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MIGRATION AND GOVERNANCE
Moving beyond the security obsession

“Conscious that the management of migratory flows cannot be achieved through control measures only, but also require a concerted action on the root causes of migration, in particular through the implementation of development projects in Africa”

Euro-African Partnership for Migration and Development
Rabat Declaration, July 2006

Context

Migration is not a new phenomenon. However, its expanding scale in the context of globalisation raises concerns and fears. Particularly from Africa, important migration flows are taking place towards developed economies. Main push factors are poor socio-economic and/or governance conditions in many countries. Migration takes many forms, including a continuing brain drain of African cadres, thus further depriving Africa from the human resource base it needs for its development. The response of developed economies, including Europe, to the new migration patterns, has so far tended to be largely built on security imperatives. This, in turn, has led to reinforcing the image of Europe as a fortress. Yet awareness is growing that a more comprehensive approach is required to properly address international migration flows.

Main issues and challenges

International migration is a very complex, multi-faceted issue. Migration is mainly a response to differences that encourage individuals to cross national borders to take advantage of higher incomes and jobs. Individuals have ever more incentives to cross national borders for economic betterment. ‘Sending countries’ have begun to recognize the advantages of remittances and Diaspora-led development. ‘Receiving countries’ have often developed layered policies, welcoming some highly skilled migrants while erecting higher barriers to unskilled migrants who want to settle.

Beyond these economic responses, the EU has been increasingly prioritising a ‘security-approach’ to tackling migration flows, making use of “carrots and sticks”¹. This approach is also visible in ACP-EU cooperation, more particularly in Article 13 of the Cotonou Agreement, according to which migration issues are to be “the subject of in-depth dialogue in the framework of the ACP-EU partnership”. Its inclusion was the result of pressing recommendations from some EU member States which sought to improve the effectiveness of their immigration policies through the use of external relations instruments. The recent EC Communication on governance and related ‘Governance Profile’ also includes the management of migration flows in the list of what ‘governance’ entails.

¹ See the conclusions of the Councils of Seville (June 2002) and of Thessalonica (June 2003).

Security issues reflect legitimate EU concerns. Yet it is increasingly acknowledged that all parties stand to gain from a more “comprehensive” migration policy (as envisaged in the Amsterdam Treaty). This message came through very forcefully in the recently issued Euro-African Rabat Declaration of July 2006, which called for a strong nexus being established between migration and development. This, in turn, implies adopting a governance approach to tackling migration issues.

Several governance challenges arise in relation to managing migration flows in a comprehensive and sustainable way. *First*, there should be a better appreciation and management of the close linkages that exist between international migration and development and other key policy issues, including trade, aid, state security, human security and human rights. This need for coherence should take place at different levels, including the national one. In many States, responsibility for migration is divided between different ministries and coordination is often lacking. Besides, national policies on migration sometimes lack consistency with international commitments. Coherence is also needed between stakeholders at the regional and global levels; between the EU and Africa or between the EC and EU Member States

Second, managing migration flows requires shared responsibility and mutual commitments. This means that all parties need to respect key governance principles such as fair treatment of immigrants (including respect for human rights). A shared policy response is also required to properly address the issue of brain drain. African states are called upon to show commitment to creating incentives for migrants to stay at home – so safeguarding human capital for economic development. Donors, in turn, are invited to support the efforts of States to formulate and implement national migration policies through the contribution of resources, appropriate expertise and training.

Third, regular dialogue is a key tool to ensuring a governance approach to managing migration flows. Yet, the systematic use of an inclusive and participatory approach remains a challenge. Such a dialogue may help to share good practices; establish mutually beneficial partnerships; as well as contribute to the elaboration of common agendas.

A *fourth* governance challenge is to develop a longer term approach to migration. This means translating the proposed partnership approach to migration into effective action. This promises to be a difficult exercise. Fifty years of development co-operation clearly demonstrate that reducing the structural inequalities that promote migration is a complex task that will not be completed quickly. Proposals have been made for establishing a World Migration Organization with a view to defining rules and imposing norms on migration. However, it is doubtful that many national governments would give up the authority to determine who enters and stays inside their borders to regional or global organizations. In 2004, the UN launched a Global Commission on Migration as a framework to promote more orderly or legal migration. The Commission may be able to help developing countries to think through the hard choices they face in developing the economic policies needed to promote stay-at-home development. It may promote policies aimed at reducing migration pressures indirectly (e.g. by proposing ways to increase the volume and investment impacts of remittances from the migration that is occurring).

Recent changes in EU policies towards Africa, as reflected in the new EU-Africa Strategy, harbour potential to develop a more comprehensive and long-term approach to migration. The challenge at hand for both parties will be to engage in a balanced dialogue on the matter and to properly integrate migration into the overall partnership.

Possible questions for debate

- Ways and means to improve the governance of international migration (including through partnership, dialogue, cooperation at different levels and mutual commitments based on shared responsibilities);
- Ways and means to support positive steps to be taken by African countries to better contain migration flows;
- Positive steps to be taken to better integrate migration into overall (EU) development policies and programmes, including the search for synergies between migration and other policies (development, trade, ...);
- How to build a longer-term approach to migration?