

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION

League of Arab States (LAS)

A. BACKGROUND

The Arab Observatory for International Migration was launched by the Population Policies and Migration Department of the League of Arab States (PPMD/LAS) a few years ago with the goal to execute the Arab Declaration for International Migration, adopted by the Arab Social and Economic Council in 2006, with the objectives to:

1. Filling the gap in migration data in the Arab region by continuously compiling and updating such data;
2. Capacity-building and sustaining the technical capabilities of the bodies dealing with migration in Arab countries;
3. Contributing in knowledge transfer in the international migration field;
4. Finding mechanisms to enhance the benefits of migration of highly-skilled migrants to promote the development in Arab countries and the Arab regional integration.

B. ACTIVITIES 2007-2008

1. Advocacy and regional coordination activities

PPMD, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), organized a Coordination Meeting on Fostering More Opportunities for Legal Migration in Cairo, Egypt, from 8 to 9 October 2008. The meeting was opened by Ms. Aisha Abdel Hadi, the Egyptian Minister of Manpower and Migration and attended by governmental representatives from 15 Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Occupied Pa

- (d) Make suggestions to support the roles and activities of the Arab Observatory for International Migration implemented by PPMD/LAS.

The meeting adopted the following recommendations and decisions:

- (b) Causes of skilled emigration. How are skilled persons encouraged to migrate to another country? Are they directly attracted through job offers or through other channels? Did this migration result from Arabs studying abroad?
- (c) Current situation of transnational communities and their involvement in the development of countries of origin. In which ways do transnational communities participate in the development of their countries of origin? What relationships do skilled labour migrants maintain abroad with local communities and home countries? What role do the following factors play in linking countries of origin and destination: remittances, investments, joint ventures, promotion of exports, outsourcing, return for short periods to serve in academic institutions or research centers, participation in think tanks, political participation, etc.
- (d) What is needed so that Arab skilled migrants remain involved in the national development and regional integration of their countries of origin? What are the learned lessons from the successful international experiments?
- (e) Strategies and policies to mobilize transnational communities. How can a country of origin benefit from its transnational communities abroad and how can it integrate these communities into global development initiatives? What role do civil society institutions, especially Arab professional associations, play abroad? What is the role of professional and scientific organizations and Arab expatriate researchers in technology and knowledge transfer, in national development and regional integration and in bringing transnational communities and countries of origin together? How can one enhance their roles in order to serve local communities?
- (f) transnational communities and regional development? What is the role of destination countries in helping to establish and strengthen transnational communities?
- (g) How can one improve knowledge and information base of scientific transnational communities?

3. Arab Labor Organization (ALO)

The ALO, in its thirty-fifth General Assembly of the Arab Labor Conference, which took place in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from 23 February to 1 March 2008, recommended the following:

- (a) To support Arab temporary migration to Europe and to protect Arab migrants through: (i) the Barcelona process², the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, which started in 1995 to strengthen relations between the European Union and the Mashreq³ and Maghreb⁴ regions; (ii) Arab migrant associations in countries of destination, and (iii) non-governmental organizations and other institutions which support migrants;
- (b) To organize a forum for those involved in labour mobility in both Arab receiving countries and countries of origin in order to discuss and implement temporary bilateral or multilateral mobility projects;
- (c) To adopt the Abu Dhabi Declaration⁵ of 2008 on overseas employment and contractual labour for countries of origin and destination in Asia, including countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Further, to implement partnerships between sending and

receiving countries to ensure labour rights and interests of receiving countries as well as a multilateral framework for circular labour mobility;

- (d) To draw attention to the issue of irregular migration flows in Arab countries, and support the international effort to combat human trafficking;
- (e) To implement the free movement of service provided, as called for by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (Mode 4).

N