



***MOBILISING MIGRANTS' SKILLS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE
MENA REGION***

Making the Most of Young Migrants Skills

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Ms. Sew Lun Genevieve AH-SUE
Deputy Regional Director,
UNFPA Arab States Regional Office

Excellence Monsieur Ali Laarayedh, Premier Ministre de la Tunisie

Excellence Monsieur Hocine Jaziri, Secrétaire d'Etat aux Migrations et aux Tunisiens à l'Etranger

Monsieur Stefano Scarpetta, Directeur Adjoint de l'Emploi, du Travail et des Affaires Sociales à l'OCDE

Chers invites, chers collègues, chers amis

Je tiens tout d'abord à remercier vivement le gouvernement tunisien de son hospitalité et sa précieuse collaboration à abriter la présente rencontre sur « Mobiliser les Compétences des Migrants pour le Développement de la région arabe: Valoriser les Compétences des Jeunes Migrants ». L'opportunité de ce thème se confirme comme le monde s'apprête à célébrer, le 12 août prochain, la journée mondiale de la jeunesse sous le thème « Jeunes, Migration et Développement ». Il m'est particulièrement agréable de prendre part, au nom du Fonds des Nations Unies pour la Population (UNFPA), à la présente Conférence, organisée conjointement avec l'Organisation pour la Co-operation et le Développement Economique (OECD). En effet, cette rencontre internationale marque une étape importante dans l'appréciation du chemin parcouru depuis la tenue, en 1994, de la Conférence internationale sur la Population et le Développement, quand les dirigeants du monde entier ont appelé à une approche holistique sur les questions de migration, et particulièrement celles liées à la pauvreté et aux droits humains.

Il convient de rappeler que la capacité des gens à choisir l'endroit où vivre et s'installer est une composante de la liberté humaine, appelée *mobilité humaine*. La migration est l'exercice de cette liberté. Or, la migration et le développement constituent un binôme indissociable de notre actualité

socioéconomique. Nous vivons dans un monde inéquitable et inégal ou franchir les frontières représente souvent un moyen qui permet d'augmenter les opportunités du bien-être individuel, celui de sa famille et celui de sa communauté. La mobilité peut, quand elle prend certaines formes et atteint une certaine dimension, présenter des défis qui revêtent, au-delà des aspects économiques et sociaux, une dimension plus fondamentale : celle de la garantie du respect des droits humains fondamentaux.

Dear guests, Dear colleagues,

In the 21st century, migration, together with population growth, population ageing, and urbanization, constitute important development challenges and opportunities. These are clearly articulated in the Dhaka Declaration, issued at the recent Global Leadership Consultation Meeting held in Bangladesh, in preparation for the post-2015 Development Agenda. The Declaration contains recommendations related to safe and orderly migration; protection and assistance for migrants; integration of migration into development policies, strategies and programmes; matching of skills and jobs and of labour supply and demand; low-cost transfer of savings and investment incentives; migration and climate change and migrants' human rights.

Over the past decade, migration and development continue to be on the agenda at high-level policy discussions in many fora, with growing interest in this part of the world. The Arab Region hosts one in every ten international migrants in the world and nearly one in every three migrants in the less developed regions. International migration in the Arab region unfolds in two separate but interlinked systems. One encompasses the countries of the Gulf

as a destination from other Arab and South-East Asian countries. The second comprises labour migration from the Arab Maghreb and Mashreq countries to Europe. We also witness the emergence of new migration flows as the Mashreq and Maghreb States are increasingly becoming countries of immigration and of transit.

During the last two years, what has come to be known as “the Arab Spring”, had a considerable impact on human mobility in the region. The political and economic situation prevailing in countries like Egypt, Libya, Syria and Tunisia has generated new waves of potential migrants looking for better opportunities. Return migration, another fall-out of the Arab spring, has two drivers: first, nationalism and patriotism among nationals who want to partake in the change happening in their homeland, and second insecurity and chaos push foreign workers to return from conflict countries to their home countries.

Dear colleagues,

While, according to the World Bank, remittances increased from \$10.0 billion in 1995 to over \$82.0 billion in 2010, migration is changing over the years, to become gradually a process of human capital accumulation rather than one of financial capital accumulation. Recent studies show a clear progressive tendency of migration movements towards the most highly skilled from Arab countries, with a high rate of graduate migrants from many sending Arab countries - double that of the world average. This is due to high level unemployment, potential higher income and better working conditions, and is

contributing to brain-drain. Today, there are about 1.7 million native Arab persons working in the health sector in OECD countries.

Emigration of highly-skilled individuals is looked upon differently by countries. For Egypt and Jordan, where more than 50% of their migrants are highly-skilled, this phenomenon seems to ease their unemployment problem and prevent brain waste caused by youth graduate unemployment and female inactivity. For other countries such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, evidence indicates that skilled migration is causing shortages of qualified labour and therefore, emigration is a source of concern, as it deprives them of trained personnel, and exacerbates the current dearth of highly-skilled human resources in important social and economic sectors such as health and technology.

Initiatives taken during the recent years by some receiving countries in Europe have attracted more highly qualified migrants to meet labour demand, modernize economies and improve competitiveness. Students' migration is increasing as many developed countries compete to attract the best candidates and to allow them to obtain a work permit after the completion of their studies. These initiatives show that well-managed migration can help to prevent shortages and bottlenecks in the labour market, to increase tax revenues, and to make economies and cultures more vibrant.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, there is an improved understanding of the positive aspects of international migration and a growing recognition on the part of Governments of the need to manage migration instead of restricting it. Expanding global economy, anticipating the implications of trends in population ageing and in

labour force in certain sectors are the main reasons of this evolution. Here is a window of opportunity.

Today, we need to turn our attention to the need to enhance efforts and policies that aim to increase the benefits from international migration. This calls for strengthening data and information collection; for migration management institutions; and for encouraging dialogue, consultation and information sharing among countries of origin, of destination and of transit. Here is a window of opportunity.

Today, our dialogue will strive to find ways to enhance the contribution of migration to the development of both sending and receiving countries, and to make informed policy decisions to ensure a win-win situation, particularly for young people. The outcomes of these deliberations are timely and will contribute to discussions at (i) the Regional Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in June 2013, (ii) the second round of High-Level Dialogue on International Migration scheduled in New York in September 2013, and (iii) the post-2015 Global Development Agenda. Here are three windows of opportunity.

I would like here to extend my gratitude to their Excellencies, the Prime Minister of Tunisia and the Minister of Immigration and Tunisians Abroad, for honouring us with their effective presence. I say special thank you to OECD for the exemplary collaboration and to all participants who came from near and far to contribute to the success of this Conference. This success will be measured by the extent to which we adopt a human-rights approach that will contribute to the protection of migrants, will encourage the diaspora to

become partners in the overall development process and will ensure full utilization of remittances for development goals. Migrants are human beings endowed with inalienable human rights. Respecting and promoting their rights, including their reproductive rights, as well as enhancing their access to social protection and services, such as their access to sexual and reproductive health services, especially for women and girls, and their contributions to development have to be high on the development agenda.

UNFPA looks forward to continued collaboration with all partners, so that together we move the migration agenda forward; so that together we ensure that migration is adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda; so that together we do not forget that behind each migrant there is a person. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that basic human rights are protected so each migrant, each person can live in dignity.

Thank you for your attention.