibition of discrimination of any kind including social and economic rights, in order to prevent abusive practices and to promote decent and productive work for all migrants”.

### **Migrant integration**

Many countries recognized the myriad contributions migrants make to their host societies and the important role played by civil society and the private sector in facilitating integration. Moreover, there was agreement on the overall desirability of facilitating integration. In the words of the Australian delegate, “Well designed migration policies that include post arrival support for individual migrants, including integration and citizenship for permanent migrants, will greatly contribute to a positive experience for individual migrants through respect, self-sufficiency, and participation in society”.

In some cases, integration was a major theme of the statement, but most states either mentioned it only briefly or not at all. The absence of any mention of integration was notable for some countries that dedicated much of their discussion to their large diasporas abroad, such as India, or to the unprecedented numbers of migrants within their territories, such as the Russian Federation.

Destination countries that addressed the issue of integration usually did so by highlighting their efforts to integrate migrants effectively and to provide equal

treatment. They recognized that a multicultural society can pose great social challenges, and generally expressed a desire to enable migrants to participate fully in their societies. In some cases, countries identified obstacles to successful integration, such as the fears that migrants evoke in host populations. As the Belgian representative observed, “These irregular migratory movements sometimes create fears in the destination countries, with regard to disfunctioning of the job market, but also with regard to the respect, by the migrants, for the political and societal values that we consider being fundamental”. A handful of countries, primarily destination, emphasized that migration is a two-way street, pointing to the responsibilities – as well as the rights – of new residents. As the Holy See asserted, “Migrants should respect the cultural and religious identities of the host nations and the rights and duties constituted by citizenship, and be encouraged to integrate socially as well as contribute economically in their receiving countries”.

Relatively few source countries emphasized migrant integration, although some appealed to destination countries to undertake necessary measures to promote integration. A few expressed criticism of destination countries’ integration policies, as when the Turkish delegate objected to “forced assimilation” over “humane integration”, disrespecting cultural diversity and fuelling intolerance. Though not necessarily addressing integration specifically, a number of states, including those of the Group of 77 and China, urged governments to “acknowledge the very important contribution made by migrants to the development of countries of destination”, be it economic, social, or cultural.

A few destination countries with temporary worker programmes, especially Gulf States, stressed the importance of the migrants’ eventual return home. The representative of the United Arab Emirates argued:

...to protect the special particularity of the Emirate society in the face of cultural and social effect resulting from values and norms brought in by expatriate labour, which could influence...the social fabric of the society and the demographic constitution of the country, besides other sensitive issues, the state of the UAE has put a set of laws and regulations ensuring that guest workers in the country are temporary, not permanent immigrants; they do not leave their countries to immigrate and live permanently in the UAE, but come according to temporary work contracts to perform specific jobs, after which they return home.

### **Enhancing governance: coherence, capacity, and cooperation**

A wide range of countries agreed on the importance of incorporating coherent policies, capacity-building, and inter-state cooperation (bilateral, regional, or

global) into the effort to address international migration. The importance of the three areas of governance was summed up well by the representative of Cyprus:

Through international cooperation and coordination of our policies we can maximize the beneficial effects of international migration to development and minimize the negative ones. We need, however, to build capacity in both countries of origin and destination in order to formulate coherent migration policies, in an integrated and a holistic way. Cooperation in this area is essential, not only between governments, but also with non-government actors, such as the civil society, the private sector and international organizations.

A number of states echoed the need for greater coherence both within and between states regarding migration policies, and linking migration policies with related policies (such as economic/developmental, social, employment/labour, health, and security). They further highlighted the importance of capacity-building in countries of origin to help those governments formulate and implement migration policies. Some countries, particularly in the South, pointed to progress in their national capacity-building efforts, often assisted by IOM, while others appealed to the international community for more support in this endeavour.

Many statements acknowledged that the transnational nature of migration required transnational coordination. But while virtually all states agreed that countries need to work together in order to achieve positive outcomes in migration, they differed somewhat in the value they ascribed to bilateral, regional, and international cooperation. A number of countries, particularly the United States and Australia, attached more significance to regional cooperation, with many, including Iran, Mozambique, and the Dominican Republic, highlighting their successful participation in regional cooperative schemes. Some countries, such as Albania and Greece, highlighted the benefits of particular bilateral agreements, but the general tone of source countries was to encourage more international cooperation, especially in fighting trafficking, facilitating remittances, and combating brain drain. They urged more international cooperation, for, as the Mexican representative asserted, “No country can address migration alone”.

While the discussions regarding coherence, capacity-building, and cooperation generally yielded consensus, there was an occasional accusatory note. The representative of the Russian Federation, for example, declared, “Experience shows that the countries of origin of migrants often resort to a passive stand, shifting the responsibility for their citizens on to the receiving host-countries and benefiting from their activities. We call on all the participants of this process to approach this cooperation in a more responsible manner in the spirit of equal burden sharing and partnership”. Some source countries noted a “lack of will in

the cooperation for development” of destination countries, with the Cuban representative, for example, arguing that “today’s facts put into question the existence of that will by the industrialized world”.

## FOLLOW-UP TO THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

The debate that took place during the HLD reveals that, by and large, countries share similar views on the challenges posed by and potential strategies to address international migration and development. Significant differences emerged, however, on the more procedural issues – that is, how to move the debate forward. The disagreement manifested itself in what might be considered the organizational details, such as whether the forum would be conducted within or outside of the UN, who should be involved, how much to build on existing (primarily regional) efforts, and whether and how to link the forum to other migration-related entities and programmes. These differences did not appear to fall along any major extant fault lines, including any North-South divide.

Most states supported continuing dialogue at the international level, but they differed in their views of the appropriate venue and nature of the dialogue. One group emphasized the need for, in the words of the Irish representative: “the establishment of ... a forum which would be non-bureaucratic, open-ended, state owned, consultative and non-decision making and would provide a framework for continued dialogue on challenges which face all our societies in the areas of migration and development”. Another group favoured continuing the dialogue at the global level, but preferred that it be conducted more formally, within the UN. Countries represented by the Group of 77 and China took this position, noting that the dialogue “is too important not to have it within the United Nations”.

There was some opposition to any forum, whether independent or within the UN system, expressed most forcefully by two major destination countries: the United States and Australia. Their statements warned of duplication of efforts and expressed a preference for follow-up at the regional level. According to the US delegate: “We are not interested in grand and elaborate global dialogues simply because we have seen the inherent weakness that results from their size and scope. They lumber under the great weight of rounds and rounds of conversation, far removed from immediate problems and realistic solutions”.

While countries that explicitly opposed the forum happened to be destination countries, their rejection did not constitute a source-destination divide, insofar as most of the countries of the EU favoured establishing a global forum. Likewise,

source countries were divided over the issue of whether the dialogue should take place within or outside of the UN.

In addition to these positions, a large number of states were noncommittal, expressing general support for continued international dialogue and cooperation, but making no specific mention of the proposed forum. New Zealand, for example, urged caution, voicing concern over the potential duplication of efforts and insisting that any new forum add value to existing efforts. In outlining their preferred follow-up, several states underscored the vital role potentially played by IOM and the Global Migration Group in future coordination of efforts. A number of statements included an appeal similar to that of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), which encouraged an “inclusive approach to migration, including the involvement of non-state actors (NGOs, business, trade unions and civil society)”.

Thus, as the Secretary-General concluded, “Clearly, there is no consensus on making international migration the subject of formal, norm-setting negotiations. There is little appetite for any norm-setting intergovernmental commission on migration” (UN, 2006g).

## CONCLUSION

The HLD provided an important opportunity for states to identify ways to maximize the developmental benefits of international migration and to outline their preferred approach to inter-state consultation. The dialogue showed that there is a broad international consensus that migration is a critical element of globalization and demands concerted international attention and coordination. The HLD failed to capitalize fully on the moment, however, by laying out the means for follow-up *action*, even in the areas of greatest consensus, such as reducing the costs of remittances. While most states did favour further dialogue, few expressed interest in taking action and there were few practical suggestions on how to implement the plans discussed. The assembled states effectively punted when it came to taking steps toward implementing any concrete, practical measures to address international migration and development.

This leaves the role of the UN in migration unclear. A majority of states are not prepared to see a more activist role for the UN, relying instead on the Global Migration Group to better coordinate activities within the UN and between the UN and other agencies. IOM’s future role and relationship to the UN also remains undefined. IOM’s constitution gives it a role to provide a forum to states as well as international and other organizations for the exchange of views and



experiences, and the promotion of cooperation and coordination of efforts on international migration issues, including studies on such issues in order to develop practical solutions. In respect to this last function, it has launched a policy dialogue with governments on policy issues. Whether the IOM dialogue and the Global Forum will play complementary or competitive roles is far from clear.

The new Global Forum will hold a dialogue in Belgium in 2007. Its future is still in doubt, but given states' apparent reluctance for real action at the global level, Global Forums per se are unlikely to meet expectations raised through protracted deliberation.

## NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are taken from statements presented at the plenary sessions. For more information on the plenary statements, see <http://www.un.org/migration/statements.html>.
2. The ground work for the discussion of remittances was laid by the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects 2006 report ([www.worldbank.org/prospects/gep2006](http://www.worldbank.org/prospects/gep2006)), which urged more guestworker programmes to benefit migrants and developing countries: "Managed migration programmes, including temporary work visas for low-skilled migrants in industrial countries, could help alleviate problems associated with a large stock of irregular migrants, and allow increased movement of temporary workers". GEP 2006 estimated global remittances at US\$232 billion in 2005, including US\$167 billion to developing countries (one-third of the remittances to developing countries may have come from migrants in other developing countries, as from Indonesians in Malaysia). Remittance flows via informal channels are believed to add at least 50 per cent to recorded flows, an additional US\$84 billion in 2005, bringing the total to US\$251 billion in a year when Official Development Assistance was about US\$106 billion. India received the most remittances, US\$21.7 billion; followed by China, US\$21.3 billion; Mexico, US\$18.1 billion; France, US\$12.7 billion; and the Philippines, US\$11.6 billion, including the US\$8.5 billion from OFWs and US\$3.1 billion from Filipinos settled abroad.

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