

Sixth Informal Thematic Session

Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures

**Geneva, 12-13 October 2017
Palais des Nations, Conference room XIX**

Towards a Joint Approach to Migration and Development

By

Ibrahim Awad, Ph.D.

The American University in Cairo

I wish to thank the President of the United Nations University General Assembly for his kind invitation to me to participate in this Six Informal Thematic Session on *Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work*, organized as part of the preparatory process leading to the adoption of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. I am delighted to be here today, to see many old and dear friends and to share with participants a few ideas about the subject of the session, in particular as indicated in the description of this thematic session, *ways to promote and facilitate regular labour mobility including through bilateral and regional arrangements*. So as not to remain at the conceptual level, I will

focus in my intervention on international labour migration in the Mediterranean Basin, in other words Euro-Mediterranean labour migration, i.e. migration processes involving Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) countries and the European Union (EU) member states (MS).

1. So far, labour migration policies have been formulated separately by the origin and destination parties to the Euro- Mediterranean migration processes.
2. From the EU perspectives, SEM countries are implicitly considered policy-takers, expected to accept and to facilitate the implementation of policies decided by the Union and its Member States (Examples: Global Approach to Migration and Mobility [GAMM], Mobility Partnerships).
3. On their part, SEM countries are not in a position to relegate to the EU to the status of policy-takers. The reality is that they cannot formulate comprehensive policies. The reason is that they are unable to address the root causes of labour migration, which lie in the functioning of their labour markets.
4. In fact, SEM countries, like developing countries generally, do not have migration, and migration policy, as their main concern. Their utmost concern

is with the employment question and with balance of payments. A preoccupation some have is with highly-skilled migration (HSM) and Brain Drain.

5. To varied degrees of effectiveness, SEM countries are concerned with the living and working conditions.
6. A joint approach to labour migration policy by parties to Euro-Mediterranean processes may sound unrealistic because of divergence of interests. But it is here suggested that there also is convergence of interests.
7. The joint approach should address the structural causes of migration processes: demand for labour in the EU and of excess labour supply in the SEM countries.
8. The structural causes are known:
 - i. EU: low fertility rates, resulting in low to negative natural population growth rates, ageing, and shrinking working age populations (WEA) and labour forces;
Mismatch between native supply and demand of labour;
Demand for labour of new industries;
 - ii. SEM countries: expanding working age populations (WAP) and labour forces (LF), despite variability in fertility rates; economic growth rates that are incapable of catching up with LF growth rates and of improving living conditions;

Mismatch between structures of demand and the supply of labour (HS).

9. It is worth noting that economic growth rates have also been low in recent years in Europe, at least since the eruption of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, especially in Southern Europe, to where migration flows from SEM countries mostly head.

10. It is also worth noting that high unemployment rates, especially among youth, were registered for many years, on both shores of the Mediterranean, on the northern as well as on the southern shores.

11. Thus, because of low economic growth and high unemployment in Europe, migration in general, and from SEM countries in particular, became a political question in Europe, on which identity-based, populist political parties and movements have thrived.

12. Migration was faulted for unemployment even though research has repeatedly brought evidence that it is not.

13. Migration was also faulted for terrorist attacks in Europe even though perpetrators were mostly not technically migrants, but EU-born citizens with distant migration origins.

14. Parties to migration processes around the Mediterranean should not be distracted from formulating policies that meet their concerns and realize their objectives.

15. These objectives can be summarized as follows:

- i. EU: supply of labour; supply of skills at different levels; temporary presence at least for some categories of workers; integration of long-term or permanent migrants;**

- iii. SEM: bringing relief to pressures on their labour markets; benefits to BOPs through financial remittances; acquisition of skills useful for their development; reducing consequences of HSM and harmful Brain Drain; protection of their nationals who migrate for employment in the EU**

16. A joint approach would consider the two sets of objectives together. The two parties would thus have a convergent interest in the joint approach.

- a. The two parties would jointly determine the volumes and characteristics of migrant workers. This may be done and implemented through Government-to-Government agreements.

- b. Migrants workers may be contracted for fixed-term temporary employment, the duration of which depending on the type of employment.
- c. They may be contracted for training purposes with the aim of being employed on their return in specific projects or industries. In other words, labour migration from SEM countries would be linked to development plans. This justifies Government-t-Government agreements. Firms of EU MS may be involved in the projects to which migrants workers would return.
- d. The two parties may also consult and converge on how to formulate and implement complementary policies for the protection of migrant workers from SEM countries.
- e. Another area of consultation/convergence is that of economic policies that raise growth rates and demand for labour, which should also reduce the urge to migrate among youth of SEM countries.
- f. Account could also be taken of securing inflows of migrant workers in a long-term perspective. Migration is not the only remedy to shrinking

WAPs and LFs but it is one that is effective, especially in the short-term.

17. Policies on employment, training, education, access to labour markets, equality and non-discrimination, visas and residence should be subjects of consultations and joint formulation.

18. Trade and specific development policies have bearings on migration as well as on larger economic growth: improving their effectiveness could be subjects of consultation.

19. The identitive question should be addressed if a joint labour migration is to succeed.

20. There is a convergent interest in countering hate speech, which also affects EU citizens of distant migration origin: social peace, inclusion in EU Member States, and the preservation of the European political model requires countering xenophobia and exclusionary attitudes.

21. Neutralizing animosity towards migrants and population of migrant origin is a further issue for discussion and consultation.

22. Policy measures could be formulated to counter essentialist theses propagated on both shores of the Mediterranean.

23. Integration of migrants and populations of migrant origin is undeniably an issue in Europe. But, by and large, integration has been effective. The numerous successes of migrants in politics, business and culture should be brought out, as a matter of policy.

24. Policies should also promote student exchange and bring out historical cross-cultural fertilization.

Thank you for your kind attention.