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**General debate on national experience on population
matters: international migration and development**

**Letter dated 27 February 2006 from the Permanent
Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Mexico City from 30 November to 2 December 2005 (see annex). The purpose of the Expert Group Meeting was to consider the interrelationships between migration and development and the challenges and opportunities arising from migration in the region, with a view to contributing technical information to the debate on the migration policies currently in force around the world.

The meeting, which was part of the preparatory work for the 2006 sessions of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development and the Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, was attended by 39 Government representatives from 22 Latin American and Caribbean countries, Canada and the United States of America.

I should be grateful if you would have the conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting circulated in connection with the special theme of the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development, namely, "international migration and development".

(Signed) Enrique **Berruga Filloy**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/CN.9/2006/1.



**Annex to the letter dated 27 February 2006 from the
Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General**

**Conclusions of the Expert Group Meeting on International
Migration and Development in Latin America and
the Caribbean**

Mexico, 30 November to 2 December 2005

The National Population Council of Mexico, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) were responsible for organizing the Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Mexico City from 30 November to 2 December 2005.

The meeting was part of the preparatory work for the United Nations Commission on Population and Development and the ECLAC Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development, since their 2006 sessions will be devoted to the analysis of the relationships between international migration and development.

The purpose of the Expert Group Meeting was to consider the interrelationships between migration and development and the challenges and opportunities arising from migration in the region, with a view to contributing technical information to the debate on migration policies currently in force throughout the world.

Twenty-nine speakers (8 from Mexico and 21 from overseas) made presentations at the Meeting, which was attended by 39 government representatives from 22 Latin American and Caribbean countries, Canada and the United States of America.¹ Seven representatives from UNFPA country offices, five from the International Organization for Migration, three from the United Nations Development Programme in Mexico and one each from the United Nations Population Division, ECLAC, CELADE, the United Nations Children's Fund in Mexico and the Ibero-American Secretariat were also present at the Meeting, which was open to the public and attracted an audience of 217 people.

This document sets out the main conclusions reached by the Expert Group Meeting and groups them together under headings corresponding to the six panel discussions listed in the programme of work, namely: recent trends in international migration and the regional economic context; regional forums on international migration; social and political dimensions of international migration from Latin

¹ Government representatives from the following countries in the region attended the meeting: Antigua and Barbuda; Bolivia; Brazil; Colombia; Costa Rica; Cuba; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Guatemala; Haiti.; Honduras; Jamaica; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). The list of government representatives, representatives of international organizations and speakers and the agenda for the event are available on the website of the National Population Council (CONAPO): www.conapo.gob.mx.

America and the Caribbean in recipient countries; development, remittances and migration: subregional models for economic integration and international migration; and social aspects of international migration.

The meeting opened with a keynote address, delivered by Francisco Alba, member of the Global Commission on International Migration, who presented the report submitted by the Commission to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in October 2005. The participants welcomed that document as a useful tool for guiding responses to policy questions raised by the phenomenon of migration, since it offers a general overview of the issue and provides a springboard for more detailed discussions in each region of the world.

Panel I. Recent trends in international migration and the regional economic context

1. The growing economic and social disparities among nations had led to an increase in migration worldwide. According to the United Nations Population Division, there were currently 191 million international migrants, 60 per cent of whom lived in developed countries and the remainder in developing countries.
2. International migration had been a constant in the history of Latin America and the Caribbean. After having played host to immigrants from overseas for several decades, the vast majority of the countries in the region had become the point of departure for migrants. According to estimates from CELADE, the number of international migrants from countries in the region had reached almost 25 million, of whom 18 million lived in the United States of America, 4 million in Latin America and the Caribbean and the remaining 3 million in other regions.
3. While intraregional migration flows had fluctuated over time, depending on the economic and political situations of the countries concerned, they were still significant. In many cases, international migration was the result of internal migrations which had eventually extended beyond national borders.
4. Emigrants accounted for around 4 per cent of the region's population. The largest group consisted of over 10 million migrants from Mexico, followed by Colombia and the Caribbean Community as a whole, which produced over a million emigrants each. Nine other Latin American countries each produced over half a million emigrants. Those figures showed that a significant number of Latin American and Caribbean citizens were living outside their countries of origin.
5. Relatively speaking, emigration had already had an impact on the national populations of the countries of origin, although to differing extents: while the proportion of the total populations of Latin American countries living outside those countries ranged from 14.5 per cent in El Salvador to 0.4 per cent in Brazil, in many Caribbean countries those figures exceeded 20 per cent. In those countries, the effect of international migration on the demographic structure, and the concomitant loss of human capital, could be devastating.
6. Migration had intensified in recent years. Nearly half of the region's emigrants had left between 1990 and 2000. Globalization, economic integration and the growing interdependence of nations were all contributing to the increase in migratory flows. Similarly, the economic development models adopted by the Latin American and Caribbean countries had not yielded the hoped for results in terms of economic growth and job creation; that, together with the major economic

imbalances among regions and the demographic pressure arising from the periods of rapid population growth, had intensified the forces that led to emigration.

7. The demand for migrant workers that existed in the labour markets of many developed countries, along with the rapid ageing of the populations of those countries, acted as a magnet for foreigners. The structural need for migrant workers would continue to promote migration, but that fact tended not to be reflected in those countries' migration policies.

8. At the same time, the extent of international migration in many of the region's countries had led to the consolidation of wide social networks which promoted, facilitated and increased migration flows.

9. Consequently, international migration to other regions had become a persistent and growing phenomenon in the region, in particular since 1990. In keeping with that trend, Latin American and Caribbean citizens accounted for the largest number of immigrants who had settled in Spain and the United States of America. They accounted for over half the foreign-born population of the United States of America: their economic and social circumstances varied greatly and they presented a diverse picture in terms of ethnicity, nationality, migratory status, territorial distribution and organizational capacity.

10. The number of destinations for migrants had grown. Migration to Spain was on the increase, with almost a million migrants, primarily from South America, choosing to settle there. Six hundred thousand Latin American and Caribbean citizens had settled in Canada, and a significant number of migrants from the region were now present in other European countries, as well as Japan, Australia and Israel.

11. The growing number of destinations for migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean necessitated the establishment of mechanisms for dialogue at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, with a view to reaching consensus on how to manage migration in an appropriate manner. It also confirmed the need to ensure that national migration policies gave due consideration to regional, interregional and global aspects of the phenomenon.

12. Most migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean ended up working in the less desirable sectors of the labour markets of the recipient countries, having taken precarious, low-paid jobs requiring few qualifications.

13. International migration in Latin America and the Caribbean was characterized by a growing number of female migrants; women had been in the majority in a number of the most recent migratory flows towards the United States of America, Canada and Europe, as well as in several intraregional flows. The feminization of migration was closely linked to the features of the labour markets in recipient countries, the consolidation of social networks and family reunification, and it was therefore essential to mainstream a gender perspective into the analysis of migratory processes.

14. The high and rising incidence of illegal migration, the increased presence of organized gangs for the illegal trafficking of migrants, violent and xenophobic incidents and the precarious social integration of many migrants in receiving countries were evidence of the negative circumstances in which migration was taking place and demonstrated the ineffectiveness of existing policies designed to address the phenomenon.

15. Better knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon were needed as an essential input in order to meet the challenges and opportunities that international migration posed to the countries of the region. More bilateral and multilateral studies were needed and there must be improved and better designed sources of information to supplement the census, in order to make available an empirical database that was reliable and supported by standardized methodological models.

Panel II. Regional forums on international migration

16. There was consensus on the need to encourage initiatives to promote participation, dialogue and cooperation among States that would allow the design and implementation of measures aimed at reducing the negative consequences of migration and enhancing its benefits.

17. The regional consultative processes, which had been instituted in response to the recommendations made at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development had fostered constructive dialogue, coordination and cooperation in looking at international migration from a regional perspective: the Regional Conference on Migration (Puebla Process) and the South American Conference on Migration were examples of best practices that could be replicated in other regions of the world.

18. In order to make the results of the two conferences more effective and further promote dialogue and cooperation, it would be necessary, inter alia, to:

(a) Come up with better policies and actions aimed at more appropriate management of the phenomenon of migration so as to minimize its undesirable consequences, such as human rights violations, trafficking in persons and illegal trafficking of migrants, loss of human capital and undocumented migration;

(b) Prevent the growing association between security and migration at the global level from giving rise to inappropriate treatment of migratory flows. The climate of insecurity fostered by terrorism had led to a situation where international migration was one of the areas where more control and security of national borders was being sought. There was a danger that, in dealing with the issue, migrants might be perceived as a potential threat, that priority might be given to closing borders rather than to strategies aimed at managing the issue appropriately, and that preference might be given to a restrictive approach to migratory movements all of which could violate the rights of migrants and increase their vulnerability;

(c) Encourage greater participation in such forums by organizations of civil society and of migrants themselves.

19. There was an urgent need for the countries of the Caribbean to enter into dialogue and collaboration to help address the migration issue for, given the size of the flows involved and the magnitude of the loss in human capital, migration was having a substantive impact on their development.

Panel III. Social and political dimensions of international migration from Latin America and the Caribbean in recipient countries

20. It was acknowledged that most receiving countries took a restrictive position with respect to migration that was not in keeping with the real demand for workers in their labour markets. That had fostered a rapid increase in undocumented

migration, which was causing growing tension both within countries and between nations, hence the importance of designing strategies aimed at achieving more openness of legal channels for migration.

21. In order to achieve effective, orderly and legal administration of international migration it would be necessary for countries of origin, transit and destination to cooperate. The transnational character of migration made it necessary to go beyond unilateral policies centred on migratory control and to start handling migration in such a way that all the countries involved could participate, under a system of shared benefit and responsibility.

22. All persons, no matter what their migratory status, must be guaranteed that of the human and labour rights outlined in international human rights and labour instruments, and reaffirmed at the fourth Summit of the Americas held in Mar del Plata, Argentina in October 2005, would be protected.

23. Xenophobic trends could have an influence on the formulation or application of migration policy or on integration of migrants in receiving societies. Government must be proactive in eliminating discrimination in all its forms and must advocate for the recognition of the contributions migrants made to the economy, culture and society of receiving countries.

24. There was growing discontent in many receiving countries, both in the public and the political spheres, because of the limited room for action by States to stem undocumented migration, and that was encouraging a climate of hostility towards migrants in host societies.

25. In the specific case of Latin American and Caribbean migration to the Mediterranean countries of Europe, historical and cultural factors facilitated the arrival and integration of migrants. That was reflected, for example, in preferential treatment towards Latin American migrants demonstrated by the signing of bilateral agreements and higher rates of naturalization among those migrants. However, achieving appropriate integration of Latin American and Caribbean migrants in the host societies of European countries continued to pose a challenge due to problems associated with immigrant status and the persistence of employment, social and economic segregation.

26. The Canadian experience in administering migration had produced examples of best practices. In Canada, immigration was a central component of plans for building the nation, particular importance was attached to policies for social cohesion and integration of migrants and the benefits of multiculturalism were acknowledged.

27. It was acknowledged that further progress must be made in conducting studies to analyse the experience of integration of migrants in the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region themselves, in order to strengthen policies and programmes to promote appropriate social integration and guarantee full respect for human rights.

Panel IV. Development, remittances and migration

28. One very notable result of emigration was the flow of remittances, which they constituted a major source of income for migrants' countries of origin. In 2004, the countries of the region had received over \$40 billion through remittances.

29. Remittances had a positive effect on the income of families receiving them and helped improve their quality of life. In many countries the total volume of remittances represented a major source of foreign exchange. However, from a macroeconomic point of view, remittances could have undesirable effects, by reducing exports due to the appreciation of national currency. In addition, they could have inflationary effects and create dependence and social inequality. Thus, it was important to implement appropriate economic policies to mitigate those negative effects.

30. While there was evidence that remittances did help to reduce poverty levels, it was emphasized that they should not be viewed as a substitute for strategies to deal with this serious social problem; that called for structural changes that would help foster sustainable expansion of production and economic and social mobility of the population.

31. The experts stressed that remittances did not solve regional and national development problems which, by definition, required greater State participation and increased flows of private investment. Similarly, these economic transfers were not a substitute for official development assistance.

32. It was pointed out that money sent by migrants to their families and the use and final destination of such resources were matters that fell within the sphere of private life and must not, therefore, be subject to undue official regulation.

33. Attention was drawn to the need to encourage cost-cutting and make it easier to send remittances and also to expand access to the banking and financial infrastructure for senders and recipients so as to safeguard remittances and ensure that those resources were used to the best advantage, particularly in poor and marginalized areas of the countries of origin.

34. As for remittances intended for the establishment of businesses and for small-scale investment, priority attention should be given to systematic evaluation of investment plans, in order to identify successful models, to promotion of technical assistance and to access to credit and financing systems. It was also recommended that steps should be taken to ensure that the recipients of remittances knew what their financial options were so that they could make the most of their resources.

35. Accordingly, the experts welcomed the pledge made by the Heads of State and Government, when adopting the Declaration of Nuevo Leon at the Special Summit of the Americas in 2004, to take specific steps to at least halve the average regional cost of sending remittances by 2008 at the latest.

36. It was acknowledged that organized international migrants could be a strategic new partner for regional and local development, as demonstrated by the investments made by clubs and associations of migrants in some countries of the region (notably those in Colombia, El Salvador and Mexico). However, in order for those initiatives to be successful it was necessary for there to be public policies that were committed to those goals and for communities of origin and migrant organizations to promote continuing organization and training processes so as to strengthen them.

37. It was therefore necessary to engage in broader and deeper analyses of the impact of returning migrants with a view to developing specific policies to encourage development by making optimum use of migrants' skills, experience and savings, both for their own benefit and for that of their families and regions.

Panel V. Subregional models for economic integration and international migration

38. Studies showed that the subregional models of economic integration in Latin America and the Caribbean had resulted in profound economic restructuring, but in many cases that had not led to greater job creation nor had it raised salaries or reduced inequalities. Thus the hopes that trade liberalization would promote economic convergence among participating countries and thereby lessen migratory pressures, had yet to materialize.

39. Participants in the meeting were generally in agreement regarding the need to include labour mobility as a factor in the subregional processes of economic integration, since the latter stimulate it and gave rise to new modalities of mobility.

40. It was pointed out that from the time the Treaty of Asunción was signed, in 1991, strategic attention had been paid in the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) to the processes of social and labour integration, free movement of persons and free residence for migrants of member countries. The advances made in MERCOSUR, while as yet embryonic and evolving, could be used to reconcile the processes of economic integration and labour mobility.

Panel VI. Social aspects of international migration

41. Migration of skilled workers posed a significant challenge for the countries of origin, particularly those in the Caribbean and some countries of Central America where the loss of human capital was such that it accounted for between 50 and 70 per cent of their skilled population and inhibited their own development possibilities. The countries of the region could therefore benefit from policies designed to foster the return and retention of their educated population. Thus far, the initiatives that had been developed — programmes to support, connect and repatriate scientists — had had very limited results. New strategies were therefore needed in order to take advantage of the potential benefits resulting from their technical, professional and scientific diaspora.

42. It was pointed out that a large proportion of skilled migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean entered the labour market in the countries of destination to fill jobs that required lower skills; that meant that the resource was not being used to full advantage either in the country of origin or in that of destination.

43. International migration had an impact on the living conditions of migrants and of their families in the communities of origin. With regard specifically to health, there was some evidence to suggest that the migratory experience of the parents had the potential to reduce infant mortality. It was stated that the ties between migration and health should be further studied so as to make it possible to anticipate possible challenges to public health resulting from migration, such as changes in risk behaviours and the dismantling of family social networks.

44. Attention was drawn to the need to increase dialogue and integration of programmes and services relating to health care for migrants and their families between countries of origin and countries of destination. The importance of measures to improve the sexual and reproductive health of migrants, particularly measures for the prevention, treatment and care of HIV/AIDS, was emphasized.

45. It was pointed out that a gender perspective must be included in the design of migration policies and in discussions on migration and development. As had been seen, the migration experience could have a positive impact on the social status of migrant women and that could result in social change and development in their places of origin. Likewise, the migration of women, particularly illegal migration, could entail risks and vulnerabilities, both during the journey and at the point of destination and it involved social and emotional costs associated with divided families and transnational motherhood.

46. The meeting welcomed the Declaration adopted at the Fifteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Salamanca from 14 to 15 October 2005, whereby the countries of that region had undertaken: to coordinate common policies to channel and manage migratory flows in an orderly fashion; to promote development models that link immigrants and their families with efforts to step up development in their regions of origin; to involve countries of origin, transit and destination in the development of joint policies that also favour and facilitate temporary migration for employment purposes and incorporate adequate incentives for promotion, training and savings to ensure that the individuals concerned return with better prospects; and to promote diversity and respect for human dignity within the framework of the rule of law as essential considerations in, inter alia, the treatment of migrants.

47. Attention was drawn to the importance of following up on the discussions held at the Group Expert Meeting on International Migration and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean and encouraging an open dialogue between the Governments of the region, the academic community, civil society organizations and international organizations with a view to building a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities arising from migration. The goal was to establish just and legal migration regimes that safeguarded the human rights of migrants and contributed to the development of individuals and of nations.
