



THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

International Migration and Development¹

3-7 APRIL 2006

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population [IUSSP] is very pleased to have this opportunity to address the Commission.

The IUSSP is the only international professional association of population specialists. With 2100 members and 300 student associates located in 130 countries, the IUSSP has an active program of scientific activities that bring together population specialists from different disciplines and countries. Through its activities, the IUSSP acts as a catalyst for the development of scientific knowledge and policies on a wide range of population issues.

Since the early 1970s, the IUSSP has worked to improve the quality of data on international migration and to study the consequences of international migration for sending and receiving countries. In 2005, the IUSSP organized 12 sessions on international migration and development issues at its XXVth International Population Conference that was held on the 18-23 July in Tours, France. Over 2200 population specialists from 140 countries attended the Conference. We are indebted to our French colleagues in the French National Population Association and the French Government for hosting this Conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to express the IUSSP's gratitude to the

¹ This Statement was prepared by Mary M. Kritz, Cornell University, in her capacity as ex-Secretary-General and Treasurer of the IUSSP, 2002-2005.

National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) in Paris, which has hosted the IUSSP headquarters since 2000, and provided it with generous support.

Each of the sessions on international migration that were held at the Conference focused on specific topics and compared patterns for different countries. The effects of labor migration on both receiving and sending countries were considered as were gender issues, forced migration, and return migration. The sessions were very well attended and participants recommended that the IUSSP sponsor further work on these critical issues in the years ahead.

Conference participants agreed that international migration is a priority topic for governments and an important factor contributing to development and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Conference highlighted the growing global numbers of international migrants and revealed that every country in the world is a sender or receiver of migrants, and growing numbers of countries both receive and send migrants. While most international migrants are unskilled workers migrating to another country in search of improved economic opportunity, many are highly skilled workers sought by receiving countries for their managerial, professional, and technical skills. In order to attract highly skilled workers, countries have introduced special visa-entry programs and regularly sponsor trade fairs at which businesses recruit highly skilled workers. In addition, growing numbers of countries in Europe and North America that wish to attract foreign skilled workers, actively recruit foreign students and encourage them to stay after they complete their studies. The implications of the increased receptivity shown on the part of rich countries for the highly skilled labor of poor countries remain to be determined but a consensus is emerging that emigration and remittances do have positive effects on skill and capital accumulation in sending countries.

Discussions at the Conference revealed that many receiving countries are concerned with their increasing stocks of unskilled workers and the limited effectiveness of policy measures to control illegal immigration. Countries concerned about these issues are considering policy measures to reduce their inflows and stocks of unskilled workers. Moreover, growing numbers of receiving countries are developing labor market and social policies that will allow them to maximize the productivity and labor force participation of their native-born workers in the years ahead. These policy efforts are being driven as much by aging populations and projected demands on pension and welfare programs, as they are by immigration concerns. Moreover, growing levels of unemployment in some countries of immigration, particularly among population subgroups such as youth, also underlie receiving country efforts to reduce reliance on foreign-born low skilled workers.

Integration concerns were also considered in discussions at the Conference. Countries of immigration seek advice regarding how to integrate their foreign-origin populations. These concerns are not limited to traditional immigration countries but have developed in receiving countries in all world regions as growing numbers of countries have become recipients of migrant workers. Best practices toward integration were examined at the Conference toward educational attainment, labour market position, language, religion, and ethnicity. Countries confronting natural decrease of population were reminded that they can reverse that trend by admitting large numbers of immigrants. However, participants considered that few countries experiencing natural population decrease are willing to admit the numbers of immigrants needed to maintain population equilibrium and, therefore, recommended that countries take steps to raise their fertility to replacement levels by introducing family policies.

Other analyses carried out under IUSSP auspices indicate that economically motivated emigration is more likely to occur in countries that have already reached a certain level of development and are advancing economically, rather than in countries that are low on the development scale and continue to experience stagnation.² This occurs because the development process itself is destabilizing and, over the short run, increases rather than decreases emigration pressures. Furthermore, free trade and investment flows can accelerate economic growth among trading partners, leading to alterations in relative prices, wages, incomes, and job opportunities. If migration networks already link groups of persons adversely affected by development changes to compatriots living in another country, increased out-migration is likely to result. Family and community networks are known to promote migration and facilitate migration flows within and across geographic regions.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, the IUSSP wishes to commend the United Nations for the leadership it has provided in the field of population. Special credit is due to the Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat and to the United Nations Population Fund for their work on population and international migration. The United Nations has published several comparative documents that provide information on migration flows, stocks, and policies in different countries and should continue that work in the future. For our part, the IUSSP intends to continue to sponsor scientific activities that can inform the ongoing international dialogue on international migration and to collaborate with other institutions working on this important topic.

² International Migration: Prospects and Policies, edited by J. Edward Taylor and Douglas S. Massey, IUSSP/OUP Series on International Studies in Population, Oxford University Press, 2004.