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Third United Nations Conference on the  
Least Developed Countries  
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**Parallel event**

**HARNESSING DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS FROM MIGRATION:  
THE INTERFACE BETWEEN MIGRATION, DISPLACEMENT AND  
DEVELOPMENT**

Summary prepared by the Conference secretariat

1. The Migration parallel event was organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with UNHCR and ILO with the support of UNCTAD. It generated a good exchange of information and opinions on the main issues relevant to international migration and revealed the positive nature of migration in its relationship to the development process. While touching on a wide range of causes and implications of migration, the event did not specifically single out LDCs from other developing countries. A notable exception to this was the IOM statistical presentation, detailing migration flows between African LDCs and the rest of the world.

2. Migration was generally considered as an evolving phenomenon in the context of globalization and described as a “missing link” among globalization forces. Indeed, movements of persons, though very substantial on a world scale, appear to be the least liberalized sphere of the globalization process. Nevertheless, as the Secretary-General of the Conference recalled, migration of labour factors is an old phenomenon that has largely contributed to the prosperity of industrialized countries. The main causes of migration continue to be influenced by environmental, economic and political factors. Participants

stressed the causal link between poverty and emigration. The cases of Bangladesh and Mali received particular attention in the presence of ministers from these two countries.

### **The main problems caused by migration trends**

3. Participants emphasized the seriousness of many of the socio-economic problems caused by migration trends, particularly the negative effects of migration on countries of origin, and the ramifications of migrants' departure, in terms of losses of skills and productive labour. From the viewpoint of host countries, although immigrants have contributed to their economic prosperity, other economic and social difficulties were highlighted. Participants agreed to the paramount importance of fighting illegal immigration.

### **A vision for migration as a catalytic development link**

4. One of the most meaningful messages that came out of the migration event was the necessity of a positive approach to migration and the merits of a notion of immigration that would no longer be perceived negatively. Migration can indeed be regarded as a beneficial link at both ends of the migration route, particularly for the country of origin in regard to its development. A new philosophy of migration was implicitly recognized as accepting, if not encouraging, movements of persons insofar as such movements take place within a sphere of new economic opportunities for the benefit of the countries of origin.

5. This approach, which converges with France's policy of "co-development", is based on the premise that today's migrants are more and more exposed to globalization forces. They can easily increase their awareness of new economic opportunities and modern technology and help establish many economic links (business and trade opportunities) between their home country and the host countries. In voicing this positive vision of a new migration era, the participants described migration opportunities as being conducive to higher studies abroad, first professional exposure and bilateral trade and investment connections, in particular for local/foreign joint ventures. The comparison between migration and international tourism, which is an economic form of short-term movements of persons, illustrated the modernity of the vision for a new migration era.

6. This vision was echoed by most speakers, including the UNHCR representative, who evoked the case of former refugees who have voluntarily returned to their country of origin and have been able to assist economic development by adapting the skills and experience they had acquired while refugees.

### **Responses to migration issues at national levels**

7. It is in the interests of LDCs experiencing emigration to adopt a strategy to harness the potentially beneficial impact of migration flows. Such a strategy may involve the determination of an implicit "migration optimum" or level of migrant departures that will be regarded as generating the most desirable financial benefits (remittances) and human benefits (upgrading of skills). This strategy should guard against depriving the country of precious human resources with the skills on which economic competitiveness and productivity depend.

Many participants called for efforts to sensitize potential emigrants, at the national level, about advantages and disadvantages of migration.

8. Regarding the response to migration issues by host countries, discussions focused mainly on the “co-development” experience of France with four pilot countries (including one LDC) and the immigration policy of the European Union. The European Union supports countries of origin in their efforts to motivate emigrants to pursue economic opportunities based, one way or another, on a partnership with the host European country.

### **International support to derive development benefits from migration**

9. The migration event provided IOM with the opportunity to present its programme of action (consisting of three deliverables) in favour of the LDCs: (i) a project relevant to national policy frameworks and relevant institutional capacities to enhance migration management; (ii) a programme to mobilize migrants to contribute to the socio-economic development of their country of origin, involving analysis of the implications of migration and dissemination of relevant information; and (iii) a project to promote female entrepreneurship among immigrant women in LDCs.

10. The International Labour Office envisaged providing technical assistance to LDCs to help them harness the potential benefits from tourism, particularly under the direction of remittance mobilization and the use of such funds for investment in the country of origin. This will involve direct assistance to relevant countries in the area of credit for small entrepreneurs and access to appropriate technology.

11. The representative of UNHCR announced a plan to enhance refugee women’s capacities in the area of food security through a trust fund managed by FAO. This will be jointly directed by FAO and UNHCR in cooperation with national public bodies and NGOs. The project will focus on land rights, empowerment of women, micro-finance projects and food production.

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