



## United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

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### Fourteenth session

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## Ministerial round table: Looking beyond emergencies – creating opportunities in migrant sourcing and transiting countries

### Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

The themes of the ministerial round table were divided according to whether the panellists were from countries of origin of migrants or from host countries, to cover different points of view. The international context was added as another theme of the round table for completeness.

### Countries of origin of migrants

1. In 2015, 244 million people, equivalent to 3.3 per cent of the world's population, lived outside their country of origin. Those numbers had been increasing in the recent past. The majority of migrants crossed borders in search of better economic and social opportunities, while the remaining migrants fled from conflict, civil war, persecution and the like.
2. Economic migrants were the world's fastest growing group of migrants. In the past 15 years, their number had increased by 43 per cent to reach 200 million. All panellists mentioned that globalization had eased mobility of labour. In many developed countries, declining fertility and working-age populations had led to rising demand for workers from abroad to sustain national economies. Migrants filled the labour gaps in developed countries, and contributed to their host countries' budget through taxes. One panellist mentioned that refugees could bring many advantages to host countries, if the right institutions were in place.
3. Some speakers stated that common responsibility was necessary to address common challenges and for that reason, global issues should be addressed at the collective level

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rather than at the level of individual States. Given its timeliness, the current refugee crisis and possible steps that could be taken at the international level were noted by all panellists.

4. A few speakers dwelled on the ways and means of tackling poverty, which was often the main push factor behind economic migration, whether temporary or permanent. One panellist called for multilateral agreements to have a human face and for equal market access to be given to achieve equal prosperity for all. To make poor countries benefit from globalization, it was argued that strategic support should be provided, including technology transfer, infrastructure investment and maintenance.

5. Most panellists mentioned the challenges linked to climate change, as the pursuit of development from rapidly growing countries should not be a detriment to the people who were facing the greatest challenges.

### **Host countries**

6. The panellists representing host countries talked about what their respective countries were doing, mostly in terms of technical assistance, to reduce poverty in countries of origin of migrants. They referred to the assistance packages currently being implemented, specifically with regard to vocational training programmes, provision of business opportunities and enhanced access to finance, as the programmes that best had an impact on the ground.

7. One panellist argued that it is important to enhance the benefits originating from migration, through the promotion of safer, cheaper and faster remittances aimed to promote consumption as well as productive capacity in the home countries. The speaker also mention the overall goal agreed at the 2015 Valletta summit on migration of the European Union and African countries, held in Malta, to reduce the transaction costs of migrant remittances to less than 3 per cent and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent, by 2030.

8. Some speakers discussed the necessity of promoting diaspora engagement through the development of country specific actions aimed at enhancing the development impact of migrant diaspora to their country of origin. One panellist focused on diaspora investment models, which aim at leveraging migrants' savings for local business development and as a means of boosting local economic development.

9. Another panellist noted that, at present, there were 2.73 million Syrian refugees based in Turkey. To date, the Government of Turkey had spent more than \$11 billion to support refugees, in particular on education, free access to other public services and the new regulatory measures adopted, particularly those pertaining to work permits. (As of June 2016, 13,000 work permits had been provided to Syrian refugees). The representative of one delegation underscored that the challenges were significant, resources were scarce and that solidarity from the international community was needed.

### **International context**

10. Historically, migratory flows had always been driven by wars and poverty. In an unequal world, pull factors would always been represented by the opportunities that could be found in wealthier countries. Until greater equality could be reached among the world's people, that would remain the case.

11. One speaker noted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was developed with the idea of putting together a global compact aimed at achieving solidarity for all the people in the world. The Sustainable Development Goals provided the

framework that could help achieve prosperity for all. Most speakers called for the Sustainable Development Goals to be fully embraced by all countries, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 10 on reducing inequality between and within countries.

12. Most panellists called for a transformative solution to the challenges noted above, in particular those related to the unsustainable inequality between countries the world faced today. Part of the solution was to have all countries embrace a path towards sustainable and inclusive growth.

13. Some panellists argued that official development assistance could not transform societies and economies in ways that would make them conducive to inclusive growth. What was needed was trade. Trade that was conducive to structural transformation and diversification in economies would be the driver to prosperity in all countries.

14. The secretariat noted that UNCTAD technical assistance could be instrumental in diversifying economic opportunities both in countries of origin of migrants and in transit countries, particularly in rural areas and in the least developed countries.

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