

Towards Policy Coherence on Migration

Presentation Delivery Notes

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In the title of this Council's presentation, drawn largely from the background paper for this session, we have two terms which appear to be at odds: migration and coherence?

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Migration and Coherence: Inherently incompatible?

Migration is multi-faceted. Coherence in policy issues requires focus. Migration means different perspectives from different actors. Coherence requires unity of vision. Migration can bring about rapid, unpredictable change. Coherence is all about predictability.

This question of apparent incompatibility becomes all the more important considering the inherent complexity of migration.

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As previously mentioned, migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon. To mention just a few of the major sub-areas of concern and activity:

- Labour mobility
- Security
- Health
- Integration
- Border control
- Irregular migration
- Counter-trafficking
- Emergency and Post-conflict
- Development

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Which brings two fundamental questions to the forefront:

Is policy coherence desirable? Is it feasible?

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The answer to these questions is that yes, there is a definite need for policy coherence, and it is arguably within reach. Policy coherence helps create the proper context to ensure that gains are maximized and costs – economic, social, human, administrative – are kept to a minimum.

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In fact, the question that we should ask ourselves and try to provide an answer to is this: Do we respond in kind? In other words, if migration can be unpredictable, disruptive and, should we say, chaotic, does policy have to be the same? Or is it all the more necessary that we need clearly defined policies, priorities and response mechanisms? I invite you all to think about this question.

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Let's take a brief look at the coherence gaps on different levels.

At a national level

At the national level, migration policy responsibilities are spread over different ministries whether they be Labour, Development, Social Welfare, Trade, Education, Justice & Home Affairs, or Health.

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Coherence gaps at an international level

At the international level, there are different government perspectives depending on the specific policy objectives and priorities of each government; the region it belongs to; the nature of migratory flows and the location of a given country on the migration continuum.

The absence of a central international legal instrument or binding structure governing the cross-border movement of people has been cited as a gap in the current institutional structure for the global economy; nonetheless, the existence of such an international framework would not necessarily in itself ensure policy coherence.

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Coherence gaps at stakeholder level

Uneven engagement of key stakeholders

- Governments
- Private sector
- Trade Unions
- International Organizations
- Migrants' Associations
- NGOs

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Coherence gaps at the policy domain level

I have mentioned the lack of coordination and consultation among government departments, and this points to another need for coherence when looking at policy

issues. There are some major policy areas that impinge on migration, and are in turn affected by it.

- Development
- Environment
- Security
- Trade
- Employment
- Health

Policy bridges need to be built.

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In isolation it would be very difficult to address key issues pertaining to important and sensitive migration management portfolios, such as:

- Skills mobility and Productivity;
- Mode 4;
- Remittances;
- Tsunami and other natural disasters, climate change;
- Terrorism and social conflict;
- Avian flu, SARS, HIV/AIDS.

All these are very topical and serious issues which create the need for inclusive policies. Which bring us to consider the directions in which possible solutions might be found.

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Coherence: possible solution at national level

At the national level, coherence begins with consultation and coordination among ministries.

For example, security and labour market needs in countries of destination can be addressed and indeed enhanced through the establishment of legal labour migration channels. Development and human resource needs in countries of origin can be similarly enhanced through temporary labour migration programmes that result in the return of skills and talent.

Through coherence and coordination, areas of common interest and benefit can be found.

Of course, policy coherence within governments also requires that migration policies be consistent with international obligations undertaken by the State, such as those under international human rights law.

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In 2005, the efforts of Governments as diverse as those of Afghanistan, Albania, Iraq, Ireland and Paraguay to conduct a strategic review of their migration policies, approaches and mechanisms are illustrative of the desire for intra-governmental coherence. And also of the need for inter-ministerial co-ordination.

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The important thing is to get all key stakeholders in the migration process around the same table. This can happen in a more general setting or a more restricted participation according to the topic of concern to each and every major player.

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Possible solutions at an international level

At the regional level, the proliferation of Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) on migration in the past decade is emblematic of the need for regional dialogue and cooperation. Developments such as the recent inclusion of countries of destination in the Asian Ministerial Consultations on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour in September this year illustrate their potential to evolve to meet needs.

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IDM

At the broader international level, consultative mechanisms such as the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) are increasingly seen as sources of coherence for migration management at an international level. I want to mention in this respect the workshop organized this year by IOM and the GCIM which brought together representatives of no less than nine different RCPs around the same table.

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Partnerships

Under this very same heading, the partnerships on Migration and Trade between IOM, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization; or the one on Migration and Health between the Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization and IOM; or, finally the one on Migration and Development between the Government of the Netherlands, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

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IAMM

The process that led to the elaboration of the International Agenda for Migration Management (IAMM) with its objective to foster inter-State dialogue and cooperation at the global level. The IAMM, a non-binding reference system and policy framework on migration management at the international level, has significant value as a basis for future inter-State cooperation. Four big regional consultations were held under its

auspices in Africa, in Europe and Central Asia, in Asia and Oceania, in Africa and in the Americas.

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IAMM Studies

- The International Agenda on Migration Management
- Interstate Cooperation and Migration
- Migration and International Legal Norms

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Further IAMM work

The work of the IAMM continues with capacity building workshops such as those carried out under the framework of the MIDSA and MIDWA and which put to good use IOM's Essentials of Migration Management (EMM).

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Bodies

The conduct of the UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development has raised expectations about improved levels of policy coherence at the global level.

Moreover, regional economic regimes and political institutions such as those shown on the screen behind me are increasingly placing migration on their agendas and integrating migration considerations into their work.

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Possible solutions at stakeholder level

While migration policy is principally the domain of sovereign States, each aspect of migration concerns **stakeholders in addition to government**. Consequently, policy coherence also depends on the timely identification and active engagement of members of the private business community, civil society, NGOs, migrants associations, and others at all levels.

These stakeholders must be ready to take ownership of partnerships.

Reflecting this recognition, IOM has recently created a Business Advisory Board.

I would now like to turn to coherence in policy domains, focusing on a few key areas.

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Migration and Development

Just as migration has an impact on development, development has an impact on migration, and the implications in both directions require attention.

Migration has the potential to offer gains to virtually all involved, if properly managed: countries of origin; countries of destination; and migrants. Of course, remittances and investments by diasporas are not the panacea for development challenges. They should not be perceived as substitutes for international development assistance or national economic reform strategies and development budgets.

Only through coordinated efforts can migration and development communities maximize the positive development potential of migration and minimize its costs.

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Migration and Trade

It is difficult to envision a world where there is an increasingly free flow of capital, goods and services without increased movement of people. There is important work going on through negotiations under Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Trade negotiators and migration policy makers must understand one another's terminology, priorities and viewpoints so as to realize the huge gains that have been predicted from increased mobility.

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Migration and Security

Recent efforts to combat terrorism have put security concerns at the forefront of the discussion of international migration, yet terrorism is not, of course, the only link between migration and security. Irregular migration (including human trafficking and smuggling), which undermines a State's capacity to regulate the entry and stay of migrants, may also pose a security threat.

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Migration and Security (cont.)

A key challenge faced by States is that of balance. In other words, how to increase security without stifling legitimate and needed movement (including the need for a mobile international workforce) and without imposing serious constraints on the personal rights and liberties of migrants and asylum seekers. It is not possible to meet this challenge unless coherence is achieved between security policies, migration policies and human rights obligations, at a minimum.

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Migration and Health

As migration flows around the world increase, the health of mobile populations and the societies with which they are affiliated is becoming a major public concern. The re-emergence of tuberculosis (TB) in developed parts of the world, the rapid spread of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and concerns regarding a possible avian influenza pandemic are just a few examples of the relationship between population mobility and health.

Another dimension requiring attention is that of the mobility of health workers.

Linking migration health and public health calls for bridging all phases of a migrant's journey (departure, transit, arrival, and return).

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Migration and the Environment

In recent years responses to major disasters have occupied the international community, while comparatively little attention has been paid to the long-term migration consequences of predictable environmental forces such as global climate change, desertification, the greenhouse effect, river erosion, deforestation and other identifiable climatic and environmental trends.

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Migration and the Environment (cont.)

While environmental factors can influence migration patterns, migration can also affect the environment. For example, significant inflows of migrants – whether from abroad or internally from rural to urban centres – can increase the resource burden on often already-strained infrastructures such as the general environment, drinking water, housing, power, communications and transportation in host communities. This is a domain where a lot of work remains to be done before we get the right policy equation.

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Capacity Building

There will be little progress towards policy coherence if states do not improve their capacity to effectively manage migration.

- States must have the ability to analyze and understand the migratory flows affecting them.
- States must also have the appropriate infrastructure to develop legislation, to formulate policy, and to manage programmes.
- States must have the capacity to train their personnel on migration and migration-related issues.
- States must have the capacity to identify and effectively engage relevant stakeholders.

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Conclusion

Temptation for policy makers is to deal with specifics and with the politically sensitive issues. As a result there is no comprehensive longer-term policy.

The recent period and particularly this year has been a period in which International attention was increasingly focused on the opportunities of migration – for national and

international growth, development and stability – if effectively managed. As proof of this I quote the overall work and report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), the UN’s High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, as well as the World Bank’s Global Economic Prospects.

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The Geneva Migration Group (GMG)

Several organizations have already come together through the Geneva Migration Group (GMG), a forum of agency heads interested in migration, which could easily be enlarged and reinforced to fulfil the need for inter-agency coordination.

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Policy interaction

While the need for policy coherence is relevant to most disciplines, it is particularly acute for migration in view of the multi-disciplinary and transnational character of migration.

Current international attention offers a unique opportunity:

- for discussion of the challenges of migration-related policy coherence;
- for reflecting on the institutional architecture necessary for achieving policy coherence at the international level; and
- to mobilize national and global political will.

The international community may now be ready to acknowledge that migration and migration policy should routinely interact with the agendas of related policy domains and vice versa on a continuing basis, just as environmental issues and the observance of human rights are factored into development and other agendas.

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Without policy coherence – within governments; between States; among other stakeholders (such as international organizations, the private business sector, trade-unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)); and across migration and related policy domains – migration’s promise cannot be fully realized.