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Challenges and Opportunities for Migration Governance

Early in the 21st century, international migration ceased to be a domestic affair within each country and became important at the community, local, regional and transnational levels.

The document *International Migration, Human Rights and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*, by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE), ECLAC's Population Division, is a contribution to the meeting of the **ECLAC Sessional Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development**, which will take place during ECLAC's **Thirty-first Session**. This meeting offers the region's governments orientation on how to deal with the challenges and make the most of the opportunities posed by migration, particularly with regard to the human rights of migrants and their families.

The Latin American countries are promoting joint positions on migration. The region has valuable experience regarding migratory governance that can be presented as good practices to the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, scheduled for 2006.

There are two consolidated inter-governmental forums, the Summit of the Americas and the OAS initiatives, complemented by commitments recently approved by the Ibero-American Summit in 2005. Agreements on subregional integration spend more and more attention on migration issues and, along with important efforts by the International Organization for Migration (OIM), there are many United Nations and other specialized bodies carrying out concrete actions as part of their mandates. Similarly, civil society has steadily consolidated its role in this area, establishing networks and participating in many initiatives.

Intergovernmental consultation forums also involve interesting experiences: in 1996, the countries of Central and North America created the Regional Conference on Migration, in Puebla, Mexico, while in 2000, 12 countries established the South American Conference on Migration, in Buenos Aires.

These forums have advanced in identifying priorities, designing procedures and terminologies common throughout migratory administration, and establishing intersections between the areas of migration and development. This involves a pool of good practices, some of which have yet to be evaluated and reinforced within a framework of multilateral cooperation. ECLAC recommends preserving the subregional specificity and sustainability of these two forums. The Caribbean should join the process, and opportunities for cooperation must be strengthened with the European Union (the Ibero-American Summit could serve as an example) and Japan.

Some ECLAC recommendations in this document:

* All migrants should be protected under international law. Such protection has not yet been achieved on a systematic basis, although several countries in the region have ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. A programme specifically designed to protect migrants has been adopted within the framework of the OAS and the Summit of the Americas. Countries that have already signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families include: Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay.

* Migration should be made easier, given that restrictions on human mobility contrast with the ease of circulation of financial flows, trade, information and ideas. **ECLAC** estimates that bilateral and subregional agreements on specific migratory issues (such as professional accreditation and temporary work) are very important in this sense.

* The contributions made by migrants to the competitiveness and prosperity of their countries of destination should also be made known to a wider audience. Action in this area would lend greater legitimacy to their integration and would help promote respect for cultural diversity, the regularization of the status of migrants who have been residing in a country of destination for some time, and the adoption of new temporary work agreements to regulate migration appropriately.

* Sustained efforts must be made to promote linkages among dispersed populations and, especially in the case of professionals, of scientific and technological networks to deal with the loss of human resources in countries of origin. Academic links must be developed and strengthened by promoting electronic communications and short-term visits, providing firm support for the creation of networks of researchers and shared research programmes, and effectively incorporating emigrant technicians and scientists in national science and technology projects.

* It is essential to foster the further empowerment of women migrants. Their contributions to their families, communities and countries of origin and of destination must be recognized, and situations which prevent their empowerment and perpetuate gender inequalities identified. Special attention should go to identifying and remedying the multiple disadvantages women migrants face, in terms of their in general health, their sexual and reproductive health, employment in low-productivity sectors, as in the case of many female domestic workers, and the threat of human trafficking, which also affects minors.

More information on **ECLAC's *Thirty-first Session*** and the summary and conclusions of the document ***International Migration, Human Rights and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean***, in English and Spanish, are available on the **ECLAC** website:
<http://www.ECLAC.cl/ps31/default.asp?idioma=IN>.

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