

Knowledge to lead

Seminar on Migration and Sustainable Development

Part of the 2012 Migration and Development Series
jointly organized by UNITAR, IOM, UNFPA, and the MacArthur Foundation

16 April 2012, Conference Room E (NLB); UN HQ, New York

Background

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, herein “Rio+20”), to be held in June of this year in Rio de Janeiro Brazil, will mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The Conference, among others, will address new and emerging challenges to sustainable development resulting in a focused political document that will make notable contributions in advancing the goal of sustainable development. In light of the renewed political commitment for sustainable development—in particular in the context of the post-2015 development agenda—and in preparation for the Rio+20 Conference, the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the MacArthur Foundation will host a seminar on “Migration and Sustainable Development” on April 16, 2012 at the United Nations Headquarters.

The seminar will address strategic responses to the challenges posed by human mobility trends in a context of development. In particular, the seminar will focus on heightened risk and vulnerability resulting from changing climate patterns, lack of economic and livelihood opportunities and growing economic inequalities. We will also address issues of poverty, and resource scarcity in post-conflict situations as well as demographic change, weakening ecosystems and increasing urbanization.

These factors have long had an impact on global migration flows and on the ability of migrants to effectively integrate in their host communities. The scale of such flows, both internal and cross-border, has greatly increased over the past decades. While it remains challenging to measure the impact of these factors on future migration trends, several recent research studies have underlined its risks and have predicted alarming figures. In 2010 alone, 42 million people were displaced due to the effect of natural hazards compared to 17 million in 2009.¹ By 2050, 150 million people may be displaced due to the effects of climate change.² Rural-urban migration is increasing consistently. The majority of migrants tend to move to highly populated areas that are often already severely challenged by scarce natural resources, severe exposure to environmental degradation and natural hazards. In fact, the Zero Draft of the outcome document³ of the Rio+20 Conference, points to building sustainable cities (article 72) as a critical framework. In 2060 compared to 2000, there may be around 300 million additional migrants living in floodplains in Africa and Asia. Similarly, despite high economic growth rates experienced recently by several African countries, the number of the African urban poor in 2015 is

¹ Yenotani, M. 2011. *Displacement Due to Natural Hazard-Induced Disasters: Global Estimates for 2009 and 2010*. Oslo: IDMC & NRC.

² Myers, N. & Kent, J. 1995. *Environmental Exodus: An Emergent Crisis in the Global Arena*. Washington, DC: The Climate Institute.

³ The Future We Want - Zero draft of the outcome document, Rio+20.



unitar

United Nations Institute for Training and Research



MACARTHUR
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation



expected to almost double with respect to 1990⁴. These factors along with swelling pressures on public services such as health and education, and increased difficulties to access water and employment opportunities, create barriers to sustainable development.

Yet, if properly managed, migration can contribute to poverty alleviation and the growth of prosperity not only of individuals, but also of both countries of origin and destination. Migration due to social, economic and environmental challenges is not only a manifestation of acute vulnerability; it can also represent a logical and legitimate livelihood diversification and adaptation strategy. Migration can enhance the overall capacity of households and communities to cope with change. Indeed, migration can contribute to sustainable development by enabling local populations to increase their resilience to developmental challenges, while at the same time offering them an alternative to permanent migration.

To this end, this half-day seminar will consider migration in the context of sustainable development by examining the relationship between migration and development for the benefit of both societies and migrants.

Seminar objectives

- Identify the role of migration within the context of the Rio+20 Conference and the post-2015 development agenda;
- Explore the advantages of migration in the context of sustainable development as a means to enhance the impact of migration benefits and reduce its challenges;
- Analyze measures necessary to mitigate the effects of social, economic, and environmental challenges through preparing for and managing migration effectively;
- Explore cross cutting issues of human mobility, rural to urban migration, economically motivated and induced migration, as well as return and reintegration of qualified nationals.

Methodology

The seminar will propose expert presentations followed by an interactive discussion.

Target Audience

This seminar is designed for the members of Permanent Missions. UN staff and interested representatives of non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector are also welcome to attend. Applicants are requested to regard their participation as a firm commitment.

Registration and Contact

If you have any questions regarding the event or to register, please contact UNITAR at:

UNITAR c/o Mr. Pierpaolo Capalbo
1 United Nations Plaza, Suite DC1-603
New York, NY 10017-3515
Email: pierpaolo.capalbo@unitar.org; mahillet@un.org
Phone: (212) 963-3021 or 9196; Fax: (212) 963-9686 or 0995

Registration deadline: 12 April 2012

⁴ Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change (2011). Final Project Report. The Government Office for Science, London



unitar

United Nations Institute for Training and Research



MACARTHUR
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation