



Civil Society Statement
NGO Committee on Migration
Migrant Rights International (MRI)
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)
United Methodist Women (UMW)

Informal Thematic Debate on International Migration and Development
64th Session General Assembly
May 19, 2011

The following are recommendations for concrete actions to promote the human rights of migrants and people-centered development, within the framework of the Informal Thematic Debate's two overarching themes:

- The contribution of migrants to development
- Improving international cooperation on migration and development

The Contribution of migrants to development

As members of Civil Society we support a people-centered focus on development. Migrants may contribute greatly to the economic and social development of both origin and destination countries, and a focus on the contributions of migrants serves as a means of combating racism and xenophobia. However, framing the relationship between migration and development in this manner leads to an overemphasis on remittances and a neglect of the root causes of migration. We reiterate from the Civil Society Statement of the 2010 Global Forum on Migration and Development, that the *right to development* is a basic human right that guarantees the social, economic, and cultural rights of all. It must include opportunities for human growth, access to decent work at home and abroad, health care, education, security of life and person, and full participation in political and social processes. Migrants must have the *choice* to migrate or not to migrate; their inherent human rights do not stop when they cross borders.

We affirm that:

- Migration, despite its contributions to countries of origin and destination, is not and cannot be used as a substitute for development.
- Remittances cannot and must not replace the responsibility of nations to invest in people-centered development. Developed nations must fulfill their obligations represented in Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals to enable development through aid, trade and debt relief. Developing nations must direct resources towards meeting human needs.
- Policy and practice regarding migration and development must address the lack of suitable and sustainable development in countries of origin as a root cause of migration. Unequal bilateral, regional, and international trade policies, in addition to national policies such as agricultural subsidies that displace a large number of people in developing countries from their homes and livelihoods and exacerbate outward migration from poor nations, must end.



- Human-centered development cannot be built upon the fragmentation of the family unit. States should therefore focus policy and practice, including the issuance of visas, on family reunification, and should not separate families through detention and deportation.
- Women must be recognized as active agents contributing to development. Their economic, cultural and social rights, including the right to decent work, must be ensured in both countries of origin and destination. Governments in sending and receiving countries must put in place mechanisms to address violence against migrant women in all areas of their lives—from the home and workplace to migration journeys and detention centers.
- The current trend toward exploitative, temporary worker programs as a response to the economic needs of countries of destination, must be reversed. In recognition of the essential contribution that migrants are making to their economies, countries of destination should adopt forthright policies of providing visas for workers which grant them legal rights equal to citizens (recognizing certain specific reasonable exceptions such as full voting rights) and a path to residency status for those who wish to remain in the country of destination. Efforts are also needed to regularize the status of migrants in irregular status. “Circular migration” in practice means the denial of migrant’s human rights, as they are unable to negotiate with employers or put down roots in a community.
- States should strengthen and promote the integration of migrants, ensuring their equal access to economic, social, and cultural rights, including education and health services.

Improving international cooperation on migration and development

There is nothing inherently positive about improving international cooperation. Benefits depend on which outcomes derive from that cooperation. All initiatives focused on increasing cooperation, policy coherence, and global governance on migration and development--whether labour migration or protection of the most vulnerable--should be explicitly focused on a rights-based framework in contrast to a “migration management” approach that is focused primarily on the economic benefits to both countries of destination and countries of origin.

- We call on the international community to discuss, develop, and implement policies for the protection of migrant workers, with particular concern for youth and women, in accordance with UN human rights instruments such as the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, and the relevant Conventions of the ILO, including the ILO (draft) *Convention on Domestic Workers*.
- States should review national legislation and policies on migrants to bring them in line with international Conventions and policies including but not limited to those listed above.
- The current international trend of increasing criminalization of migrants and militarization of borders should be reversed:
 - The human rights and labor rights of all migrants, including those in irregular status, must be upheld.



- The rights of migrant children in particular must be upheld, and States must address current violations of those rights, especially with respect to family separation, detention, trafficking, child labor, and denial of social services.
- States should with all urgency develop and adopt proactive and cooperative practices to protect migrants displaced by political upheaval such as that currently occurring in the Middle East and North Africa. The international community should protect migrants' lives in the current crisis, and take proactive steps, including protection of the human rights of migrants in transit, on the high seas, and crossing borders.
- The international community must address in a more responsible and urgent manner the impending calamity from global Climate change. Efforts at addressing the root causes of migration or instituting more reasonable, functional, and fair systems of migration will fail in the face of global inaction to prevent what may one day become the single largest "push factor" in outward migration. In particular States must address the global imbalance in responsibility for the causes of migration and the largest potential impact – those States most responsible for the underlying causes of Climate change tend to be Countries of Destination that are increasingly closing their borders to migrants, while those States that stand to be the most impacted are also some of the least responsible.

Supporting Organizations

BRAC

El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA)

Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul

Congregation of the Mission

Congregations of St. Joseph

The Grail

Global Workers Justice Alliance

Gray Panthers

International Catholic Migration Commission

International Council of Jewish Women

International Council of Psychologists

International Federation of Business and Professional Women

International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation

Loretto Community

Marianists International

Migrants Rights International

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Passionists International

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur



United Methodist Women
Vivat International
World Christian Life Community
World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations

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