University for Peace

Our time is an era of unprecedented human mobility

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- This paper highlighted the challenges the world is facing regarding migration and invited us to reflect and work towards overcoming these challenges. We live in a world that is on the move, migration is one of the most powerful and immediate strategies for poverty reduction.

- There are drivers that make migration a mega trend: 1. Demography; 2. Demand for labor; 3. Distance Shrinking technology; 4. Digital revolution; 5. Degradation; 6. Desperation; 7. Disparities and; 8. Disasters.

- Migration is a global phenomenon that affects millions around the world. Over one million migrants entered Europe in 2015, more than twice as many as in all of 2014 and further 3.700 died the same year. Today, we face and unprecedented forced migration, simultaneous and complex humanitarian disasters, anti-migrant sentiment and we are experiencing an unprecedented political malaise.

- Large scale migration or human mobility is inevitable, necessary and desirable. This means: first, we must find a way to change the migration narrative. The second challenge is to protect the human rights of all migrants. The third and crucial challenge is thus learning to manage diversity: our societies will inexorably become more multi-ethnic, more multi- cultural, and more multi- religious. In conclusion, migration is as old as humankind.

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It is a true honor and a privilege to be addressing you today as a representative of the International Organization for Migration, a one hundred and sixty two Member States intergovernmental migration agency. We are glad that migration is a topic that is now receiving more attention than ever on the global and regional agendas; although we regret some of the circumstances in which migration is being highlighted. I hope that together we can reflect and work towards overcoming the challenges that we are now facing.

I. A World On the Move

We live in a world that is on the move. Our time is an era of unprecedented human mobility. More people are on the move within their countries and crossing international borders than ever before, more than one billion in our world of seven and a half billion inhabitants. Almost one in every seven of us is a permanent or temporary migrant.

Migration is, and always has been, one of the most powerful and immediate strategies for poverty reduction. It has the power to transform societies by helping to meet labour needs and boosting the vibrancy of economies and societies. If the world's 240 million international permanent migrants were to constitute a nation, this new nation would have a population slightly smaller than that of Indonesia and somewhat larger than Brazil's. Currently, migrants send home four hundred thirty five (435) billion US dollars annually which constitutes a GDP of a small or medium-size European nation such as Austria. New York City's migrants alone would make them the third largest city in the USA after New York City itself and Los Angeles.

Migration "Drivers"

Migration is thus a "mega-trend" – and will remain so because of several "drivers" of large-scale migration.

1. Demography – ageing North and youthful South.

The global population growth and population ageing in some global regions will have a significant impact on the future societies. Currently 40 million newcomers enter the workforce each year worldwide. The rate of this increase is gradually declining and by 2030 will only reach 31 million.

Most of this labour force growth will happen in developing countries. There are however concerns with respect to the capacity of some developing countries

to generate a sufficient number of jobs to absorb new workers. Already today, scarcity of decent jobs in the countries presents significant developmental challenges and represents one of the important migration push factors. This push is further reinforced by income inequality within and between countries, as well as obstacles in many countries for upward economic and social mobility.

2. Demand for labor – differentials in labour shortages vs labour surplus across the global regions.

There is no longer a simple bipolar division between North and South, or developed and developing countries. The global economy is increasingly geographically diversified. Many non-OECD countries offer new opportunities for high and low-skilled migrants, including those coming from developed countries.

The demographic context in countries such as China is becoming similar to that of Europe, which has led to recent adoption of new policies to attract skilled migrants to emerging economies.

These trends take place in an environment where education systems in many countries are failing to produce the skills needed and recognized by employers. The same formal degree implies vastly different real educational outcomes across the world. The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2016 ranks the US as the sixth best country globally in terms of quality of higher education and training. In comparison, Costa Rica was placed as the 35th; while some other countries trail far behind, including Brazil (93), Egypt (111) and Nigeria (124).

Thus, many educational systems do not deliver key skills needed by employers, focusing on teaching what to think, rather than how to think. Jobs at all skill levels increasingly require critical and analytical competencies, interpersonal, team and entrepreneurial skills. Without a concerted effort to create more skills worldwide, the situation will become critical, given the changing global economic power landscape. McKinsey forecasts a global shortfall of 40 million highly skilled workers and a surplus of 95 million low-skilled workers by 2030. Hence, low-skilled workers would have higher risks of unemployment, and, lower job stability.

3. Distance shrinking technology – cheap and rapid means of transport.

With more people on the move now than at any other time in recorded history, and **distance shrinking technology** plays one of the major roles in these

processes. The latest migratory movements have shown us that the migrants' perception is, in most of the cases, influenced by several elements such as the means of transport, their cost and the information gathered regarding the host countries and their cultures.

Moreover, the analysis of "distance" has to be interpreted within a context of changing transport systems and travel times. As a matter of fact, a few years ago, we started to witness the raise of unexpansive and rapid means of transports that drastically changed migration dynamics: leading to large-scale migration.

Nowadays, migrants are able to purchase a long distance flight ticket in order to pursue their journeys towards the better life they long for. In a short lapse of time, we have observed increasing numbers of extra-continental migrants using buses, boats and planes, covering thousands of kilometers to reach the countries of their choice faster than ever.

The massive emergence of low-cost plane companies has also enabled international organizations and governments to provide transport assistance to stranded migrants and refugees in many countries.

4. **Digital revolution**, instant communication and information

300 million persons were connected to the Internet at the turn of the century and today, 3 billion, heading toward 4 billion Internet users today. Digital technologies also enable new ways for collaboration between workers and employers in different countries, without the need to cross physical borders, or on the contrary, enabling workers to choose where they want to live and work remotely, the so-called "digital nomads".

5. **Degradation** of the environment, as well as the effects of climate change.

Central America and the Caribbean are particularly prone to extreme environmental disasters, as well as slow-onset environmental change. According to the Global Climate Risk Index of 2015, during the last 10 years, Honduras and El Salvador have been the first and fourth countries respectively most affected by climate events. Three of the major environmental occurrences affecting the region are:

The drought in the Dry Corridor of Central America, which is seriously affecting agriculture and food security, and hence, livelihood opportunities for already vulnerable persons.

The El Niño phenomenon causing extreme weather events with major consequences on the environment, the agriculture and lives of the people.

The rising sea level that has a major impact on the islands of the Caribbean. According to the report by CARIBSAVE and UNDP in 2010, the estimation of 1cm sea level rise would lead to a displacement of around one hundred and ten thousand (110,000) people in the Caribbean.

6. Desperation

People crossing the Mediterranean and other risky routes today are not only refugees but also migrants, fleeing abject poverty, political persecution and hopelessness; unaccompanied minors (UAMs), persons seeking to join their families, the sick and the elderly.

7. Disparities

Socio-economic disparities create ever widening gaps between and within the countries, as more and more wealth is concentrated into the hands of the few. For instance, income inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean remains 65% higher than in high-income countries, 36% higher than in East Asian countries, and 18% higher than in sub-Saharan Africa.

8. Disasters

Disasters of all sorts as natural disasters, armed conflict, internal turmoil and political instability affect the world. Recent disasters included earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal, typhoon "Haiyan" in the Philippines and floods in Pakistan among others. In 2013, 22 million people were displaced by natural disasters.

Mobility and disasters are profoundly interlinked: natural hazards and environmental change can be drivers of migration. Mobility can be both a livelihood diversification and a life-saving strategy in the face of natural hazards. It can improve people's access to income opportunities and essential services, and support the wellbeing and resilience of those staying behind. At the same time, moving can expose people to a whole array of new hazards including segregation and discrimination, and represents a factor of specific vulnerability in disaster conditions.

II. The Perfect Storm

Unfortunately, forced migration and desperation migration are also mega-trends. It is a global phenomenon: not just in the Mediterranean, but from the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea to the Indian Ocean; the Red Sea, in the Sahara desert, in the Caribbean between Haiti and South Florida, and in the US-Mexican border.

For example, some one million migrants entered Europe in 2015, more than twice as many as in all of 2014. A further three thousand and seven hundred died, more than the death toll of 3.200 in 2014.

Bay of Bengal, in Southeast Asia is emerging as one of the world's deadliest routes due to mistreatment of smugglers and diseases on boats. The first half of 2015 had seen the highest-ever estimated departures: thirty one thousand. But the 2015 fatality rate had been three times higher in those waters than in the Mediterranean Sea.

A. We face and unprecedented forced migration

Today, more people have been – and still are – forced to migrate than at any other time, since the Second World War. Some amongst the 60 million, 20 million refugees and 40 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Forced migrants constitute a population the size of France.

B. Today we also face unprecedented simultaneous and complex humanitarian disasters stretching from the western bulge of Africa to Asia, with few stable areas in between.

Conflicts are driving people to migrate under dangerous circumstances, via the sea and the desert. On land and sea, these migrants have left a "trail of tears", as victims of criminal gangs of smugglers who use torture and extort to de-humanize their victims. These "travel agents of death" have led to the death of three thousand and five hundred (3,500) migrants this year alone.

C. Unprecedented anti-migrant sentiment

Our time is also a period of unprecedented anti-migrant sentiment, this is regardless of the unfilled labor demand in the ageing developed countries. Closing borders, instituting rigid visa regimes, criminalizing irregular migrants and the implementation of other rash measures, are driving more and more

migrants into the hands of smugglers. The attacks in Paris, in November 2015 have been fueling other potential tragedies such as greater anti-migrant and anti-refugee sentiment, xenophobia and the victimization of refugees and migrants.

D. We are experiencing an unprecedented Political Malaise

There is a vacuum of political leadership, lack of political courage, and an erosion of international moral authority on migration issues, with international humanitarian law being violated by all sides. Additionally, public confidence in government's ability or willingness to manage these migration flows is a further element; and a pervasive "globalization of indifference" to quote Pope Francis.

III. A High Road Scenario

It is entirely within our capacity, however, to manage these migratory movements – if there is political will.

As Director General, William Lacy Swing says: "we have to be ready to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of migration. IOM's thesis is that "migration is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be managed". Large-scale migration or human mobility is:

- **Inevitable** given demographic and other driving forces I've described such as disasters, distance-shrinking and labor demand;

- **Necessary** if skills are to be available, jobs to be filled, and economies to flourish. The truth is that the industrialized world would need more, not fewer, migrants.

- Finally, migration is **desirable** if managed in a responsible, humane and dignified manner."

How then should we respond to, or manage the realities and challenges that are now before us?

We must avoid "refugee amnesia". IOM and UNHCR were founded in 1951, precisely to take hundreds of thousands of Europeans ravaged by World War Two, to a new life in countries outside Europe. The 200,000 Hungarians who fled Hungary in 1956 (only 60 years ago), were received with open arms, open hearts and open purses in Austria and Yugoslavia.

At a time when policies have not kept pace with change, new migration policies, such as what Director General Swing calls the "High Road" Scenario, are clearly needed to provide an integrated and holistic approach to making migration better for all.

> "High road" policies include: more legal avenues of migration; more resettlement countries and larger resettlement quotas; temporary protective status; seasonal worker permits; voluntary return; humanitarian border management; relocation; integration; and so on.

> High road policies mean not only better national actions and whole-of-government approach, but better regional and global efforts. International cooperation needs to consider migration subject of shared responsibility, genuine partnerships, rights, and policy coherence. This approach requires considering development implications in migration policy, as well as migration implications in development policies, from the perspective of both countries of origin and destination.

We also need to communicate better: public information, public education and awareness-raising programs to help citizens understand, and manage human mobility; and abandon false stereotypes about migrants.

In Conclusion

Let me quote again DG Swing on what he sees as three challenges, challenges the world must meet to recover its dignity and shared responsibility.

1. First, we must find a way to **change the migration narrative.**

The public discourse on migration at present is toxic. Historically, migration has always been overwhelmingly positive. Many successful countries were built, and continue to be built on the backs of migrants and with the brains of migrants. Migrants are agents of development. Migrants bring innovation. Migrants don't take our jobs, they create new jobs.

Evidence suggests that innovation and economic dynamism come not only from skilled workers, but from complementarity between employment sectors and workers with different skills. For example, domestic workers enable the best use of professional talents of highly skilled women.

Migrants are not only workers, but also employers, entrepreneurs and investors. Every year, migrant entrepreneurs employ an average of 2.4 per cent of all the workers in OECD countries.

2. The second challenge is **to protect the human rights of all migrants**.

It is crucial to reduce loss of life and human suffering during, and as a result of migration, and to protect the human rights of all migrants. There is a need to create the conditions for migration to take place in safe, orderly, and dignified ways.

For migration to be successful for migrants and receiving communities, the conditions at destination are important. But critically, what happens before migration, and during migration, also has a significant impact on subsequent integration of migrants in the societies of destination.

Migrants and their families currently bear exorbitant economic, human and social costs, which mostly tend to affect poorer and lower skilled migrants. As stressed by the UN System Task Team report to the Secretary-General (2012), "too many migrants continue to work and live in insecure, precarious and dangerous conditions, often marginalized and subject to discrimination and without access to social and health care services".

In the same direction, IOM's Deputy Director General Laura Thompson said: "The Twenty-First Century has so far shown to be a century of contradictions. Although the world is indeed smaller, with increased communication, as well as increased free movement across border of goods, capital and services, we live in in an era with increased hindrance on the free movement of people."

Only when migrants are safe, well-integrated and healthy, with their rights protected, can they contribute to the development of communities of their origin and destination.

Internationally mobile persons often find themselves in transition – in a limbo – between various legal statuses, between labour markets, education systems and social protection systems. In the absence of effective governance it may lead to the possible loss of rights, vulnerability and brain waste. Safety of the journey and the potential duration and nature of being in transit are also important factors.

The possibility for legal migration and the rights associated with the specific legal status are crucial determinants of future successful integration of migrants, as are structural conditions and public attitudes in the country of destination.

3. The third and crucial challenge is thus **learning to manage diversity**: our societies will inexorably become more multi-ethnic, more multi-cultural, and more multi-religious.

The crucial challenge for the world is how to build tolerant, inclusive and cohesive societies, based on common values and effective equality.

We are witnessing a worrying rise in discrimination, xenophobia, exclusion, and human rights violations of migrants throughout the world. Migration is often the catch-all issue that masks the fears and uncertainties beneath the public's concerns – be they concerns unemployment, housing or social cohesion.

There is a risk that immigration policies in this region and elsewhere will be increasingly shaped by fears and misconceptions rather than evidence, objective debate and a strategic outlook for the future.

The overwhelmingly positive contributions to our societies and economies by the majority of migrants are unfortunately at risk of being forgotten. There is a fine line between a realistic and honest debate about the challenges stemming from migration and the politicized stereotyping and scapegoating that is taking place around the world.

Part of the reason for such negative perceptions is that migratory flows are more visible and more diverse than ever before, generating questions about the changing compositions of our societies, and how to manage greater diversity to the benefit of migrants and the communities where they reside. The world we live in is not static; how we embrace and manage inevitable social change will determine whether it is positive or not for individuals and societies.

Diversity is evidently an opportunity in terms of the injection of new ideas, skills and know-how.

However, it is also a challenge, especially when so many vulnerable migrants arrive to numerous shores and borders. In the short term, increasing diversity may decrease the mutual trust in the communities and present challenges to social cohesion and inclusive growth.

Managing social diversity is one the key challenges of our time. Solutions to these issues and challenges do not only involve migrants. We all need to change and adapt in order to make our societies better places to thrive and compete in the increasingly interconnected world. This may result in a shift in political, economic and social structures which is crucial not only for migrant inclusion,

but also for preventing marginalization by many other lines of societal division, for example that of young people struggling to find jobs.

To succeed in managing diversity will require:

- Political courage, a willingness to invest in public information, public education, awareness-raising and dialogue, and also

- Moving the debate from one of identity, to one of shared values and interests.

Migration is as old as humankind. Turning migration challenges into opportunities for all requires good migration governance; a broad, durable consensus among a wide constituency and coherent, coordinated policies among partners.

Insularity is not attractive, successful global hubs are open and enabling; they challenge and reinvent themselves continuously. Our countries need to change and adapt in order to make our societies better placed to thrive and compete in the increasingly interconnected world. I count on the University for Peace and all of you, its new graduates, to work together with us and all like-minded persons and organizations in taking up this challenge and building a dynamic, inclusive, fair and exciting future.

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you all much success and courage looking into the future!