



IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

**IOM 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Council  
An International Dialogue on Migration  
27-29 November 2001**

1. While migration is as old as history and has contributed to the formation of civilizations, the subject of migration is only now reaching regional and global political agendas. Countries from every region of the world and from each stage of the migration continuum - countries of origin, transit and destination - have come to recognize and value the contribution migrants can and do make to the strength, diversity and richness of their social fabric as well as to their economic prosperity. On the other hand, there is also ready acknowledgement that irregular migration can lead to social instability and insecurity. The challenge for all is to maximize the benefits that accompany migration and minimize its attendant risks. This task cannot be undertaken by individual States acting in isolation; genuine international cooperation and coordination are called for. It is with this in mind that IOM has chosen to devote its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Council session to discussing major migration policy issues.

2. There are, of course, many fora where migration issues are discussed. In recent years, a large number of regional and subregional consultative circles have emerged, each of them a testimony to the growing importance of the topic for policy managers and programme implementers alike. In such circumstances, it is perhaps unavoidable that agendas should sometimes overlap or activities be duplicated. But it would no doubt be useful for all concerned to be given the opportunity to acquire a global perspective.

3. The IOM Council is a truly representative forum in which States participate as equal partners in the search for cooperative solutions. In addition, the participation of relevant partner intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations adds richness to the debate and the opportunity to ensure coordination with other important related agendas. The IOM Council offers States, therefore, the opportunity to engage in an open and truly global exchange of information and ideas about migration policy matters. It affords the possibility of exploring issues, with a view to identifying possible common ground with representation from all regions of the world and all migration circumstances.

4. At the November Council session, IOM's membership is invited to take advantage of the special opportunity afforded by the celebration of the Organization's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary to reflect on the migratory realities of concern to them at the beginning of this third millennium, to canvass the migration policy issues they are grappling with, to identify challenges appearing on the horizon and to map out possible directions for the future. While the Steering Group of IOM's membership, convened to prepare for the November Council, has recommended that the Council focus on three main themes for discussion, these are not intended to limit the

**Headquarters:**

17 route des Morillons • C.P. 71 • CH-1211 Geneva 19 • Switzerland  
Tel: +41.22.717 91 11 • Fax: +41.22.798 61 50 • E-mail: [hq@iom.int](mailto:hq@iom.int) • Internet: <http://www.iom.int>

discussion or preclude States from raising other issues of concern to them, but rather to give the debate a sense of coherence and purpose.

5. The Steering Group has selected the following three themes to guide its deliberations.

### **Demographics and migration**

6. Forecasts suggest that there will be profound changes in the demographic distribution of the world's population, with equally profound implications for the economies of many countries. Already, declining birth rates and the greying of the populations of many countries in the developed world, in particular in Europe, have raised significant challenges for policy-makers and new policy options will require consideration. Coupled with this, projections of increasing population growth in many countries of the developing world, even after the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS are factored in, raise the prospect of significant labour market surpluses and insufficient revenue bases to support needed social structures and provide opportunities for the citizenry.

7. Policy-makers will be looking to a range of measures to address these anticipated imbalances. Automation and technology, as a substitute for human labour, and increasing the retirement age to prolong the productive life of the work force, are just two such measures that may be considered in the developed world. In view of the mobile nature of youth and the comparative sedentary outlook of more mature populations, other measures may need to be considered. In this connection, the following queries arise:

- **Where does migration fit in the range of responses to be considered by policy-makers whose responsibility it is to plan for and manage population levels?**
- **Does migration offer short-term or long-term solutions to demographic imbalances?**
- **If solutions are identified, how are they to be put into practice, should they be envisaged at the regional or global level?**

### **Labour, trade and migration**

8. Global trade liberalization has resulted in increasingly mobile international flows of goods and capital. However, progress in trade liberalization, with respect to the movement of natural persons as providers of services pursuant to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), has not proceeded at the same pace. In addition, the formal regime for negotiating trade liberalization is currently geared to trade primarily at the high end of the labour market-place. While the need for multinational companies to have access to highly-trained professionals in a mobile manner to provide competitive services is well-recognized, comparatively less official attention has been given to labour market needs at other skill levels.

9. There are chronic and pervasive labour shortages in many developed countries in certain sectors, such as nursing and information technology. In addition, significant underground economies have grown in many developed countries, particularly in low-skill sectors such as household work and restaurants, to fill labour market gaps and satisfy the demand for inexpensive labour.

10. These substantial underground economies pose significant risks both for the individuals and for their host societies. Governments of the host countries are deprived of the opportunity to exercise a fundamental attribute, and indeed responsibility of sovereignty, to judge whom they permit to enter and remain on their territories, including on the basis of health, security or other national considerations. In addition, the host societies are deprived of revenue in the form of taxes from these employees as well as other forms of contribution to society.

11. In addition, from the perspective of the individual, while many irregular migrants are responding to the demand for labour in their countries of employment, they are generally not eligible for many of the socio-economic and other legal benefits and security afforded to regular migrants. These migrants are at a significantly heightened risk of abuse and exploitation, especially if they employ the services of migrant traffickers. In many instances, these migrants are individuals who have been pressured, due to the lack of economic opportunities in their countries of origin, to move from their home communities in search of gainful employment and life opportunities only to face a lack of protection in their new employment and host countries. The risk of their alienation and isolation in their host countries is substantial, with obvious risks to society as well. Within this context, the following questions are pertinent:

- **What is the impact of flows of goods and services on the movement of labour?**
- **Is it possible to separate labour flows from the movement of capital?**
- **What are the means through which the underground labour market may be brought above ground while providing necessary protection to migrants and societies concerned?**

### **Integration and prevention of xenophobia**

12. All societies have minorities, whether recent migrants or of longer standing, and they are increasingly becoming multicultural to a greater or lesser degree. Few, however, have successfully addressed the implications of this so as to protect the rights of migrants and minorities and the societies in which they live. It is increasingly recognized that, for migration to be sustainable, and to maintain the security and stability of society, significant attention must be paid to settlement and integration policies and practices. Policies need to take into account both long-term migrants already resident in the country and migrants selected for admission to a new host country. Integration necessarily raises practical questions at the programmatic level - to address, for example, language, education, and employment. In the first instance, however, it is important to address the perception of migrants - to avoid stereotyping migrants, either as criminals or as victims, and encourage positive terminology

regarding migrants and their contributions to society. Assumptions about single national identities may need to be re-examined as the reality may be more akin to developing or maintaining multiple national identities and affiliations, including through retaining links to the country of origin. Here, political leadership is crucial - in ensuring the protection of human rights, combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

13. While the full integration of migrants into the economic, social and political fabric of society is the goal of some States and not others, all States have an interest, at a minimum, in avoiding isolation and the disaffection of migrants and migrant communities and ensuring the respect of human rights for all. Although integration means different things in different national contexts for historical and national identity reasons, the key common element is creating a sense of belonging - a stake in the new community. Some States have a deliberate policy of integration as part of their immigration policies and have devoted substantial resources to this effort. For others, migrants have come, not as a part of formal immigration policies, but as a side effect of an asylum policy or simply on their own, and therefore integration questions arise as a matter of necessity rather than as a matter of choice. In either case, effective means must be found to safeguard the rights of the individuals and to ensure the stability and security of the society.

14. Government policies addressed to integration questions will necessarily distinguish in favour of enhanced rights for migrants legally authorised to enter and remain; nonetheless, basic human rights' protections apply to all migrants, regardless of their legal status, and must be respected. Some form of mutual adaptation of the migrant and the new host community is a necessity - the one to respecting the laws and culture of the host and the other to respecting the rights and tolerating the differences of the newcomer. The precise balance will be unique and dynamic in each national context but the need to find a balance is a common one. This reality requires cultivation of a culture of tolerance and acceptance of differences while at the same time preserving a distinct national character and identity. Certain questions flowing from these considerations include the following:

- **What steps can be taken to ensure that migratory movement is followed by integration into the host society rather than alienation from it?**
- **What are the indicators of successful integration? Is integration best envisaged as transformation (i.e. an end to be reached) or growth (i.e. a continuing process)?**
- **Where does the balance lie between the adaptation of the newcomer and adaptation of society?**
- **Would it be possible to define the rights and responsibilities of the host society and those of the migrant?**

15. The field of migration policy is vast. The themes articulated above are not intended to impose a rigid methodology for the exploration of that landscape, but rather to offer a frame of reference for constructive debate among Member States.