



All Africa Conference of Churches AACC

Christian Organisations on Migration and Development in view of the Civil Society Days and the Global Forum on Migration and Development, Athens, 2-3 and 4-5 November 2009

“When an alien lives with you in your land you shall not ill-treat him. The alien living with you must be treated as a native-born. Love him as yourself for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” Leviticus 19, 33-34

Our organisations represent churches from Africa, Europe and the Middle East and globally - Anglican, Independent, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic - as well as church related organisations. Being part of the global fellowship of churches, we are particularly well acquainted with the links between development and migration. Based on the narrative of the Bible - a narrative of migration - we are deeply committed to human dignity, global solidarity and the promotion of a society welcoming strangers and respecting their rights.

Christian organisations have contributed to and participated in the past two Global Fora on Migration and Development and are looking forward to the upcoming Global Forum in Athens. The Global Forum initiative is a unique opportunity to bring together a wide range of relevant actors in the field of migration and development. At the eve of this Global Forum we acknowledge that progress has been made concerning the diversity of participants and the improved interface sessions between governmental representatives and civil society representatives. However there is still room for further development. Our organisations hope that the Forum further enriches ways of accommodating migration through developmental initiatives and to identify sustainable migration policies that will lead to improved development outcomes and promote a more dynamic partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination.

To that end Christian organisations and churches call all relevant stakeholders to consider the following issues:

1) Place human beings at the centre of migration and development policies

- **acknowledge that migrants are not simply providers of manpower and economic opportunity, but first and foremost fellow human beings.** Migrants have dreams, hopes, a cultural heritage, families and friends, and inalienable dignity and rights. They have not only contributed to economic growth, but also to greater diversity in our societies.
- **provide a space for further developing and implementing a coherent and binding body of international rights of migrants.** These should be the key human rights instruments on migration, including ILO Conventions and the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Family Members.
- **recognize that only a situation of safety and stability for migrants and their families, including undocumented migrants, will enable them to develop their full potential as actors of development.** Countries of departure, transit and destination must work together to secure migrants' residence status, social and labour rights, property rights, safety, and respect for their physical and psychological integrity. Special attention should be given to reverse the growing trend towards stigmatisation and even criminalisation of migrants.
- **consider the engagement and the needs of refugees and other forced migrants and development.** Depending on choices and funding offered by States and their partners, refugees and internally displaced people can be either a threat to development, i.e., if reception



Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe



is not well prepared or communities are depleted from their population, or, if recognised and supported for their skills, education and livelihoods, they can play a key role for economic, social and human development and in building communities as well as for long- term solutions and peace in host communities or, upon return in their own countries or communities of origin.

2) Contribute to improved migration policies and prioritise poverty reduction

- **reduce poverty and support development with international efforts and establish good governance in the countries of origin.** Resolution of conflicts and mitigation of the effects of climate change is essential for fewer people being forced to migrate. **Migration should be an option and not a necessity.**
- **document and foster initiatives which explore and encourage measures for synergies between migration and development policies.** Key measures include flexible visa regimes with multi-entry permits for circular migration, matching grants for remittances, micro-credit programmes and regularisation strategies and projects which encourage the participation of migrants and make best use of their experiences and skills.
- **consider how states can liberalise and simplify regular channels for migration that allow people to seek work abroad.** In order to optimise the development impact of migration, reforms in this area need to focus on the movement of migrants working in low skill labour market segments, such as domestic and agricultural workers.
- **recognise the negative impact of restrictive and security-based migration policies on development, sending and receiving communities, and migrants, and devise corrective measures.** States must ensure that positive synergies between migration and development are not obliterated by counterproductive policies such as adverse conditionality of aid; the impact of financial and technical means allocated to security-based measures rather than integration and ODA; the impact of detention and forced deportations on the persons concerned as well as on remittances and re-integration; the impact of barriers to family reunification in origin, transit and host countries on children left behind, and the implications of selective labour migration on brain-drain.
- **put the right to life before the right to control borders.** It is incoherent if governments and civil society meet to discuss the issue of migration and development, while it seems that our human and moral development has taken a step backwards. Shameful practices over the past year concerning the interception of migrants at sea have to be stopped. The duty of any person is to save lives, which are in danger. Persons living up to their human duty of assisting others must not be criminalised.

3) Policy coherence and broad participation

- **further explore policy coherence with other areas with considerable impact on migration and development** such as climate change, trade relations, agricultural policies, arms exports.
- **further explore the link between migration and development in the light of providing equal opportunities and options for men and women.** Women who migrate for their personal and family development generally pay a high price. Half of the migrant women move on their own and often earn their living in the service sector or in other less regulated and less paid sectors of the labour market. Despite the still existing wage differences, they remit a higher proportion of their salaries than men, often for education and health. It should be further explored whether remittances of women migrants have a specific development impact and whether they can be particularly supported in development related activities. Migration policies should be developed which take into account the needs and vulnerabilities of women and prevent trafficking and exploitation.
- **design the Global Forum as a global process. The role of the diaspora and migrant communities in shaping policies on migration and not only on development must be strengthened.** Conclusions of the previous Global Fora should be taken up by the current Global Forum and their further development included in the actual conclusions. A record of lessons learned must be kept as a reference point for upcoming fora in order to improve the setting and check the progress made. The preparation of the GFMD should be a more comprehensive and inclusive process of governmental and civil society actors. This can be achieved, by the holding of joint regional fora of government and civil society prior to the global forum, as well as a full day of shared discussion between government and civil society actors on key themes. The UN should play a central role in taking these issues forward.

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