

Migration and Development - Reflection Dinner

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Peter Verhaeghe - Caritas Europa



Migration and Development - An overview
of the political discourses



Migration & Development – evening debate 2nd of May 2007 - INTRODUCTION

The debate linking migration and development policies is certainly not new, but it has gained considerable momentum on the global as well as on several regional political agendas these last years. For the purpose of this evening debate I will highlight some key moments of that process:

1. In 2003 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan takes the initiative to set up a **Global Commission on International Migration**. The Commission held a series of regional consultations and studies, involving all relevant stakeholders, including the Churches and NGO Community.
2. In 2005 the **Global Commission** publishes its report ***“Migration in an interconnected world: New Directions for Action”***. The Commission in its report calls for a shift of paradigm concerning migration management in order to realise the full potential of human mobility, including the promotion of migrants’ contribution to development and poverty reduction in countries of origin. A number of recommendations are formulated to enhance the positive impact of migration on the development of countries of origin. Insisting on the fact that remittances are private money, the report recommends to combine measures to facilitate transfer of remittances with macro-economic policies in countries of origin that support economic growth. A condition sine qua non to realise the potential of human mobility is the commitment by all states to protect human rights and labour standards that should be enjoyed by all migrants.
3. Still in 2005, the European Commission publishes a **Green Paper** – a consultation document – on an EU approach to manage economic migration. The paper acknowledges that EU can benefit from a well reflected labour migration policy in terms of tackling the demographic challenges. The paper highlights *“the importance of ensuring that an EU economic migration policy delivers a secure legal status and a guaranteed set of rights to assist the integration of those who are admitted”*. The Christian NGOs in their joint contribution agree with that statement but draw the attention to the need for a more balanced approach, aiming at reaching a “triple win” situation, where countries of origin, countries of destination AND the migrant him- or herself benefit from migration.
4. In September 2005 the European Commission presents a **communication on *“migration and development, some concrete orientations”***. It recognises the importance of linking migration and development policies as one element of a comprehensive “Policy Coherence for Development”. The document suggests policy measures to facilitate transfer of remittances, to support and increase involvement of diasporas in development of their country of origin, to promote circular migration and to prevent brain drain. The first report on the impact of the EU commitment to policy coherence for development is expected in the course of this year.
5. The above mentioned “triple win” is a central issue in the **UN report on migration and development**, presented in May 2006. The report again

recognises that migration, including circular migration, can be a positive force for development if the necessary legal framework allowing legal labour migration is put in place. At the subsequent HLD in September, participants *“recognized that international migration, development and human rights were intrinsically interconnected. Respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all migrants were considered essential to reap the full benefits of international migration.”*

6. At the **Euro-Africa Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development held in Rabat** on 10-11 July 2006, the participating states commit to *“creating and developing a close partnership between their respective countries so as to work together, following a comprehensive, balanced, pragmatic and operational approach, and respecting the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, as regards the phenomenon of migratory routes that affect our peoples. This partnership between the countries of origin, transit and destination aims to offer a concrete and appropriate response to the fundamental issue of controlling migratory flows and is based on the strong conviction that the management of migration between Africa and Europe must be carried out within the context of a partnership to combat poverty and promote sustainable development and co-development.”* Although there is a clear commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, we find a very strong focus on migration control and on the fight against irregular migration in the proposed measures.
7. At the **Tripoli conference in November** of last year, the participating states, acknowledging the importance of the outcome of both the UNHLD and of the Rabat Conference, agree to start taking measures to address the migration phenomenon and the opportunities and challenges posed by it in a number of key areas for cooperation, including the area of migration and development. The participating states agree that well-managed migration can have a positive development impact for countries of origin, transit and destination and that they will consider mechanisms and channels that facilitate circular migration.
8. The first meeting of the **Global Forum on Migration and Development**, as a concrete outcome of the UN HLD on migration and development, will take place in July in Brussels. As NGOs we welcome the organisation of this follow up to the HLD. We are however surprised with the format of the event, leaving little space for civil society to participate. We do acknowledge the efforts made by the Belgian Government to involve civil society, but we regret that the conference could not be organised according to regular UN customary rules. We are confident however that our input will be reflected in the conclusions and recommendations of the Forum.

In **conclusion** to this overview, we can say that these steps are a promising start of a long process which should lead to concrete action in creative and visionary political decisions aiming at maximising the benefits of international migration for countries of origin, of destination as well as for migrants themselves and for their families.