

**FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division  
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**SUBMISSION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS PROJECT  
FIFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION\***

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\*The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

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## A proposal for the United Nations

The International Metropolis Project has long been interested in the extent to which migration-related phenomena can further the economic and social development of the migrants' countries of origin. Owing to the relative youth of the Metropolis Project, it has had less interest in an issue that dominated in earlier years, namely the extent to which economic development would reduce migration flows. Managing migration by managing development has over the past ten years given way to an interest in managing development in part through managing migration, specifically in ways that will further the development goals of the world's poorer migration source countries. This is a fascinating turnabout and one that has taken place rapidly and principally amongst those in the migration field. To a certain extent, this shift has been made possible by the growing acceptance in the West of the utility of migration as populations age and labour forces begin to experience the stress of retirements accompanied by low birth rates. Attention has been able to move from means for reducing migration flows, including development, to managing these flows for the best societal outcomes, including source country development. The extent to which those in the development field think of migration management as an effective means for enhancing development appears to be less than among those in the migration arena. Of more concern is the relatively little attention that migration experts and commentators are spending on the basics of development theory and experience. The result has been an explosion of ideas of how migration can be a force for development with little hard evidence to support the individual ideas or to determine which of them would have the greatest benefit if put into practice.

No matter how well-meaning the advice, a free-wheeling approach to migration and development poses dangers. Not only might energy and resources be devoted to initiatives that hold little promise of success and that, therefore, would call into question the viability of managing migration for development benefits, but some results might actually prove to cause more harm than good if only from opportunity costs.

The High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development has resulted in the creation of a state-led initiative to continue the discussions that took place in the summer of 2006 in New York. Given that this is to be a state-led project, a central question now must be of the role of the

An evidence-based assessment of which migration-related phenomena do or, if so-managed, could contribute to the creation or enhancement of these necessary conditions in countries of origin

An evidence-based assessment of how migration-related phenomena could be managed in order for them to produce development benefits for countries of origin.

The proposal, in other words, is for the United Nations to produce research information about the fundamentals of development that would indicate clearly the directions through which the Forum could most fruitfully explore how to manage migration for development objectives. Without such a foundation, the enterprise risks floundering or proceeding in a way dominated by political imperatives.

The conditions of development examined in this research could be of an economic, political, administrative, social, educational, environmental, or other nature. How migration could contribute to their creation or their enhancement is the objective of the world's efforts to understand the relations between migration and development. Without a clear view of what is required to be in place for development to occur in a sustained way, we have no bearings for thinking about migration's possible contribution, let alone for how to manage migration for development effects. Work to help those in the migration field understand better what is required for successful development may as well open up new ideas or new possibilities for how migration can make a significant contribution, ideas that are quite simply not yet on the discussion table.

A timely product from the United Nations would help the Global Forum on Migration and Development focus its efforts and maximize its utility. Once the Forum has acquired this information and has carried out work on how to create and implement a migration-development plan, the United Nations' role could shift to studying the actual effects of migration-development initiatives, not for purposes of normative

Some discussions of note have included that at the 2001 Metropolis conference in Rotterdam during which the economist Oded Stark introduced his hypothesis that the brain drain, under certain conditions, will give rise to a subsequent brain gain within the country of origin. The now familiar argument is that the emigration of people with considerable human capital will, if they succeed reasonably well in their countries of destination, create incentives in the country of origin for people to emulate their success. This requires an upgrading of their human capital. If countries of destination control entry and thereby restrict migration flows, only a subset of those with increased human capital will actually leave. The net result will be

The International Metropolis Project will continue to attend to this issue in future