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INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Economic and environmental questions: reports of subsidiary
bodies, conferences and related questions

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In the context of its deliberations on the report of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994, the General Assembly adopted resolution 49/127, entitled "International migration and development", in which it requested the Secretary-General "to prepare, in consultation with all States and relevant international and regional organizations, a report on international migration and development, including aspects related to objectives and modalities for the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development, to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995 for discussion". The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

* E/1995/100.

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1. International migration is widely recognized as an intrinsic part of the development process. During the nineteenth century, when population growth rates at the world level were relatively low, countries and territories in need of labour resorted to migration in order to satisfy such needs. In some cases, people were moved forcibly from one part of the world to another to satisfy existing labour demands. In others, the allure of better opportunities abroad led to the voluntary movement of millions of people. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, intercontinental migration reached massive proportions; the First World War, however, largely stopped the major flows. The world depression that marked the interwar years had a dampening effect on most international migration flows. The Second World War, which itself involved major forced movements of people, set the stage for a resurgence of international migration. Thus, the aftermath of the war witnessed the resettlement of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons both overseas and in Europe and, as reconstruction led to economic expansion in the 1950s and 1960s, many of the market economies of Europe² resorted to foreign labour. The process of decolonization that began after the war also gave rise to significant migration flows, not only because of the repatriation of all those involved in colonial administration but also because the establishment of certain newly independent States involved major population exchanges as, for instance, between India and Pakistan. During most of the 1960s, the labour demand in the expanding market economies of Europe was so strong that not only were the repatriation flows generated by decolonization accommodated but, in addition, the organized recruitment of workers abroad continued. However, the oil-price shock of 1973-1974 and the recession that ensued were largely responsible for bringing to an end the recruitment of foreign workers by the labour-importing countries of Europe.

7. The reconfiguration of States that has taken place largely since 1990 has had important implications for international migration. Thus, the reunification of Germany transformed international migration flows into internal movements, whereas the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia has internationalized movements that used to be internal. According to the 1989 census of the former Soviet Union, 25.3 million Russians lived in non-Russian republics. Because the legal and economic situation of Russians in some of the successor States of the former Soviet Union is uncertain, return flows have become evident. In 1991, for instance, according to one estimate 43 per cent of the population increase in the Russian Federation was attributable to net migration gains.⁹ In addition, conflict and instability in some successor States has already led to substantial flows of refugees and displaced persons between neighbouring countries. Yet, the conflict that still afflicts the former Yugoslavia has been the major generator of persons in need of protection: 3.8 million as of mid-1994, 2.7 million of whom were in Bosnia-Herzegovina and half a million in Croatia.¹⁰

45. There was general agreement among the Governments that favoured the convening of an international conference on international migration that it would be of a political nature, involving negotiations among Governments. Several Governments noted that such a conference would have to deal also with technical and substantive issues, particularly in relation to the formulation of effective recommendations for action. The results of the International Conference on Population and Development and of the World Summit for Social Development were mentioned by a number of Governments as providing a good basis for further negotiation. However, Governments that favoured the holding of a conference on

56. As the following inventory shows, within the United Nations system, different United Nations departments and programmes, specialized agencies, and other bodies deal with various aspects of international migration, either directly or indirectly in terms of its relation to development. Issues related to the international migration of labour, for example, fall within the purview of the International Labour Organization. UNHCR, which deals with refugees and certain other types of forced migrants, is among the few United Nations bodies concerning itself exclusively with migration issues. The Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA) addresses migration issues from a substantive perspective, being concerned with all types of migrants and the policy issues related to migration. In addition, a number of international governmental organizations outside of the United Nations system deal with migration issues, and there are many non-governmental organizations that provide assistance to migrants of different types at the local, regional and, in some cases, international level. The following overview of the relevant activities of different bodies and organizations is meant to inform about their specific areas of expertise. Attention is mostly focused on the activities of the United Nations system but, for illustrative purposes, two inter-governmental organizations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have also been included. The OECD has a long tradition of dealing with the political and developmental aspects of international migration and the IOM is primarily devoted to operational activities related to international migration.

61. Through its Population Division, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) monitors regularly the patterns and trends of international migration in Africa. The Division carries out studies on various issues related to migration. A recent publication, entitled Patterns, Causes and Consequences for Development Planning of Female Migration in Selected ECA Member States, draws attention to the importance of the migration of women in the continent. A workshop on the topic is expected to be held in the near future. A study on the causes and consequences of international migration in Africa, reflecting the debate of the issue in ICPD, is in preparation.

62. The Population Activities Unit of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is engaged in its own research and in the initiation and coordination of research in the region as well as in the dissemination of data and information in the field of international migration. Since 1992, the International Migration Bulletin, covering up-to-date information on international migration trends, legislative changes and the results of conferences and seminars, has been published twice a year. The Economic Survey for Europe in 1994-1995 contained a chapter on "International Migration in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States" prepared by the Population Activities Unit. Other publications prepared or in preparation by the Unit include International Migration: Regional Processes and Responses containing a collection of papers dealing with world-wide migration issues; International Migration in Central and Eastern Europe containing 11 country studies; and Transit Migration in Central Europe, a collection of papers. In addition, a series of in-depth international migration surveys has been carried out in Lithuania, Poland and the Ukraine in 1994-1995 to study the causes, consequences and modalities of international migration in countries in transition.

63. Most activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) regarding international migration are undertaken by the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) which carries out research, provides technical assistance, organizes seminars and offers training. CELADE maintains a database on international migrants as enumerated by the population censuses of Latin American and Caribbean countries. CELADE fosters the exchange of such information between sending and receiving countries. ECLAC expects to hold in 1996 a seminar on international migration whose goal would be to "assess the magnitude, the modalities, the determinants and consequences of international migrations within the context of the political and socio-economic realities of those countries most affected by this phenomenon" as stipulated in the Draft Regional Plan of Action on Population and Development for Latin America and the Caribbean. The seminar will be preceded by subregional meetings to ensure that all experiences are adequately reflected.

64. Decision 1995/206 on "Regional cooperation", which was adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its organizational session held in New York from 7 to 10 February 1995, endorsed the joint recommendation made by the regional Executive Secretaries to select the subject "The impact of international migration on countries of destination and countries of origin" for interregional cooperation in social development. The proposal made involves carrying out research and related activities on the selected subject over a period of several years. Further information on the subject will be provided in the Secretary General's report on regional cooperation which will be before the 1995 session of the Council.

IV. VIEWS OF GOVERNMENTS REGARDING AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

V. ORGANIZATIONAL MODALITIES OF OTHER UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCES

VI. RELEVANT ACTIVITIES OF UNITED NATIONS BODIES AND
OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

65. UNHCR's mandate is to provide international protection and assistance to refugees and to seek solutions to the problems of refugees. The latter responsibility includes monitoring the well-being of returnees, that is, former refugees who have repatriated voluntarily, especially in regard to guarantees obtained on their behalf prior to their repatriation. Thus, UNHCR cooperates with other agencies in the promotion and implementation of rehabilitation programmes for returnee communities. UNHCR has also been requested by the Secretary-General or a competent principal organ of the United Nations to assist, in specific cases, internally displaced persons who find themselves in refugee-like situations. UNHCR attaches great importance to the need to distinguish clearly between population movements of a refugee nature and those of an economic nature. Given its mandate, UNHCR plans, develops and administers a variety of projects and programmes to ensure refugee protection and assistance. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, ECOSOC and the General Assembly are the main intergovernmental fora to which UNHCR reports and where issues related to refugees and other types of involuntary migrants are discussed on a regular basis. In addition, UNHCR organizes, as necessary, special intergovernmental conferences to discuss refugee issues at the regional and subregional levels. The most recent initiative in this regard is the convening of a conference on refugees, returnees and displaced persons and related migratory movements in the Commonwealth of Independent States and relevant neighbouring States.

Table 1. Estimated migrant stock in selected regions
of the world, 1975 and 1985

Table 2. Average annual number of immigrants to selected developed countries,
and average annual net migration, by region of origin, 1960-1991

Table 3. Trends in governmental perceptions regarding
the level of immigration

(Percentage)