

Intervention by IOM Director General, William L. Swing at the occasion of the inaugural session of the Leadership Meeting of the Global Thematic Consultation on Population Dynamics for the post-2015 Development Agenda, Dhaka 12 March 2013

Madame Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, Mr Executive Director, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

What an honour! What a joy! It's so good to be back in Bangladesh to take part in this Global Leadership meeting on Population Dynamics in the context of the post 2015 development goals. I would like to thank the Government of Bangladesh for their warm welcome and legendary hospitality. I thank both the Governments of Switzerland and Bangladesh for their leadership in this very important milestone in our collective efforts to establish a new global framework beyond 2015.

A great deal is at stake: the discussions over the next two days will contribute substantially to the global dialogue – an exchange that will help us to identify sustainable and equitable development goals – goals around which we can all rally.

Fortunately there is now a common recognition that this is a global challenge and that it demands global solutions. As noted in the 2012 UN Report to the Secretary General "the central challenge of the post 2015 development agenda is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's peoples of present and future generations". In this framework, population and migration challenges are highly inter-related global issues.

As the lead global agency on migration (active in more than 400 field locations), IOM is convinced that well-managed migration and facilitated human mobility is a vital element in ensuring that the challenge of population dynamics evolves into opportunities for the benefit of all. To do so, migration risks and costs must be reduced and opportunities improved for migrants and host communities alike.

With that introduction, I would like to make 3 points: 1) the challenges we face, 2) the strategic approach needed and 3) the pragmatic implementation of policy. Each of these points draws on a broad consensus amongst the 16 GMG agencies.

1. Challenges

We live in a world on the move. Ours is an era of the greatest human mobility in recorded history. The push-pull factors, the drivers of large-scale migration are such that migration has become a mega trend. Let me mention the following challenges:

a) there are the population challenges related to growth and there are also the well-known numbers about geographical disparities in demographics:

b) about one third of all countries in the world – some 62 in all comprising 30% of the total – have more than 60% of their population under the age of 30. The issue of global youth unemployment is critical. In contrast, in the industrialized world population growth is stagnant or negative, with more people dying than are being born, and a declining population.

d) North/South demographic disparities – a youthful South, an aging North, and both growing and contracting populations – all of this means massive projected gaps in labour for many countries – North and South. A colleague just published an article that describes the industrialized countries' situation aptly: fewer citizens means a need for more migrants. The traditional concept of the nation state is changing.

e) Climate change, rapid and slow onset disasters will only accentuate these demographic pressures and labour demands.

2. Policy

The GMG mentions a number of recommendations for the post 2015 Development Agenda:

a) Mobility: it is a key element in reducing poverty, fostering inclusive growth and enabling the growing number of young people in the world to gain access to education and employment opportunities in order to fill jobs in the highly industrialized world and help achieve economic goals.

b) Health and care system: they are heavily reliant on migration workers, under increasing strain from aging populations, with fewer people in the workplace to support them.

c) Urbanization and disaster risk reduction goals: these require a fresh look at greater use of migrant as a stabilization and growth option.

d) Financing for sustainable development: this can be enhanced through diaspora investment and migrant remittances. IOM will be holding a Diaspora Ministerial Conference in June in Geneva to look at and exchange good practices and experiences.

e) Large scale human mobility will increasingly come to be seen as inevitable given the demographics, necessary given labour market demands, and desirable if humanely and responsibly managed. Today's 214 international migrants will become +400 million by 2040.

3. Implementation

a) Migration has risks and costs, and we need to work together on managing facilitated migration (not just North-South but South-South and, lately North-South), and need to be abreast of all currents and trends to turn the challenge of population disparities and migration risks and challenges into opportunities through safe and orderly labour migration.

b) IOM believes that private companies have a major share of this responsibility. Labour migration is not only desirable but feasible. A number of companies and countries have been coming forward to back an IOM initiative, called IRIS, for safer international recruitment for migrants – free of unscrupulous agents and unreasonable recruitment fees – a pragmatic foundation for the labour migration flows that the world will increasingly require.

c) We must do more to assist migrants affected by disasters and crises.

All these good efforts need to be embedded in the post 2015 development framework. Ignoring these trends and pressures would be to lose sight of today's reality and risk squandering human talent and potential for sustainable development. In short, safe and orderly human mobility, facilitated by good migration management, is a vital element in harnessing globalization for human development and ensuring it is a positive force. Migration must, therefore, be included in the post 2015 agenda.