



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 November 2013

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-second session

11-21 February 2014

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:**

**priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in
achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full
employment and decent work for all**

Statement submitted by UNANIMA International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Migration: a cross-cutting issue

Migration affects all countries around the world, whether as countries of origin, transit or destination. It is a cross-cutting issue involving most of the major themes on the United Nations agenda: poverty, women, children, food, water, war, decent work, human rights and climate change. Migration creates the risk for many human rights abuses, including human trafficking and other forms of exploitation of vulnerable people. Our organization wants to ensure that migration is put on the post-2015 development agenda as a major issue in the development of the post-2015 goals. It wants to support the General Assembly in its efforts to ensure that Governments have in place the appropriate legislation and structures to use migration as an effective tool of empowerment and development.

Migration is growing in scope, complexity and impact, according to the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The number of international migrants worldwide has reached 232 million. This group of people on the move also includes refugees and asylum seekers, people fleeing out of fear. Migrants and refugees are fundamentally different and must be treated differently under international law. However, both groups are among the most vulnerable of people — displaced from home, family and support systems; often poor and unskilled; some with health issues. Many of them are aware of the resources available, but are paralysed by fear or the lack of self-esteem or well-being to access them. Other resources, such as language facility, transportation or community support, are needed before people can empower themselves to access learning opportunities and income security.

At the same time, migration is a powerful tool for empowering people, eliminating extreme poverty and providing decent work. Migration offers positive benefits not only to the migrants themselves but also to their countries of origin and destination, filling gaps in the workforce of the destination country and stimulating a flow of currency back to the country of origin — one of the most “painless” forms of foreign aid. Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said that migration broadens the opportunities available to individuals and is a crucial means of broadening access to resources and reducing poverty.

But the benefits of migration fail if migrant people are exploited and abused owing to failures of Government. States must make informed policy choices in order to generate significant economic and social gains from migration by regulating migrant labour recruitment, guaranteeing migrants’ rights, protecting migrants stranded in distress and engaging migrant entrepreneurs in development.

Existing policy barriers have instead promoted xenophobia and harsh conditions, resulted in migrants being charged exorbitant fees, separated families and failed to uphold human rights. Some countries’ policies are increasingly punitive, involving lengthy detention and off-shore processing of asylum seekers. The traumas inflicted upon these vulnerable people, including women, children and unaccompanied minors, are often actual violations of human rights conventions.

The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, held on 3 and 4 October 2013, indicated that Governments should shift away from a defensive stance on migration and view it as productive and beneficial for everyone.

At that meeting, there was a call for securing migrants' international rights and a place on the post-2015 development agenda.

Practices from the grass roots

The empowerment of migrants requires services in the areas of settlement, employment, and support for health and well-being. For example, units of the non-governmental organization (NGO) UNANIMA International operate migrant resource centres that provide shelter, food, clothing and other settlement support, such as legal services, translation assistance and health care; they empower migrants in the transition to life in the country of destination by helping them find housing, transportation and employment; they teach informal classes in language, nutrition and leadership development; they provide a place where migrants can belong, build community, form networks and contribute to society; and they seek to enable the social integration and rehabilitation of migrants who return to their countries of origin. Local UNANIMA International groups are also involved in anti-trafficking activities that seek to stop the demand for people trapped in human slavery and to provide services for them.

These and other services are provided all over the world by NGOs. Governments could provide more financial and resource infrastructure and form public-private partnerships to increase funding to these agencies which are already in place, or expand their services to others. Governments and all their partners must be held accountable for the use of funds and the use of power.

Conclusion

In light of the theme for this session, "Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all" migration would be an effective lens through which to view the post-2015 development agenda. Provided that the true social integration of migrants is effected, mobility is one of the greatest tools to empower people, to eradicate poverty and to provide full employment and decent work.

Recommendations

We call on the Commission for Social Development to urge Member States:

- (a) To consider "migration" as a topic for the post-2015 development agenda;
- (b) To enable countries of origin to reduce the need for migration by providing a social protection floor, ensuring the rule of law, a stable society, decent work and human rights for every citizen;
- (c) To consider ways to avoid the "brain drain" of professionals from the countries of origin;
- (d) To ensure that countries of destination provide a social protection floor which includes migrants and refugees and resources that promote people's self-empowerment;
- (e) To further develop policies and best practices for governance and accountability mechanisms which affect migrants, for example by legalizing or regularizing mechanisms for the movement of peoples that protect their dignity and human rights, within a rule of law framework;

(f) To take special care to protect migrants and refugees, especially women, children and other vulnerable groups, from abuses such as human trafficking;

(g) To share infrastructure and resources so as to enable Governments to balance the labour supply and demand across borders (e.g. use the “troika” formation experience of the high-level political forum to create partnerships between developed and developing countries);

(h) To recognize the contribution of migrant peoples to the diversity and healthy development of the countries of destination and origin.

Migration has the potential to promote “the empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all”. Governments must respond to the call of the United Nations to secure migrants’ international rights and a place on the post-2015 development agenda.
