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## BRIEFING REPORT

### UNITAR/UNFPA/IOM KEY MIGRATION ISSUES WORKSHOP SERIES<sup>1</sup>:

### REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES

20 June 2006, United Nations Headquarters, New York

#### BACKGROUND

On 20 June 2006, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) hosted a briefing on Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) as part of the “*UNITAR/UNFPA/IOM Key Migration Issues Workshop Series*”.

The event was held in Conference Room 9 at United Nations (UN) Headquarters. The attendees included 31 delegates representing 29 countries; 19 staff from UN Secretariat, agencies and other international organizations.

#### OBJECTIVES

This briefing’s objectives focused on: receiving additional information on RCPs; understanding their concrete input in strengthening migration policy and cooperation between states; exploring the possibilities of cross-fertilization between RCPs and discussing the relationship between coordination and cooperation at regional and global levels with a view to contributing to roundtable 4 during the High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development taking place on 14-15 September 2006.

More generally, this Series is intended to provide participants with greater knowledge on key migration issues, and offer a forum for discussion and awareness-raising prior to the High Level Dialogue.

Information on upcoming briefings and workshops in this Series is available from [info@unitarny.org](mailto:info@unitarny.org) or at [www.unitarny.org](http://www.unitarny.org)

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## SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

### *Session I: What is an RCP? Experience of the Secretariats of RCPs*

**Mr. Robert Paiva**, Director of External Relations for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), gave an introduction and general overview of RCPs. As migration trends have become increasingly complex and occur on a more regional than bilateral basis, RCPs have emerged as state-driven and non-binding fora which bring together representatives of governments at the regional level to informally discuss migration-related issues in a cooperative manner. He emphasized that RCPs, because of their informal nature and their exclusivity on discussion of migration issues, provide a venue for exchange of information, experiences and good practices. They are generally thematically-organized or geographically-based and hold regular meetings at different levels, though civil society and international organisations may be invited as observers. Because RCPs have proven their success in certain areas of regional cooperation, they receive the consistent backing of their member countries. Mr. Paiva acknowledged some of the main advantages of RCPs: they are a process and not an institution; they are informal and open which allows for a frank discussion amongst governments and can thus lead to enhanced cooperation; they are efficient since there is minimum administration; and they are of a non-politicized nature. Furthermore, their general mode of operations is also seen as advantageous by governments: they may provide non-binding recommendations, action plans and/or statements; they allow states to act independently; and they are generally open to all states within a specific region with low entry and exit costs. As for the future of RCPs, Mr. Paiva stated that a discussion on the cross-fertilization of RCPs may be helpful to governments to benefit from others' experiences and avoid duplication. In addition, stronger linkages with more formal regional and subregional institutions would benefit RCPs, as well as broader involvement of the private sector and civil society. Finally, he noted that RCPs may provide a model to be reproduced at the global level.

**Mr. Luis Monzon**, Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM or Puebla Process), offered a secretariat point-of-view of RCPs. The RCM is an RCP whose member states include Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States. The Technical Secretariat was created by a decision of the Vice Ministers of the RCM in 2001 to assist the Presidency Pro-Témpore by coordinating RCM meetings and monitoring related activities. Member states contribute to the budget of the Technical Secretariat, which provides the following: advice to the Presidency Pro-Témpore and member countries in all areas of the process; overall coordination and logistics of meetings and events; preparation of all draft agendas and related documents for meetings, and chair facilitation; in consultation with the Presidency Pro-Témpore, preparation of follow-up drafts to agreements and the implementation of the Plan of Action; participation in outreach activities; the focal point for all participants in the process including members of the public; and coordination of printed publications of events.

**Mr. Vincent Williams**, Project Manager of the Southern Africa Migration Project (SAMP), gave his impressions as co-secretariat for the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) RCP. MIDSA was established in 2000 as an informal dialogue on migration of the 14 Southern African Development Community (SADC) states. Similar to the Technical Secretariat of the RCM, the secretariat for MIDSA also prepares workshop agendas and programmes based on topics identified in preceding workshops and prepares and writes concluding reports and recommendations. There is an annual senior level forum of MIDSA which is an opportunity for the SADC governments to provide substantive input on the MIDSA Process, workshops and research agenda. Throughout the year, the secretariat also holds technical workshops on such topics as irregular migration, migration and development and labour migration.



MIDSA's secretariat must do its own fundraising for its budget. Overall, Mr. Williams emphasized that MIDSA has provided for its member countries an opportunity for informal dialogue and inter-action through information and experience sharing, and through informing bilateral discussions and agreements. The shared regional perspective provided by MIDSA on migration policy and management has resulted in enhanced cooperation between governments in the region and links governments in SADC to migration developments globally.

### *Session II: Government Experiences working within RCPs*

**Ms. Monique Ramgoolie**, Program Officer of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration of the U.S. Department of State, provided a United States' focus on the Inter-Governmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugees and Migration (IGC) and the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM). For the U.S., both RCPs provide an opportunity to informally bring together their technical experts and policymakers to discuss migration issues. The IGC provides a venue for "like-minded member states" to exchange best practices and common concerns on migration issues, while the RCM allows the member states of the region to establish joint activities on migration issues and allows interaction with NGOs. She emphasized some of the key characteristics of these two RCPs which have allowed for U.S. involvement: their informality and openness; their collegial manner; sustained collaboration between migration experts from the member states, and generally, the shared commitment to practical cooperation amongst member states. The small size of the RCPs as well as the lack of politicization allows member states to commit to and follow through on migration activities.

**Mr. Andre Siregar**, Third Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations, focused on Indonesia's participation in the Bali Process Ministerial Consultations in 2002 and the Colombo Process Consultations in 2003. He first gave an overview of the migration situation of Indonesia and spoke of the value of the Bali and Colombo Processes for Indonesia. Member countries of the Bali Process work on practical measures to combat people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crimes in the Asia-Pacific region. He used as an example the April 2003 Second Bali Ministerial Conference, where ministers agreed to continue a program of practical cooperation to combat people smuggling and trafficking in the region which has led to more effective information and intelligence sharing; increased public awareness on irregular migration; opportunities for legal migration between states; and greater protections for migrants and enacting of national legislation to criminalize smuggling and trafficking. Mr. Siregar also spoke of the Colombo Process' Third Ministerial Consultations on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin in Asia in Bali, Indonesia September 20-21, 2005, which included countries of origin and also countries of destination. One of the achievements of this meeting included the creation of the "Welfare of Overseas Workers and Support Services" which, amongst other things, provides pre-departure orientation for migrants on destination countries and works with destination countries to establish minimum wage levels and ensure safe and decent conditions of employment for contract workers. Mr. Siregar emphasized that these RCPs provide Indonesia with an opportunity to engage in dialogue with other countries on migration issues to help generate practical solutions without overriding national sovereignty.

### *Session III: Bringing the Regional Dimension to the Global Debate*

**Mr. Juan Alfredo Buffa**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Paraguay to the United Nations, spoke of the recent VI South American Conference on Migration in Asunción which took place in early May 2006. This meeting culminated with the Declaracion de Asunción which was adopted by the 11 Vice-Ministers and High-level Representatives of the South American Dialogue member states.



This Declaration calls for respect of the human rights of migrants and the recognition of the development contribution of migration to migrants and to countries of destination. The Declaration also calls for: the inclusion of migration and development as a priority theme in the agenda of all regional and bilateral meetings; the support of programmes which facilitate voluntary returns; and reducing transfer costs of remittances. The Declaracion de Asunción, which also encourages member states to try to reach a common position in view of the HLD, will be conveyed to the President of the General Assembly as an input to the HLD.

**Mr. Jose Miguel Guzman**, Chief, Population and Development Area, CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC noted that regional processes are a response to regional specificities. Approximately 25 million migrants come from Latin America and the Caribbean with the U.S. as the major country of destination. Intraregional migration, which constitutes approximately three million migrants, has led to some initiatives to facilitate mobility such as CARICOM, MERCOSUR and the Andean Community. The region has also witnessed, through migration, the rapidly growing level of remittances, which constitute over 10% of GDP in some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. He emphasized that the protection of the human rights of migrants is a growing concern in the region. Mr. Guzman noted the progress made by the Puebla Process (RCM) and the South American Conference on Migration in identifying priorities, developing common terminologies and procedures for migration management, and establishing a nexus between migration and development issues. However, he noted that the Caribbean is not part of any RCP and should join in such processes, and opportunities for cooperation must be strengthened with the European Union and Japan. ECLAC has also given support to these sub-regional processes, most recently at its 31<sup>st</sup> Session last March in Montevideo. In a resolution on international migration which was adopted at this session, member countries of ECLAC agreed on the need to value such RCPs, such as the Puebla Process and the South American Conference on Migration, and also requested its Executive Secretary to establish an inter-agency group to follow-up on international migration and development issues in the region.

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