

1. Statement on Migration and Development



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Including article by Halleh Gorashi, Ruud Lubbers and Naema Tahir:
'Vier de komst van migranten, haal alles uit hen wat ze in zich hebben - en dat is veel'

world connectors

Statement on Migration and Development

In 2007 the Worldconnectors wrote four statements related to the themes Migration and Development, Global Human Security, Millennium Development Goals and Policy Coherence for Development. All four statements are prepared by Working Groups before presentation and discussion at the Round Table of Worldconnectors.

The statement on Migration and Development discussed by all Worldconnectors at the Round Table on 31 January 2007 at the West Indisch Huis in Amsterdam – is an inspiration and starting point for further dialogue, public debate and media activities of the Worldconnectors.

The Working Group on Migration and Development consists of the following Worldconnectors: Ruud Lubbers, Halleh Gorashi, Naema Tahir, Willemijn Aerdt, Sayida Vanenburg and special advisors Valentina Mazzucato (UVA), Hein de Haas (Oxford), Frans Bouwen (THP), Domenica Ghidei Bhidu (THP) and supporters: Dušica Vukolić and Alide Roerink (NCDO), Gordana Stanković (SID NL), Karen Witsenburg (DPRN), Frans Bieckmann (Wereld in Woorden).

Reactions and comments on the statement can be shared on the website www.worldconnectors.nl and readers are invited to exchange inspiring examples and initiatives that illustrate and support Migration and Development via email: roundtable@worldconnectors.nl.

Other statements:

2. Statement on Global Human Security
3. Statement on Millennium Development Goals: Schokland Agreement for the second half of the MDGs (2007 - 2015)
4. Statement on Policy Coherence for Development: Aid, Trade, Investment and other issues

Colofon

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Annex to 'Inspiring a Global Mindset – an overview of 2007'

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The Worldconnectors wish 'to encourage the ambition and enhance the role of the Netherlands as a key player in the global community of nations and peoples, with the urgent aim of working towards a just, sustainable and peaceful world'. Based on this mission, the central aim is to inspire and influence the political and policy debate and agenda in the Netherlands from a global perspective.

We aim to connect. Connect sectors of policy. Connect segments of society. Connect nationally as well as internationally. We should open up, overcome polarisation. This is a process. We have to develop it gradually, find agreement on common grounds.

Kofi Annan, in his preparatory document for the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (September 2006), states that international migration related to development should be viewed not as a threat, but as an opportunity. A positive attitude towards migrants and migration, combined with sound migration policies, can result in a 'Triple Win'; beneficial effects for the country of origin, for the country of destination and for the migrants themselves. Migration is a century-old phenomenon, which has proven to contribute to global economic and cultural development.

Human Rights, as formulated in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, are applicable to migrants, without reservations. Migrants (documented and undocumented) deserve protection against forced labour, abuse, malafide traffickers, against malevolent employment agencies and employers and against administrative arbitrariness. They deserve perspective, equal access and treatment, space and opportunity to develop and contribute.

We are inspired by the Earth Charter initiative that was launched in June 2000. With respect to the issue of migration we refer in particular to the principle to 'uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities (Principle 12).'

We endorse the Declaration of The Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy, dated 22 November 2002.

We agree with the conclusions and recommendations of the Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, 2005 and the Santa Cruz Declaration, dated October 2006.

However, the European Union, and more specifically the Netherlands, are not living up to these declarations and as a result, miss the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the 'Triple Win' approach to migration. The current Dutch attitude towards migration and migrants is defensive and has resulted in a fear-based attitude towards migrants. Dutch migration policies have a clear lack of policy coherence for development. We have to overcome this fear and we need policies that are positive for developing countries.

How did this fear arise?

The earlier more dominant ideal in the Netherlands of a multicultural society was increasingly being criticised as naïve. For example, Pim Fortuyn gave a voice to the discontent among the Dutch people. There was a sense of being confronted with increasing numbers of immigrants, coming from different cultures and parts of the world. People feared the deterioration of the quality of their life and they felt neglected by the administration. Former Minister of Immigration and Integration, Rita Verdonk, subsequently created a similar political platform that mobilised the well-to-do and the middle class income groups as well. The murder of Theo van Gogh had a big impact on the migration debate in the Netherlands, but the debate had already been intensified by the international realities of '9/11', Iraq, Afghanistan, and earlier the Rushdie-affair and more recently the Danish cartoons.

The debate on migration evolved into a high political and public priority. For the first time the responsibility of migrants towards Dutch society was stressed, a development that was intensely stimulated by some academics, independent writers, human rights experts and politically active representatives of the migrant community.

The way forward

Now time has come in the European Union, more in particular in the Netherlands, to go for the ‘Triple Win’ of migration. This is a positive message. At the same time we are aware of the negative aspects of migration. For example, when migration occurs due to lack of opportunities in the countries of origin of the migrants, or when it results in splitting up families. However, improved migration policies can help reduce some of these costs of migration. This requires not only a change in policies, but also a mental shift. There is a need for a radical change in how migration and migrants are perceived in the Netherlands. We have to recognise the fear and help to transform it into actions that facilitate social cohesion, connection and participation in society. We have to make reciprocal respect of migrants and host societies tangible. Hiding behind the dykes is clearly not an option. Opening up to the world can lead to new possibilities and profits.

The following ten considerations clarify how the ‘Triple Win’ of Kofi Annan can become a reality, help overcome the culture of fear and create new perspectives for all actors involved.

1. Participation

Integration, as it is often understood and subsequently applied in attitudes and measures, is based on the expectation that migrants will assimilate. This idea has evidently failed. Participation is the way forward. Participation is a key challenge and has to be practised in our society from bottom-up. The obstacles in functional circles of each individual – i.e. work, healthcare, sports, school, culture and arts and religion – have to be overcome in daily life. Migrants have to participate actively in these functional circles and Dutch-born citizens have to be involved in removing obstacles for participation and help find practical solutions. At the same time, the government should ensure an enabling environment. Participation can be enabled and stimulated by taking positive initiatives – ‘best practices’ – and invest in them at all levels and sectors of society. Not only the public sector, but also the private sector should actively support a diverse employ-

ment force and make it part of a comprehensive Corporate Social Responsibility policy.

2. ‘Transnational Citizenship’

In addition to a tremendous effort of the migrant, participation also requires a change in mentality in Dutch society. Such mindset change will give migrants the room to engage in society and it will create a sense of belonging and security. It will allow Dutch society to become more inclusive and open to the diversity the world offers.

This open view should not be noncommittal or indifferent, but should be based on a deeply felt reciprocity. We are not proposing to return to the multicultural ideal of coexistence, yet concurrently ignoring each other. Engagement from both sides is key. After all, the participation of all people who can preserve their particular characteristics, is important. This is not a threat, but an enrichment to Dutch society. Migrants should not be viewed just as a group, but more as individuals, with diverse and layered identities. Migrants have a transnational identity, they live in and from various cultures. They embody the idea of transnational citizenship. Transnational citizenship is about much more than formal citizenship, passports or dual nationalities. Still, dual nationality does make sense. Multiple identities and engagements should not be ignored. Migrants and their children should not be forced to make a choice. In stead of pursuing a negative approach on this issue by confronting migrants with a dilemma to choose between their different identities, it would be wise to create space in which migrants can explore the diversity of their identities. It is exactly their international orientation that enables migrants to contribute to the society in which they find themselves. Moreover, by maintaining strong ties with their country of origin, migrants may emerge as ‘development agents’. The challenge to promote transnational citizenship is relevant to circular migration; circular migration benefits the migrant, the receiving and sending countries and can be practised more effectively when the reality of transnational citizenship is accepted.

3. Migrants as Agents of Change

Successful migrants are not only key as role models for participation, but can also function as agents of change to ‘bridge’ their cultures and religions, and the culture of the receiving society and country; in our case of the Netherlands. Moreover, they can play an essential role in preventing migrants from reverting to stricter traditions, which may occur with first generation migrants, who live according to the time they left their countries of origin (in a time warp), or subsequent generations of immigrants who find themselves isolated from, and therefore feel victimised by, the very society they live in. In bridging the generation gap, young migrants in particular play a crucial role as agents of cultural, social, political and economic change.

In daily life, transnational citizenship leads to a variety of lifestyles. Sometimes the migrant adapts more and more to modernity and the culture of the receiving country. Sometimes the migrant reverts increasingly to stricter traditions because there is a feeling of lack of belonging to the new surroundings. These processes are not linear but very dynamic. Awareness of these processes promotes participation from the bottom-up and from persons of different walks of life. The bridge function of successful migrants between tradition and modernity, as well as between nations and cultures, is reinforced by the phenomenon of remittances and that of diasporas that position themselves as active partners in policy making for development. Talented and successful migrants set the standards of achievement, which counters a sense of victimisation. Success breeds success.

4. Migrant Women and the Feminisation of Migration

The position of the growing group of female migrants requires special attention. Approximately half of all migrants are female. On the one hand, they have to deal with the grim reality of migration: trafficking in women girls and forced prostitution. They are mostly uneducated and often undocumented migrants who usually do the cheap and dirty work in rich countries. They are the invisible labour force of western economies, while simultaneously they send most of their wages (remittances) to their families and

villages in the home countries. The rights of these women are not protected, whereas they are often confronted with violence and human rights abuses. This should be recognised and much more attention should be given to migrant women. On the other hand, migrant women are good examples and succeed, often more so than men, in participating in the receiving country. Successful female migrants are key in making participation effective and in responding to cultural challenges.

5. Diasporas

Migrants can acquire more status through remittances and by playing a substantial role as members of their diasporas. They can play a positive role for developments in the countries of origin and destination. Successful migrants are essential in processes of participation and in reducing tensions in the countries of destination. Special attention should be paid to young migrants who have turned out to be successful entrepreneurs. Well-educated, well-organised and participating diasporas can provide the country of origin with access to knowledge, technology, investment options, foreign exchange, business contacts, arts, etc., but they can also convey ‘values’ such as equal ‘gender relations’ and democratic persuasion. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are increasingly engaged in cooperating with diasporas with regards to such goals. To fulfil this role optimally, migrants need a positive recognition, and a maximum amount of freedom to travel back and forth between the country of origin and countries of destination, and to be able to live, for alternating periods of time, in both worlds. In addition, countries of destination (such as the Netherlands) can make better use of the knowledge and experience of diasporas organisations and of individuals when migration, development and trade policies are formulated, and during other contacts with the country of origin. It is precisely by allowing migrants to participate in Dutch society, that we can maximise the use of their strength.

6. Refugees in the Netherlands

Even with as much protection in the region as possible (see point 7), a number of refugees will have to move out of the areas where they became victims of violence and of lack of human rights.

For them the Worldconnectors make a strong plea to humanise Dutch refugee policies.

In short :

- Continue to enforce the existing law (Vreemdelingenwet, 2001).
- Practice this in a strict way to separate refugees from those who – often assisted by human traffickers – try to use refugee law to escape poverty.
- However, allow those who are not rejected after three months, to participate in learning Dutch, vocational training, education; and allow them, after 6 months, to participate in work and only send them away after these 6 months if there are serious cases of non-compliance with refugee-standards.
- After these 6 months municipalities should be held co-responsible; and consult them on participation and on ending permits to stay in the Netherlands, should this be warranted and necessary.
- Do not send away refugees any longer if the human rights situation improves in the country of origin after their entry to the Netherlands, unless ‘temporary protection’ was explicitly granted on the basis of a European Union decision.
- Increase the number of ‘refugees by invitation’ considerably. This would be an important sign that real refugees are welcome in our country. And it would reduce irregular flows of migrants to the Netherlands.

7. Development Cooperation

Regarding forced migration, the first obligation of development cooperation is to assist in preventing the causes why people have to flee. This is the struggle for poverty eradication, human rights’ implementation and preventing and ending civil wars. Development cooperation must be part of coherent government policies. Policy coherence between financial, trade and development cooperation policies is crucial and should be extended to the area of migration, in order to arrive at ‘migration for development’ policies. At the same time one has to be aware of the fact that developing countries bordering countries in conflict already receive the main share of the nearly 10 million international refugees. However, the largest share of the budgets for international

refugees goes to the reception of a relatively small number of more affluent people who have succeeded in their flight to further regions, for example, to Europe. There is more attention and budget needed for the reception in the region and for rehabilitation, reintegration, repatriation and reconstruction (the ‘4R-approach’). Refugees have a right to a safe home. Obviously, a speedy return is the preferred solution for all parties involved. If this is impossible, permanent settlement in the surrounding countries is an alternative and for that purpose external aid is of the utmost importance. In short ‘protection in the region’ is an effective way to spend the budget for development assistance; also while it will reduce irregular secondary flows of refugees, child soldiers and human trafficking.

8. Managed Migration and Circular Migration

When it comes to migration – beyond refugees – in general, the best way forward is to promote managed migration in the European Union. This is migration to which an explicit needs-based selection criterion is applied in terms of skills and professional qualities necessary in the receiving country. In fact, we are referring here to labour migration. In this respect, the right to free movement of labour, next to the free movement of goods and services, deserves much more attention. Such an open market, that is well regulated and managed according to the needs of both home and receiving countries and the migrants, would allow for both circular migration and permanent migration; in both categories there will be high-skilled and low-skilled migrants. (Under point 2 we highlighted circular migration in relation to transnational citizenship.)

Labour migration should – especially in the context of the changing demographic structure of (European) society – be viewed as a solution rather than a problem. Through labour migration, demand and supply can be attuned. Economists agree that even a minor liberalisation of the global labour market could lead to great progress in the world economy. Therefore, the Netherlands and/or Europe will have to open their borders for (regulated) labour migration. Both multinational companies as well as small and medium sized companies are in need of migrant employees to

adapt their business to the global markets; innovation and all available talents worldwide are crucial in this respect. From the same perspective, in order to excel as a knowledge centred economy, it is necessary to broaden opportunities for students, PHD scholars and university lecturers to stay (temporarily) in the Netherlands. However, not just high-skilled migrants should be allowed in temporarily, also lower-skilled migrants should be accepted, through a European regulated labour migration policy.

Particular attention to the wishes and potential of young migrants will – if well addressed – give a boost to the ‘Triple Win’ through circular migration.

The European Union still has to find its way. It has to take into account the consequences of the enlargement of the EU. Time is needed to adapt to the new realities of the enlargement, and this will limit the opportunities for migrants from outside the EU. However, there will be a process of ‘slow demography’ in Central European countries as well. In any case there is a specific problem in the Mediterranean area. How to cope with the Magreb and even with the sub-Saharan countries? It is obvious that the development in these countries themselves has to be the key answer and challenge; not migration.

Still the European Union should be generous and gradually introduce temporarily and permanent labour migration. The Interstate UN Global Forum on International Migration and Development, scheduled for July 2007 in Brussels, offers an opportunity to develop international agreement on a more favourable migration policy. Special attention should be paid to the trade-off between the welfare state and migration. Some form of gradual differentiated rights to social security might be useful in this context. In any case the win-win situation, particularly for the lower income groups in the Netherlands, should be established credibly.

9. Remittances

Remittances are an important source of income for millions of families in developing countries. In that sense, remittances play a vital role in the fight against poverty.

Furthermore, the money senders can derive pride and status from their contribution to the family

that has stayed behind. This reinforces the fact that remittances are private money flows and not public means. For that reason, the spending of remittances cannot be enforced. Remittances are not a substitute for development aid. Neither do remittances decrease the need for policy that focuses on development in the countries of origin. It is important to reinforce the role of remittances in achieving (sustainable) development. In order to achieve this, other investment possibilities and other aspects of the ‘enabling environment’ in the countries concerned have to be increased. Countries such as the Netherlands, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the business community, can play an important role in this respect. Lastly; the possibility of migrants to send money home is also dependent upon the position and knowledge of the migrant in the receiving society. In general, undocumented migrants encounter more difficulties in sending money home than legal migrants. For the development process in the countries of origin as a whole, a number of best practices are relevant and should be listed, analysed and translated into new systematic policies.

10. The Battle for Brains

The Netherlands as well as the European Union should be ambitious and assertive in the battle for brains. Still, brain drain is a realistic threat to developing countries. Especially if the developed countries enter into a competitive struggle for the talents of poor countries, this will threaten the chances of development for the poor countries. The brain-drain argument should not, however, be misused to resist all migration from poor countries. Precisely by taking away the obstacles for circular migration patterns that brain drain can develop into brain gain. One of the initiatives to tackle brain drain could be a compensation mechanism. For example, by investing in the knowledge (education, science and research) of the countries of origin. Or by assuring that developing countries will be exempted from paying tens of thousands of Euros on education for the migrants who come here or by adding an equivalent amount of money to the development resources that flow back to the country.

