

**Background notes for discussion on migration and integration
Meeting of Triglav Circle Europe in Berlin, June 2011**

1. Migration has been a feature of human history since time immemorial. The human ancestors are believed to have moved initially out of Africa into the open spaces of Asia and from there in the course several ten thousand years into all parts of the globe. Later significant movements of large populations concern the Aryan migration into India, the migration of Celts and Germanic or Slavonic tribes throughout Europe, the movements of Turkic tribes into Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East, the Bantu migration into Southern Africa, and the Arab Muslim migration into Northern Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

2. Predominantly agricultural societies have known seasonal migration as a common feature, especially among nomadic tribes focussing on animal husbandry. With the beginning of industrialization and urbanization there has been and continues to be a migratory movement of populations from the rural areas into the cities, presently taking place on a large scale in China. Another common feature is the internal migration of people in order to seek protection and security from violent conflicts or natural disasters. Two special migratory movements in history need to be mentioned, i.e. the migration of traders, settlers and representatives of political-military power as part of colonialism, and the forced migration of millions of African people into the Americas through the slave trade.

3. Until the emergence of the modern nation state claiming sovereignty over a territory and the right to control movements across its borders, the distinction between *internal and "international" migration* did not apply. During the 17th and 18th century significant migratory movements occurred in Europe on the invitation of the rulers of Russia, Prussia, Austria-Hungary in the interest of cultivating their territories as well as benefiting from specialized know-how and competence. The area around Berlin has been marked by the immigration of French, Dutch and Polish migrants. Since the 19th century the migration of large populations, especially from Europe, to the "New World", i.e. the Americas and Australia/New Zealand has given rise to international migration as a major feature in human history.

4. Two world wars and many subsequent armed conflicts within and between states have led to the movement of large groups of *refugees as a special form of forced migration*. The 1951 UN Convention regarding the status of refugees which has been accepted by more than 140 states defines "*refugees*" as persons who have fled persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion and are unable to return because of lack of protection in their home country. "*Asylum seekers*" are persons who have arrived in a particular country and claim refugee status. "*Internally displaced people*" include persons who would fit the broader refugee definition but who have not left their country. The general category of "*Migrants*" refers to all people who have stayed – voluntarily or involuntarily - outside their country of origin for at least one year. This includes people who cross borders to reside and work temporarily in another country and those who emigrate with the intention to settle permanently in another nation.

5. The status of refugees as well as of migrants, i.e. persons who have successfully crossed the border of the country of reception, is dependent on legal recognition through the government of the host country. Recognized refugees are being granted "asylum" and the convention mentioned above specifies the responsibility for their protection. Once definitively re-settled

they become immigrants. Recognized migrants, on the other hand, are being granted permits of residence for a defined period and the possibility to work and earn a living. However, the criteria for recognition in the case of refugees are rather narrow with the consequence that many refugees end up as “undocumented” migrants with an “irregular status”. The willingness of governments to receive migrants and grant them legal status is limited as well and dependent on judgements of political expediency; as a consequence, many would-be-migrants first try to be recognized as refugees and, after having been rejected, then seek ways to stay in the country of reception. As a result, *the distinction between the status of migrant and refugee is fluid.*

6. The rights and obligations of migrant workers have been stated formally in *the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990)*; this convention has entered into force in 2003 after having been ratified by the necessary minimum number of countries. However, most of the potential countries of reception have so far refrained from signing and ratifying the convention, or have even declared their opposition. The convention groups together those rights and principles that apply to the situation of migrant workers and are part of the recognized core human rights instruments. Combined with the core standards for decent work developed by the International Labour Organization, the convention serves as the basis for a rights-based approach to the condition of migrant workers and their families.

7. At present the *total population of migrants* (including refugees but excluding internally displaced people) *is estimated at 215 million*, i.e. 3% of the world population; almost half of them are women. Over the last 25 years this number has more than doubled and it is likely to continue to grow. It is expected that the migrant population by 2050 will have increased to 405 million. This figure does not include “undocumented migrants” who in the USA constitute 10 million according to recent estimates, in Europe 7 million and in India up to 20 million. The global total of internally displaced people exceeds 30 million, of whom more than half are found in Africa. At the same time, the number of refugees has been declining by appr. 25% over the last decade. While almost 2/3 of the total migrant population has moved into industrialized countries especially in Europe and North America, the reverse is true for refugees: 6, 5 million out of the 9, 2 million refugees at present live in developing countries in the global south. The share of refugees among the migrant population in Asia is 23% and in Africa 22%, but only 2% in Europe. On the other hand, Europe has received 56 million migrants which constitute 7, 7% of its population, North America 41 million (12, 9%) and Australia 5, 8 million (18, 7%). Based on the share of total population the top receiving countries were Qatar (87%), the United Arab Emirates (70%) and Kuwait (69%), and their popularity as destinations has increased owing to their more resilient labour markets. The largest diaspora groups are Chinese (35 million), Indians (20 million), and Philipinos (7 million). [Most statistical figures are taken from the 2005 report of the Global Commission on International Migration and from a recent UNCTAD report].

8. The process of economic and financial globalization has increased the pressure for migration because of the growing inequality between and within countries in the global South and industrialized countries in the North and West. The lack of human security, meaningful employment and the experience of marginalization are the prime motives of migration. The dynamic of migration is likely to increase as a consequence of ecological degradation and the impact of climate change in countries of the South. It is estimated that over the next decades millions of *environmental refugees* will be added to the present global number of migrants seeking a country of reception. Another alarming feature is the increase of various forms of

involuntary or forced migration; e.g. each year between 600.000 and 800.000 men, women and children become victims of human trafficking.

9. *Migration has positive as well as negative consequences* both for the individuals and for the communities concerned. The evaluation is dependent on the specific circumstances and cannot be generalized. For the *countries of reception*, the offer of migrant labour correlates with the need to find both qualified and unqualified workers to fill gaps in the domestic labour market. In addition, migrant workers with full employment stabilize the social security systems and the demographic balance which will continue to shift in the direction of persons of advanced age. In Europe, 85% of the population increase between 1990 and 2000 has been due to immigration; without migration Europe would have lost 4, 4 million people between 1995 and 2000. However, in many countries the entry of migrants is being perceived as a threat to internal security and social cohesion; as a consequence these countries introduce strict measures of border control. It is estimated that appr. 2000 migrants die each year while trying to cross the Mediterranean in order to reach Europe; the attempt to cross from Mexico into the USA is costing the lives of at least 400 people annually.

10. *For the migrants, their families and the countries of origin migration also has advantages and disadvantages.* As a baseline it should be acknowledged that leaving one's home community is a difficult and risky step and has disruptive consequences for the community. Survival in a strange country can be a major challenge which often is reinforced by the experience of racist and xenophobic hostility. On the other hand, migration for many offers the possibility to escape from structural unemployment and poverty and allows them by way of remittances to support family members back home. It is estimated that the total amount of remittances in 2004 was at least \$ 150 billion, with many experts even suggesting double the amount. In 2009 the total amount of remittances according to UN figures was \$ 316 billion, i.e. 20 billion less than in 2008, due to the economic crisis. UNCTAD estimates that in 2012 total remittances may reach the level of \$ 374 billion. In any case, remittances represent a higher amount than the total of ODA and almost equal to FDI; therefore they represent a major source of national income in the countries concerned. For LDCs remittances account for more than 5% of Gross National Income. In some countries, remittances may make up over 50% of the recipient's household income. The main recipients of remittances were Mexico (16 billion), India (9, 9 billion), Philippines (8, 5 billion). According to analyses of UNCTAD the increase of international migration is positively linked to the decline in the number of people living in poverty.

11. On the international level, the most important political response to the pressure of migration and the problem of increasing numbers of "undocumented migrants" would be to develop *a transparent, coordinated and coherent policy* based on the recognition of the human rights of **all** migrants, whether voluntary or forced, documented or not, refugee or migrant worker, man, woman or child etc. This policy should address the issue of acceptable forms of border control, the criteria for legal recognition as refugee or migrant worker, and the provision of opportunities for work and social integration. So far, no effective policy framework has been worked out and in many countries even the most elementary statistical data are lacking which would be required for a reliable policy formulation. On the international level, policies and actions regarding refugees and migrants are not coordinated; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a mandate for protection of refugees but it cannot deal with the growing number of "economic and environmental refugees". On the other hand, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a service organization for governments, operating outside the UN system and not equipped to formulate policy.

12. In response to this unsatisfactory situation the *United Nation General Assembly in 2006 convened the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development*, the first high-level event at the United Nations exclusively devoted to international migration. Since the High-level Dialogue, activities of the United Nations system that seek to maximize the opportunities of international migration for development and to limit its negative impacts have multiplied. In 2006, the Secretary-General established the Global Migration Group (GMG), which aims to coordinate the work of 14 United Nations entities, the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The GMG has been tasked to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to international migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. The 2006 High-level Dialogue also established the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), an informal, state-led, voluntary and non-binding process providing a platform for Governments to share good practices and lessons learnt. The Global Forum is linked to the United Nations through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration and Development. The Global Forum, which has held four annual meetings since 2007, has attracted delegates from over 150 Member States and numerous observers from the United Nations and other international organizations. [Information provided by the DESA of the UN].

13. In the countries of reception, on the other hand, the most urgent policy issue concerns the *integration* of migrants and refugees in the host country. Integration is a long-term process which involves many different fields of policy formation. All efforts of integration should be guided by the recognition and affirmation of the human rights of migrants and refugees and should respect the labour standards developed by the ILO. Integration will be all the more successful if migrants are enabled to use their full potential and encouraged to reach their goals. Integration is likely to fail if migrants experience discrimination and marginalisation in the host community. The UN Population Programme considers that successful integration is dependent on: (1) achievement of language competence; (2) availability of paid employment; (3) provision of a secure legal status; (4) access to civic and political life and ability to enjoy social benefits. In the context of integration programmes female migrants need special attention.

Issues for discussion

1. It makes a difference for the discussion whether migration is considered primarily as a burden whose impact is to be limited or as an opportunity. The predominant tendency in the developed countries is to take a negative view of migration and to seek ways of limiting it as much as possible. This attitude disregards the economic and social benefits associated with the arrival of migrants in past and present and forgets the historic experience that much of the social and economic development in this part of the world was the result of voluntary and involuntary migration of large groups of people.

2. However, the problematic or critical view of migration is not limited to public opinion in the reception countries. A considerable part of international migration is involuntary since many of today's migrants, while they are not refugees according to the definition in current international law, have been compelled to leave their homelands because of severe breakdown of political, economic and social conditions. Millions of migrants have moved against their deepest wishes. If they had the choice to make a living (or to improve their economic conditions) without leaving their families and communities, they would choose to remain in their homelands.

3. Any realistic approach to the issue of migration would have to admit that there are advantages associated with migration both for the migrants and their communities of origin and for the receiving communities. In addition, migration in its different forms has been part of human history and is likely to become even more widespread under the conditions of a globalized world. The global economy even encourages mobility on the part of workers and employees. Even if the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals were reached by the year 2015 the dynamic of migration would hardly be affected. Migration has become a global challenge that calls for a cooperative approach by the international community.

4. The purpose of developing a coherent, coordinated and transparent policy on the international level should, therefore, be to minimize the negative and problematic features of migration and to maximize its advantages and benefits. Obviously, the needs and interests of the different parties involved, i.e. the migrants themselves with their families, the countries and communities of origin and the receiving countries, are not necessarily complementary, but more often will be in conflict. Priority attention needs to be given to the protection of the rights of migrants irrespective of the specific circumstances that have made them move from their home country. Much wider support needs to be mobilized for the International Convention and the respective ILO standards.

5. A coherent policy would also have to address the structural issues associated with the flow of migration. These include the fact that facilitating and encouraging migration has become part of the business of human trafficking that escapes legal and political control. Further, many governments in the developed world compete by addressing invitations and offers to highly qualified potential migrants with no concern for the “brain drain” caused in the countries of origin and the loss in terms of the prior public investments for the education and formation of the persons concerned. Another particularly urgent issue concerns the situation of the growing number of “undocumented” migrants who do not qualify for asylum as refugees and do not meet the criteria for being offered at least temporary residence. Since they are not protected by any of the agreed conventions they become victims of exploitation as cheap labour for unstable and risky jobs, or are being forcibly expelled under inhuman conditions.

6. The main policy issue on the part of the receiving countries concerns the modalities and processes of integration. And here again there may be a conflict of interests both among the migrants and in the host community: Is integration primarily a matter of being granted and accepting the rights and responsibilities of membership of a given community, or does it involve a comprehensive change of culture? There is agreement that a policy of integration aims at furthering social cohesion, or at least intends to avoid the formation of ghettos; but this still leaves the task how to reconcile social cohesion with the recognition of cultural plurality. None of the models developed so far has offered a fully satisfactory solution to the challenge on integration. An exchange of “good practices” should be encouraged.

