

**Global Meeting of Chairs and secretariats of Regional Consultative
Processes on Migration (RCPs)
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***UN General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on
Migration and Development – 2013***

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“Each of us holds a piece of the migration puzzle, but none has the whole picture. It’s time to start putting it together”. (opening speech, Kofi Annan, HLD 2006).

A “high-level dialogue” is not a very common feature in the work of the UN General Assembly. It is, in actual fact, an anomaly in the sense that this format does not lend itself to the normal outcome of a deliberation of the General Assembly which, usually, takes the shape of a resolution. Though convoked by the GA President, this event, gathering governments and non-governmental entities, is of an informal and non-binding nature. Its purpose is to allow a free exchange on an issue of a general interest that, for a number of reasons has not found its place on the formal agenda of the General Assembly.

A Brief History

Migration, first appearing on a UN agenda at the Population Conference held in Cairo in 1994, is one of the issues falling in this category. While a number of initiatives, within and outside the UN, took the challenge of addressing the migration issue in its international dimensions, the prevailing position of many governments was to consider that it was a matter of national sovereignty, hence not lending itself to a formal UN GA approach. At outset of the Millennium, Kofi Annan commissioned study known as the Doyle Report, on the basis of which the Global Commission on International Migration was established. The GCIM report provided a highly regarded analysis of the situation, but remained short of offering a clear way forward. This is under these circumstances that the General assembly, at the instance of the Secretary-General, decided to hold a special event, called High-Level Dialogue, during its 2006 session, adding the notion of development to that of migration, thus making it more palatable to many.

At the end of 2005, A Special Representative, Peter Sutherland, was appointed by the Secretary-General to lead the UN effort to prepare the HLD. The main thrust of the Dialogue was to look into maximizing the developmental benefits of migration and reduce its negative impacts. While the meeting itself was considered a success, being the first gathering addressing squarely the migration and development issue in the UN framework, it would have remained a one time event, had it not been for the S-G proposal to create a Forum of States, outside the UN but linked to it, to pursue the migration and development debate in a non-binding manner. What ensued is well known to everybody.

The 2013 High-Level Dialogue

The first HLD success and the promising start of the GFMD encouraged members of the General Assembly, especially those in favour of keeping close links with the UN, to promote at the 2008 session a resolution deciding to hold a second HLD on Migration and Development in 2013. The agenda of this meeting will be discussed at the 2012 GA session on the basis of a proposal from the Secretary-General on “organizational details and possible themes”. It is therefore too early to speculate on the issues that will be debated in 2013. One thing, however, seems to be clear, the progress achieved by the Global Forum, now in its fifth year of existence, will largely inform the HLD debates.

Meanwhile, the General Assembly has continued to be seized of the migration and development issue. It has, on various occasions, paid tribute to GFMD “as a contribution to addressing the multidimensional nature of international migration and as a step to promote balanced and comprehensive approaches”. It also invited international organizations, dealing with migration, mainly from the Global Migration Group (GMG), to “integrate development issues in a more coherent way”. Moreover, and of direct relevance to this gathering, it invited governments and international organizations to “examine regional aspects of international migration and provide inputs to the Secretary-General report”.

Needless to say, Peter Sutherland is in close contact with the Secretary-General, advising him on the preparation of HLD 2013.

Perspectives

Regardless of its contents and outcomes, the 2013 High-Level Dialogue will certainly constitute a landmark event in the long way towards improving governance of international migrations. It happens that by the time of the HLD, GFMD will have completed a six-year cycle during which it will have been chaired by six governments representing all regions as well different migration and development perspectives. 2013 will therefore coincide with the much expected conclusion of a thorough assessment of the objectives and functioning of GFMD by its members. No doubt, either, that the outcomes of this assessment, touching upon various issues of substance and of format will also play a part in the dynamics of the High-Level Dialogue.

It is hoped that a meeting like the one we are attending today will also contribute in a meaningful manner to the quality and progress of the international dialogue on migration and its links with development.

Thank you.