



## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM MIGRANTS IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

**O**n May 7 and 8, 2007, the Dr. José María Luis Mora Research Institute in Mexico City hosted a symposium on the topic of migration in the age of globalization. Leaders of international migrant organizations and movements, international officials, representatives of civilian and governmental organizations in Mexico, and academics and research specialists all came together to analyze and discuss this subject. Given the result of our discussions and work during this international meeting, we have decided to issue the following declara-

tion, which we address to all peoples, social, civilian and governmental organizations around the world, religious institutions, political parties, the bodies of the United Nations and all media.

### DECLARATION

International migration is one the defining facets of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and plays a crucial role in our societies. Because of this, it must be promptly included and addressed in all public and multilateral, regional, national and local agendas. Its complexity,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As evidenced by several studies, migratory flow is no longer restricted to the south-north axis but is also taking place on a south-south direction. Quantitatively speaking, these two trends are now comparable.



structure<sup>2</sup> and impact<sup>3</sup> must also be taken into account.

Although human migration has been an ongoing event throughout history, the age of globalization is characterized by constant migratory growth<sup>4</sup> and its vast impact on the economic, political, social and cultural pathways in countries of origin, destination, transit and return.

Persistent human rights violations against migrants, whether in destination, transit or origin countries, comprise one of migration's most serious current aspects. This also involves difficult access to systems of justice, the threat of discrimination, and communal and familial rupture.<sup>5</sup> Children, teenagers, the elderly, women, indigenous peoples, the handicapped, those with diverse sexual or religious preferences, those displaced for economic and/or political reasons, and refugees are all particularly vulnerable.

Migrants and their families are the main actors in this process, though by no means the only ones. As human beings, they possess universal

rights that must be respected and upheld by all States regardless of the migrants' legal status in countries of transit, destination, origin and return. These rights are and should remain the focus of any policy addressing the migratory phenomenon.

Migration currently takes place on a massive scale, and the increasing variety of behaviors and trends that comprise it are opening up new ways of defining the concept and legal framework of citizenship, a notion that had so far been delimited by territorial structure and the sovereignty of national States. Double or multiple citizenship has become an essential element in the lives of millions of people, and many more are seeking to obtain citizen rights in their receiving, transit, original and return countries. This new aspect of citizenship is part of the development and consolidation of democratic systems.

It is of vital importance that all countries represented in the United Nations and, most importantly, all major receiving countries, sign and

<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the decision to migrate takes place within a framework of basic liberties and responds to the legitimate desire for a better quality of life. This phenomenon is directly linked to the developmental models implemented in the countries of origin and destination and is a response to the behavior of linked markets, such as those involved in free trade agreements (e.g., Mexico, the United States and Canada). Degrees of national and international inequality also play a crucial role.

<sup>3</sup> The role of remittances in countries of origin is well known, as is the even more significant participation of migrants in the growth of receiving country economies. However, political, social, cultural and personal aspects are also part of the phenomenon.

<sup>4</sup> Nowadays, almost 200 million people—an estimated 3% of the world's population—live outside their country of origin. Still, the number of people directly affected by international migration is larger because some (or, at times, all) family members tend to remain in countries of origin or transit.

<sup>5</sup> The four major pathways of current international migration are: i. The annual flow of young, rural Chinese workers (90 to 100 million people) to the nation's urban centers, mainly those of the southeast. This flow is related to harvest cycles. ii. The intra-continental flows in Africa, product of wars, political struggles and internal friction. iii. The Latin American flow to the United States. iv. The Mediterranean area's flow from the Maghreb region toward Europe.



ratify the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,<sup>6</sup> as well as other agreements and rulings involving migratory issues.<sup>7</sup>

The international regulation of migration requires the prioritization of this topic by national governments engaged in dialogue. It should also play a key role in the agendas of multilateral debates and institutions. As of now, it has been treated as a secondary topic in institutional debates and assemblies and has not included the participation of migrants themselves. Discussions regarding a reform of the United Nations have not granted it enough attention.

The celebration of an International Summit on Migration is most desirable. This would involve a precise diagnosis of the current state of international migration and its short, medium and long term prospects; the application of strategies that address its structural causes; its multidirectional repercussions in countries of origin, transit, destination and return; the humanitarian problems involving migrants and their families, and the implementation of institutional, governmental and social strategies that can guarantee them human, labor, civil, educational and health rights, among others.

On the other hand, existing international rights and principles must be

addressed at the level of national legal norms, both constitutionally and in terms of secondary legislations and rulings, so that they can be effectively implemented and remain consistent with said national norms.

National migratory reform processes are particularly worrisome, especially in the case of major receiving countries such as the United States, Germany, France, Canada, Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom. Regardless of the sovereign rights enjoyed by a given State, it is obvious that these reforms impact relationships with other countries and the status of internationally established and acknowledged rights. A constrained and unilateral vision will, in most cases, negatively affect the search for a realistic solution that upholds universal human rights as well as labor, educational and health rights, among others.

Bilateral or multilateral dialogue among governments and the organized migrant communities residing in each country will be the best pathway. An attempt must be made to surpass economic and circumstantial issues, as well as those of national security. Then the phenomenon can be approached in an integral manner and from a long term, global perspective.

The upholding of rights and bilateral or regional organizational and regulatory agreements, the application of reforms to existing free trade agree-

<sup>6</sup> Issued by the General Assembly in resolution 45/158, December 18, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> That is, all rulings involving lack of discrimination, as well as those that include chapters or sections regarding migration (e.g., the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) among others.



ments, and a renewed impetus behind international development projects are some of the avenues through which international migration can be approached. Of course, an International Summit on Migration would play a crucial role.

In order to be successful, the study, analysis and evaluation of this phenomenon, as well as the design, organization, approval and implementation of pertinent public policies must be developed within a participatory, democratic framework. Involved parties must be able to voice their concerns and contribute; dialogue and international cooperation must be prioritized; structural causes must be addressed; the historical circumstances affecting each diaspora must be taken into account, and the migratory phenomenon must be approached from an integral perspective.

It is equally important that civilian organizations around the world (international, regional, national and local) take up these issues, open up discussion spaces and make the topics of migrants and migration a part of their agenda. Their work and contributions must be part of a scheme where migrant organizations, governments, multilateral organizations and religious institutions also share in the responsibilities.

We want to bring to your attention the recent celebration of the First Latin American Community Migrant Summit, which took place in Morelia,

Michoacán, Mexico, from May 10 to 13, 2007. This included the conference “Legislation and the Migratory Phenomenon: Contemporary Contexts and Public Policy Options.” These events comprise a strategic point in an approach to international migration that allows migrants themselves to present their views and proposals.

Those of us present at this symposium came up with our modest contribution to international migratory debate and decided upon the following:<sup>8</sup>

- 1) To work toward the creation and horizontal development of an international, autonomous migrant alliance with local, regional and international presence. This alliance should comprise networks, unions, federations and virtual connections, among many other possibilities; lead to the construction a common vision rather than that of a formal structure; pay special attention to human rights violations among the most vulnerable migrant sectors; establish strategic lines of action on an international scale, and foster communication with governments and multilateral organizations.
- 2) To work toward the implementation of an International Summit on Migration, the elaboration and approval of an International Migrants Charter within the framework provided by the United Nations, and the institution of an International Migrant Rights Day.

<sup>8</sup> These proposals and the declaration do not present the participants’ individual points of view: they comprise shared viewpoints and suggestions. They provide a skeleton around which a more extensive, international public debate and consensus can be structured.



- 3) To work toward the development of common causes and interests among migrant, civilian and religious organizations in order to construct new citizenship paradigms in a global context.
- 4) To promote systemic campaigns that address migration and the status of migrants among the citizens of original, transit, receiving and return countries. These campaigns should target education, awareness and public opinion, and be delivered over mass media as well as through alternative methods and institutions such as schools. Special emphasis should be given to the contributions of migrants and the responsibilities of all actors involved in this process.
- 5) To promote academic specialization, study and research in the fields of migration and the status of migrants. These should target stigmatization and prejudiced common assumptions (e.g. migrants are criminals, potential terrorists) and contribute a professional approach to the design, organization, implementation and evaluation of public policies involving this topic. International research exchanges should propel and reinforce the development of an international migrant organization.
- 6) To work, on a national level, toward the development of migratory State policies and legal and institutional reforms that give proper attention to migrants and their families.

#### ORGANIZERS

Lindavista Center,  
Summit of Latin American Migrant Communities,  
Leopoldo Charles Meyer Foundation for Human Progress,  
The Citizens Initiative for the Support of a Culture of Dialogue,  
Institute José María Luis Mora,  
Michoacán Institute for Migrants Residing Abroad,  
United Nations Development Programme,  
International Network on Migration and Development,  
Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs.