

## General Assembly:

### Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?

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#### Migration - threat or opportunity ?

Making the political, economic, social and environmental choices to improve a world dominated by flows of people and ideas.

Throughout human history, people have been on the move—exploring new places; pursuing work opportunities; fleeing conflict; or migrating involuntarily due to changing political, social, or environmental conditions. Today there are an estimated **230 million international migrants, a number that is projected to double to over 400 million by 2050.**

Beyond the people who cross international borders, probably more than two to three times as many are internal migrants, people who have moved within their own countries. How could migration influence their own country and above ? Is it a threat or an opportunity for these countries ?

# **General Assembly:**

## **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

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**International migrants** are defined as persons outside their country of birth for at least a year. Each migration corridor has unique features, but there are four major migration flows, where South is a developing country and North is an industrialized country:

- **South-South:**

The largest flow of migrants, just over 82 million or 36 percent in 2013, moved from one developing country to another, as from Indonesia to Saudi Arabia or Nicaragua to Costa Rica.

- **South-North:**

The second-largest flow, just under 82 million or 35 percent, moved from a developing to an industrialized country, as from Morocco to Spain, Mexico to the United States, or the Philippines to South Korea.

- **North-North:**

Some 54 million people or 23 percent of international migrants moved from one industrialized country to another, as from Canada to the United States.

- **North-South:**

Almost 14 million people or 6 percent of migrants moved from industrialized to developing countries, as from Japan to Thailand.

# General Assembly:

## Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?

### Migrant sea arrivals

Refugee and migrant sea arrivals in southern Europe this year have reached more than 80,000 to date, already exceeding the combined sea arrivals in the first four months of 2015.

SEA ARRIVALS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE - in thousands



### 2016 SEA ARRIVALS

Nearly all refugees and migrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East first arrive in the EU's southern edges and press on to the bloc's more prosperous countries in the north.



Source: UNHCR. Note: All figures are estimates and are subject to change.

# **General Assembly:**

## **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

### **1. Environmental**

**Environmental factors have long had an impact on global migration flows, as people have historically left places with harsh or deteriorating conditions.** However, the scale of such flows, both internal and cross-border, is expected to rise as a result of accelerated climate change, with unprecedented impacts on lives and livelihoods. Such migration can have positive and negative effects on both the local coping capacity and the environment in areas from which these migrants originate, as well as in their temporary or permanent destinations.

There has always been a fundamental interdependency between migration and the environment, but the reality of climate change adds new complexity to this nexus, while making the need to address it all the more urgent. Both gradual environmental change and slow- or sudden onset natural disasters influence population migration patterns but in different ways. Natural disasters may include geological hazards such as earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. They may also be of an atmospheric or hydrological nature, such as tropical storms or floods, with secondary impacts such as landslides. Some of the latter may be exacerbated by climate change. Any natural disasters may cause affected populations to leave their homes at least temporarily, although return is often feasible in the long run.

Environmental migration may take place internally, regionally or internationally. Most empirical research, however, tends to suggest that internal migration, such as rural-urban migration, or movement across immediate borders between neighbouring countries, is likely to be predominant.

The type of environmentally induced migration – whether long or short distance, long or short term – will vary with the type of environmental event or process and their severity. In cases of irreversible environmental degradation (for instance due to rises in sea level), resulting migration can require relocation of affected populations either internally or to a third country and may become permanent.

Environmentally-induced migration is best understood as a continuum, ranging from clear cases of forced to clear cases of voluntary movement, with a grey zone in between.

## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

Environmental migration is often portrayed as a failure of adaptation and a worst case scenario. However, while migration can be a manifestation of acute vulnerability, it can also represent a logical and legitimate livelihood diversification and adaptation strategy that has been used for millennia and is likely to be of growing importance in the future. Migration can help reduce risk to lives, livelihoods and ecosystems, contribute to income diversification and enhance overall capacity of households and communities to cope with the adverse effects of environmental and climate change.

Climate change will have a differentiated impact, depending on the physical conditions and the adaptive capacities of countries and communities concerned. Least developed countries and countries with particularly susceptible geographies (such as small island states) as well as economically and socially marginalized groups within the affected communities – the poor, the elderly, women and children – are most vulnerable. Migration, however, is a coping strategy not open to everyone as it depends on resources, information and other social and personal factors. Therefore, it is not necessarily the most vulnerable and the most severely affected by environmental and climatic factors who migrate.

The number of storms, droughts and floods has increased threefold over the last 30 years with devastating effects on vulnerable communities, particularly in the developing world. In 2008, 20 million persons have been displaced by extreme weather events, compared to 4.6 million internally displaced by conflict and violence over the same period. Gradual changes in the environment tend to have an even greater impact on the movement of people than extreme events. For instance, over the last thirty years, twice as many people have been affected by droughts as by storms (1.6 billion compared with approx 718m).

**Future forecasts vary from 25 million to 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050, moving either within their countries or across borders, on a permanent or temporary basis, with 200 million being the most widely cited estimate. This figure equals the current estimate of international migrants worldwide.**

- *For more details on climate change see UNEP research report.*
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# General Assembly:

## Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?

---

### 2. Economic

Migration and flows of people serve as important levers of economic growth, especially in zones of high mobility such as Europe. However, with the recent migrant crisis more than 430,000 crossed the Mediterranean to join Europe just this year. Which is twice the amount who did so in 2014. This is first and foremost viewed as a humanitarian crisis but some people see it as a challenge and threat to the economy of their country.

Many economists are adamant that if countries embrace the arrival of migrants and refugees it could help improve the current economy, but also their economy in 10, 20, and 50 years time. The first reason being that the arrival of migrants is seen as a solution to Europe's demographic challenge. Today Europe has an ageing population and countries like France are already struggling to pay for pensions as there aren't enough workers to pay for the precedent generations (baby boomers). The birth rate is also low as the demographic transition has come to an end in Europe. Today Europe counts an average of 1.5 children per woman aged 15 to 50. On the long term this could have major implications on the productivity of countries, if it wasn't for migration the European working age population would already be shrinking. Germany has created many jobs over the last 10 years but the German population aren't filling them. Thomas Piketty, a French economist encourages the idea that the arrival of immigrants and refugees are an opportunity and that Europe should fully embrace the chance to increase its workforce which could help "jump start the continent's economy."

The arrival of immigrants has proved to be positive in most areas. For example, in London, schools have been showing better results and it is said to be thanks to the recent arrival of migrant children. This will benefit the economy on the long term as it means that the future working population has a higher chance of being specialised and/or qualified in higher education.



## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

Their arrival is also positive as it brings new sets of skills onto the market and workplace diversity both of which have proved to increase productivity. Many immigrants have already had higher education and are very skilled in different sectors. Indeed, this is an opportunity for host countries but a burden for the homelands of these refugees. “Brain drain” is not a new phenomenon, it happens in countries from city to city but also on an international level. Most migrants come from Africa, South America and Asia, they come to Europe, North America and Australasia hoping for new horizons and conditions that allow them to use their degrees. Countries that send migrants are losing skilled and educated people which will slow down their development.

African countries that can attract economic migrants could benefit from the region's rapid population growth. The main flows of migrants are from very poor countries to less poor countries with more economic opportunities and countries like Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa benefited enormously, with low-cost labour from elsewhere in West and Southern Africa, respectively, supporting the countries' mining and agricultural industries. They both have more developed economies than their neighbours as a result.

However, much like the rest of the continent, countries that have historically benefited from migration are facing slower economic growth and pressure on jobs. Rising anti-immigrant sentiment in Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa is a consequence of this and, with locals frustrated over perceptions that migrants are stealing their jobs, violent spats have broken out in both countries. This sentiment is not only found in Africa but also in other host countries and continents.

Sub-Saharan Africa hosts more than 26% of the world's refugee population. The main host countries (Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) are determined by their proximity to conflict, as opposed to their attractiveness as a destination. But most have historically been fairly accommodating of refugee inflows. However, the fact that these operations are underfunded means that the native populations of host countries are starting to lose patience.

## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

Uganda, for example, has one of the world's more progressive refugee policies, but daily arrivals averaged some 2,000 in the first half of 2017 (more than some European countries' annual inflow) and response mechanisms have been overwhelmed. With international organisations' programmes chronically underfunded, refugees are putting strain on local communities' scarce resources and social tensions are rising, as reflected in a violent attack on refugees in western Uganda in June. More arrivals and fewer donations will eventually force the Ugandan government to reverse its open-door policy, which would cause a humanitarian catastrophe in South Sudan. In Kenya, where anti-refugee sentiment is more entrenched, the impact of a similar policy shift is already playing out, with Somalis in the Dadaab refugee camp evicted from Kenya without any assurance of safety in their home country.

### **3. Social**

- Internal Migration from rural to urban

**The social effects of internal migration particularly rural to urban on both the source rural and destination urban need to be seen.** There are conflicting views where one view is that migration adversely affects the welfare of the source areas because of increasing rural to urban migration in spite of rising urban unemployment, increasing environmental problems, overgrowing of population and the shortage of urban amenities. Although the available urban opportunities and the rising wage levels in urban areas continue to be main source of attraction for the migrants the urban problems and the problem of shortage of labor in rural areas are aggravated more by the accelerating rural to urban migration. It is due to this migration is viewed as adversely affecting the welfare of both the rural as well as the urban areas. The other view is that migration directly or indirectly takes care of the welfare of rural areas and positively affects urbanization, cultural transformation and development.



## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

The social consequences of rural to urban migration for the rural source areas may be examined in terms of the following points:

- The effects of migration on the individual migrants themselves who come from varied socio-economic backgrounds the effects on the resource base of the families of the migrants left behind the effects of the migration on the village community of the migrants.
- Secondly the social consequences of rural to urban migration for the urban destination areas may be examined in terms of the effects on the degree of exposure of migrants to the city, the effects on the patterns of resocialization of migrants into the urban way of life, their acculturation and cultural transformation, the effects of rural to urban migration on the location and adjustment of migrants into the urban social setting and the effects on the nature of interaction between the migrants, the overcrowding of migrants and its impact on urban employment.
- Migration is a function of certain objective social conditions operating at the rural source and at the urban destination. Those conditions are generally referred to as rural push and urban pull factors of migration. The interplay of these push –pull factor plays an important role in determining the flow of out or in migration.

**Migration is both a separative and additive process. It separates people from the place of origin and adds them to the place of destination. These functions of migration have important social consequences. The immediate effect of migration is the separation of individual migrants from the origin areas.**

## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

**=> One important consequence of rural out migration is the change in the value orientation of the migrants and its effects on their families left behind.**

The migrants usually keep contact with their families to maintain personal links and family tradition. This is an important source of exchange of values between their traditional place of origin and relatively modernized destination. The migrants are now exposed to the urban great tradition. It is through exposure that they imbibe new social and material values, new skills, experience, knowledge and an active way of urban life. The internalized urban values are consciously transmitted and fed back into the native place through their contacts. They are required by and used for their family's social, cultural and physical progress. The village community as a whole is also benefited by the social and material gains of migration. But the village out migration reduces the manpower required for agricultural productivity. At the same time it promotes rural development in addition to urban growth in terms of social prestige and the resource base of the village by way of spreading new urban values. The capital generated by migration raises rural income stimulating technological change in the village. It also helps in developing the capacity of villages in improving the agriculture.

**Migration has also changed the demographic profile of the rural areas.** Since migration has a lowering effect on fertility behavior it has reduced the family size among the migrants as compared with the non-migrants. It is higher in the rural areas where spouses live together rather than the separated family where the wife stays back in rural areas and husband goes to work in urban areas. The change in the social status from non-migrant to migrant causes change in norms and values, attitudes and behavior, motivation and expectation, material and social status, social priority and change in the circle of interaction.

## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

All these changes have a negative effect on fertility level and family size. It is due to these changes that the fertility level among the married but separated migrants is the lowest. The fertility behavior of migrants' changes when migrants are exposed to the urban way of life. The modern urban influences stimulate them to accept new family norms, postpone childbearing and raise the age of marriage. The migrants gradually stimulate their relatively younger siblings and the kins to migrate. This enlarges their family network that reinforces the traditional reproductive models among them in urban areas.

Another social consequence of migration is the change in the occupational status of the migrants. Migration ensures horizontal and vertical mobility and related changes. The migrants in the new urban social setting are at an advantage and get diversified work opportunities but they are also in a disadvantageous position as compared to the urban folks for the available opportunities. The urban folks are relatively better educated, trained, skilled, experienced and active. The migrants find it difficult to compete with them for better jobs. The migrants from the lower socio-economic backgrounds are a work and earn oriented group without any occupational choice. Their urban employers on grounds of quality of education, skill, efficiency, caste and class backgrounds also discriminate against them.

An important social consequence of migration is its effect on the processes of acculturation and adjustment and integration of migrants in the receiving areas. In the new urban setting the migrants get acculturated into the urban ways of life and adjusted to it by their ability to participate and perform new roles and activities. It is through these related processes that the new values, roles and cultural traits, behavior patterns and the new social conditions of living are acquired and internalized by the migrants. They gradually become adjusted and integrated into the urban society. These processes act as medium of cultural transformation.

## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

They promote cultural adoption, adaptation and change in already internalized values of the place of origin. The migrants of different class backgrounds find themselves between the two cultural patterns- the internalized culture of the place of origin and the culture of the place of destination to be internalized.

Among the upper class migrants there is no cultural tension between the two cultural patterns because of the similarities between the culture already internalized and the culture to be internalized. Contrary to this among the lower class migrants there is clear conflict and social tension between the two because of the dissimilarities between the culture already internalized and the urban culture to be internalized. The rural culture is already so deeply internalized by the rural migrants that it pushes them to remain ruralized in urban areas. Within the community of migrants there are formal and informal social groups that are formed on regional, linguistic and religious lines but they cut across caste lines.

They also function to promote group interest. They organize religious functions of their respective religious groups. The growth of social groups operating within the local communities of rural migrants in urban areas is a socio-cultural response of the migrants. The highly localized and concentrated population of rural migrant communities has high physical and moral densities. They have a high intensity of their own social identities. This is politically helpful for the migrants to bargain, as vote banks to meet their immediate social need requirements. It is also helpful to political parties to mobilize urban political support on the basis of social background of the migrant groups. Those identities affect not only the rural politics and rural political mobilization but also urban politics and mobilization. The formation of rural migrant communities in the urban setting tends to create social and ethnic tensions due to clash of interests between the migrants and the locals. Such a situation sometimes tends to arouse social conflict and destabilize the urban space.

## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

The overflow of migration largely from certain segments of rural population the high concentration of migrants over urban space, the growth of their rural type urban local communities and the segmentation of their internal structures on the basis of their ascription are important developments. A systematic policy on migration and urbanization for a balanced urban growth needs to be drafted with a view to check the overflow of the rural to urban migration and to relocate local communities in a planned fashion so that they play a constructive role in urban development.

- Issues of economic migration: source country

#### **Social costs include:**

- The perceived benefits of migration encourage more of the same generation to migrate, which has a detrimental effect on social structure
- There is a disproportionate number of females left behind
- The non-return of migrants causes an imbalance in the population pyramid
- Returning retired migrants may impose a social cost on the community if support mechanisms are not in place to cater for them

#### **Social benefits include:**

- The population density is reduced and the birth rate decreases, as it is the younger adults who migrate
- Remittances sent home by economic migrants can finance improved education and health facilities
- Returning retired migrants increase social expectations in the community, for example, the demand for better leisure facilities

# General Assembly:

## Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?

---

- Issues of economic migration: destination country

### Social costs include:

- The dominance of males is reinforced, especially in countries where the status of women is low – for example, in the Persian Gulf states
- Aspects of cultural identity are lost, particularly among second-generation migrants
- Segregated areas of similar ethnic groups are created, and schools are dominated by migrant children

### Social benefits include:

- Creation of a multi-ethnic society increases understanding of other cultures.
- There is an influx of new and/or revitalised providers of local services – for example, Turkish baths and local corner shops.
- There is a growth of ethnic retailing and areas associated with ethnic food outlets – for example, the 'curry mile' in Rusholme, Manchester

## 4. Political

As frustrations over migration intensify, plans for diplomatic cooperation further relations like an Africa-wide passport and greater crossborder connectivity are likely slip fairly rapidly down the political agenda. This will be a blow to the region's development.

With breakthroughs unlikely in Africa's largest conflicts and only pitifully slow progress in creating jobs in Africa's poorest countries, migrants—whether fleeing war or a lack of jobs—are unlikely to return home. In fact, the growing pressure on jobs as economies struggle to keep up with their growing labour markets probably means that migration will increase.



## **General Assembly:**

### **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

With no easy solutions for the most exposed countries, it may become a growing contributor to political risk. Forced evictions in towns that have been particularly affected by migration are possible, as governments seek to appease frustrations among locals, and violent clashes threaten to break out between locals and migrants if governments are perceived to be acting too slowly.

Similar tensions in receiving countries in Europe and America are present. Along with the cultural clash, people feel like their jobs and places in society are being taken. The question of social and economic aid being given to migrants and refugees are a source of tension between populations and governments also. Anti-migrant groups are on the rise, they protest along side humanitarian and pro-migrant groups straining the political climate even more.

On an international level the growing number of illegal immigrants and refugees are starting to create disputes between states. The EU tried to set quotas for member states but the system failed due to countries reluctance and the fact that non respected the quotas. This creates disputes for example to define the different quotas certain members thought that they should have lower quotas and that others should have more. All countries want to minimise their quotas, therefore creating tension in the European parliament and at the UN. The European Union is looking to reform the Dublin agreement. The migrant crisis is costing a lot of time and money to international organisation as one of the biggest priorities on the agenda.

**The aim is to encourage more cooperation in today's international relations to enable all countries to benefit from migration as much as possible and facilitate migrants lives. This huge humanitarian, social, political, environmental and economic needs to be treated.**

# **General Assembly:**

## **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

### **Key Terms:**

#### **Recent migration trends :**

The predominant form of migration varies considerably from one part of the world to another as well. In Asia, for example, many migrants move on the basis of temporary labor contracts. In Americas and Africa, irregular migration is far more common phenomenon. Countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA continue to accept migrants for permanent settlement and citizenship, while the countries of the Middle East usually admit international migrants for fixed periods. In Europe, the major preoccupation of recent years has been the arrival of asylum seekers from other parts of the world

#### **Refugee :**

Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalised violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection.

#### **Migrant :**

While there is no formal legal definition of an international migrant, most experts agree that an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more.

# **General Assembly:**

## **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

### **Circular migration -**

The fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or long-term movement which may be beneficial to all involved, if occurring voluntarily and linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination.

### **Push-pull factors -**

Migration is often analysed in terms of the "push-pull model", which looks at the push factors, which drive people to leave their country (such as economic, social, or political problems) and the pull factors attracting them to the country of destination.

### **Receiving country -**

Country of destination or a third country. In the case of return or repatriation, also the country of origin. Country that has accepted to receive a certain number of refugees and migrants on a yearly basis by presidential, ministerial or parliamentary decision.

### **Facilitated migration -**

Fostering or encouraging of regular migration by making travel easier and more convenient. This may take the form of a streamlined visa application process, or efficient and well-staffed passenger inspection procedures.

# **General Assembly:**

## **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

### **Forced migration -**

A migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g. movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects).

### **Orderly migration -**

The movement of a person from his or her usual place of residence to a new place of residence, in keeping with the laws and regulations governing exit of the country of origin and travel, transit and entry into the destination or host country.

### **Remittances -**

Monies earned or acquired by non-nationals that are transferred back to their country of origin.

### **Brain drain -**

Emigration of trained and talented individuals from the country of origin to another country resulting in a depletion of skills resources in the former.

# **General Assembly:**

## **Is migration a threat or an opportunity ?**

---

### **Brain gain -**

Immigration of trained and talented individuals into the destination country. Also called "reverse brain drain".

### **Economic migration -**

Economic migration is defined as a choice to move to improve the standard of living by gaining a better paid job.

### **For more detailed explanation**

- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11113-011-9216-3>
- A study case, Europe : <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/02/is-migration-a-threat-or-an-opportunity-for-Europe/>
- Figures about migration : <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Reports/2013/global-migration.aspx>
- Migration, environment and climate Change: ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE - IOM Publication  
[http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration\\_and\\_environment.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_environment.pdf)
- Social and Cultural impact of migration at an international scale : <https://oliverhartwich.com/2011/03/22/social-impacts-of-migration-international-perspectives/>
- Main impacts of migration : <http://www.acegeography.com/effects-of-migration.html>
- Different case studies on the social impact : <http://www.ac-grenoble.fr/comenius/berges/Documents/Impacts/ImpactMigration.pdf>
- Immigration in the US : <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-united-states-new-economic-social-political-landscapes-legislative-reform>  
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-united-states-new-economic-social-political-landscapes-legislative-reform>
- Figures about migration in the UK : <https://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefingPaper/document/105>

➡ Do not hesitate to check other RRs to get more information on diverse migration issues