



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

The High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) Key IOM messages

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The High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) which will take place in the United Nations General Assembly on 14 and 15 September 2006 has the potential to be a watershed in the global discussion on migration.

This paper sets out some key messages and suggests concrete outcomes.

Migration needs to be better integrated into development policy and planning. There is growing recognition that migration impact analyses should figure in development project planning – akin to the now universally accepted and required environmental impact statements. But inadequate research and patchy data – often not even sex-disaggregated – inhibit movement from theory to action. The HLD should mandate further research. At the national level, the HLD should call for migration to be incorporated as a required element in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and integrated into discussion around the Millennium Development Goals.

Countries need migration policies and the internal capacity to develop them. Despite progress over the past decade, it is striking how many countries do not have comprehensive migration policies or the mechanisms to develop them (“coherence”). The HLD should result in recognition/acceptance of the cross cutting nature of migration and should recommend creation of inter-ministerial working groups as a “good practice”. It should encourage international organizations individually to continue supporting governmental capacity building. It should call upon the Global Migration Group to come up with collective/complementary capacity building initiatives where these are warranted.

The business community needs to be drawn into the migration debate. Whether in source countries or receiving countries, the business community plays a critical role in the economics of migration – as both a provider and a consumer of goods and services. Yet it has usually been absent from the table, especially at the international level. The HLD should explicitly recommend real partnership between governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private business sector and civil society. Concretely, the HLD could recommend that this begin at the regional level, through Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs), which might have more flexibility to explore initiatives and different models. The HLD could also take note of IOM’s own Business Advisory Board (BAB) as a “good practice” in this field.

Better mechanisms are needed to match supply and demand of labor globally. The labor market is increasingly global. Migration has become a vital element in improving the world’s stock of human capital – thanks to temporary labor migration schemes and circular

migration patterns, but also via “virtual” transfer of skills by diasporas. Mechanisms to measure and match supply and demand in the global labor market, to provide frameworks for humane, safe and orderly flows to meet the needs, and to maximize the development potential of migration, have not kept pace with these developments. For female labour migrants in particular, better protection from abuse and trafficking could also come through the introduction of regulated and more flexible migration schemes; the absence of such schemes often means that the only way to migrate is through irregular channels, making women even more vulnerable. The HLD should specifically recognize these new realities in its outcome document. It should also call upon governments, relevant intergovernmental bodies, employers and unions to come together and forge a new partnership to deal with this “unfinished business of globalization,” perhaps endorsing a mechanism through which this could be achieved.

The development potential of diasporas needs to be explored and enhanced. There is growing focus on the potential of diasporas to be key motors of development – and not only through their remittances, as enormous and crucial as these have become in many parts of the world. The HLD must continue to call for the cost of remittances to be reduced. But it must go beyond that to encourage better understanding on the one hand of how national policies affect diasporas’ relations with their home country, and on the other hand, what motivates diasporas to invest time or money back home. To this end, the HLD should call upon relevant international organizations to study these issues and to make the findings widely available.

Regional consultations are a key tool for international understanding and action. Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) are widely recognized to have been a crucial element in fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and, increasingly, concerted action in response to shared migration challenges over the past decade or so. While their informality and their specificity are understood and accepted as contributing to their success in the sensitive field of migration, more could be done to achieve cross-fertilization and to benefit from good practice and lessons learned. The HLD should explicitly recognize the value of the RCPs and encourage them to consider how they might better help each other and those interested in following their example, suitably adapted to regional circumstances. IOM is already developing a section of its Web site as a “one-stop shop” resource for public information about RCPs and could also support greater interaction among existing RCPs.

Better understanding of migration law will benefit States and migrants alike. In 2004, IOM began the task of compiling and disseminating information about the vast body of existing international migration law. We have recently launched our data base (see www.iml.iom.int/section.do) and training sessions have begun. The HLD should encourage continuation of these efforts, calling upon the donor community to support them and all interested states, as well as RCPs, to take advantage of them in the context of development of their migration management capacities. Among other things, this would contribute to improving both knowledge and understanding about the rights of migrants – and better treatment of migrants as a result.

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