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# MIGRATION IN THE AMERICAS

International Organization for Migration

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. IOM is an inter-governmental organization composed of 118 Member States and 20 Observer States.

## Immigration Debates Should Not Demonize Migrants

**T**he current debates over immigration in several developed countries should not demonize migrants.

Public perceptions in many developed countries of migrants taking jobs, lowering wages and being a burden on social services are not borne out by studies, including IOM's World Migration Report 2005.

Competition for low-skill jobs is largely between migrant communities themselves; migrants have negligible if any impact on lowering wages while studies have also not clearly proved that migrants, whether regular or irregular, are a greater burden on social services than nationals.

"The significant economic, social and cultural contributions made by migrants to host communities need to be recognized," said Brunson McKinley, IOM Director General. "One way to achieve this recognition would be by having more balanced and accurate information and reporting on the positive impact of migration."

Many countries have been built on immigration and the contributions of temporary and permanent foreign workers, including the United States and Western Europe. Modern economic growth and development is also being partly fuelled by migration.


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—Brunson McKinley  
IOM Director General

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Governments have the right and responsibility to determine which non-nationals to admit to their territories, and under what conditions. However, the human rights of all, including migrants, need to be respected. At the same time, migrants have a responsibility to obey the laws of the destination country, including immigration and labor laws.

"Today's mobile and interconnected world requires governments to take a fresh, multi-dimensional and balanced approach to managing the mobility of persons. This includes addressing the needs of an increasingly global labor market, demographic forecasts of aging and shrinking populations in much of the developed world, as well as recognizing the important positive potential of migration in contributing to economic growth and development in the poorest countries," added McKinley. 

# Time for Real Dialogue on Migration

*The upcoming UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development is the most significant effort to promote international cooperation on migration in more than a decade.*

Luca Dall'Oglio  
Permanent Observer  
to the United Nations  
IOM New York

The High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD), scheduled to take place at the United Nations in New York on September 14-15, 2006, represents the most significant effort to promote international cooperation on migration since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo.

While the output of the ICPD was an all-encompassing 20-year Plan of Action covering a wide range of population matters, the outcome of the HLD will, more modestly, be a so-called "Chairman's Summary" of the meeting, not a negotiated document containing recommendations or commitments. Yet in spite of this "format," the HLD promises to be a watershed in the way migration will be conceptualized by policymakers in the next few years.

## There is more than one reason for this

While we still regard most of the objectives of the ICPD as valid today, the relevance of the migration/development nexus has certainly acquired a heightened and somewhat different significance from the paradigms that were used in Cairo. That nexus was of course already recognized 12 years ago, but the emphasis was tilting somewhat more toward the impact of development on migration than vice versa.

Today, while not neglecting the issue of "root causes," the international com-

munity tends to assign a more proactive role to migration as a potential development tool, or strategy for development. This is quite a shift which brings about significant implications and stimulates our creativity to devise ways of promoting the beneficial effects of international migration. We are engaged in innovative initiatives for leveraging remittances; creating opportunities for diasporas to participate in community development; and promoting entrepreneurship and formation of human capital, among other activities.

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*Preparation for the HLD is producing a number of initiatives at the regional, national and global levels that stimulate debate and promote deliberations among national authorities, regional consultative processes, civil society organizations and other groups. This environment fosters the key element of a progressive and forward-looking migration discourse.*

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Parallel to this emphasis on the potential benefits of migration comes a more positive appreciation for the migrants themselves, which tends to shift the focus from forced migration to migrants' capacities, initiative, resilience and drive to succeed. In other words, migrants go from being victims of "failed" development to potential development actors.


A second reason for this positive appreciation for the HLD is that its preparatory process is producing a

number of initiatives and events at the regional, national and global levels that stimulate debate and promote deliberations among national authorities, regional consultative processes, civil society organizations and other groups. This environment fosters the key element of a progressive and forward-looking migration discourse, which is participatory, open and inclusive dialogue among all its stakeholders. IOM is fully engaged in this effort.

As our website indicates ([www.un.int/iom/IOM-HLD.html](http://www.un.int/iom/IOM-HLD.html)), IOM is supporting dozens of events across the globe, injecting its perspective and program-based *savoir faire* into the debate, hoping to use the HLD as an opportunity to fully mainstream migration in the international development agenda.

IOM considers the HLD and its focus to be positive, as the role and benefits of economic migration will be given the attention they deserve.

A positive approach does not imply denial of the potential negative effects of migration (such as the issue of brain-drain); on the contrary, it is meant to urge all stakeholders to recognize them and to discuss together how these can be minimized. Such an approach can help create a conducive climate for the debate at the UN this coming September.

The upcoming dialogue will generate the political will necessary for cooperative action to realize the development potential of migration. IOM sees this as the single most important potential of the HLD. 

# XI Conferencia Regional sobre Migración

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Los Viceministros de Relaciones Exteriores y de Gobernación de los países miembros<sup>1</sup> de la Conferencia Regional sobre Migración (CRM) celebraron su décimo-primer reunión, auspiciada por el Gobierno de El Salvador los días 4-5 de mayo.

Bajo el lema "Entrelazando Comunidades," las delegaciones hicieron hincapié en los numerosos esfuerzos realizados hasta la fecha para vincular la diáspora al desarrollo socio-económico de los países miembros, así como para facilitar su participación ciudadana. Así, por ejemplo, el gobierno salvadoreño compartió la experiencia del Ministerio de Salvadoreños en el Exterior, con la realización de un Foro que congregó a más de 600 líderes de la diáspora. Se decidió que el tema de la diáspora pasará a formar parte de la agenda en futuras ocasiones.

Asimismo, se reconoció el éxito logrado en el uso del fondo de reserva para la asistencia de migrantes intra-regionales en situación de alta vulnerabilidad, administrado por la OIM, al convertirlo en un mecanismo permanente.

Durante la XI CRM, se le encargó a la OIM la coordinación de los "Lineamientos Regionales para la Protección Especial en Casos de Retorno de Niños/as Víctimas de la Trata de Personas," iniciativa en la que también participan UNICEF, OIT y ACNUR.

Los Viceministros avalaron la participación de la CRM en el Diálogo de Alto Nivel que tendrá lugar en la sede de Naciones Unidas en septiembre, así como en la Conferencia Iberoamericana (Madrid, 18-19 de julio), con el fin de presentar la experiencia de la CRM desde 1996.

Por otra parte, se reconocieron los importantes avances en el desarrollo de SIEMMES (Sistema de Información Estadística sobre Migraciones en Mesoamérica),<sup>2</sup> y se destacó la necesidad de establecer un mecanismo simple y ágil para compartir estadísticas migratorias.

También como parte de la imple-



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La XI Conferencia Regional sobre Migración tuvo lugar los días 4-5 de mayo en El Salvador.

mentación del plan de acción de la CRM, se analizó el impacto de los talleres "Estándares Internacionales sobre Documentos de Viaje y Sistemas de Emisión" y "Sector Privado y Migración," y se aprobó la realización de un taller sobre Legislación Migratoria en Guatemala, con el apoyo de la OIM y del ACNUR.

<sup>1</sup> Belice, Canadá, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Estados Unidos, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, y la República Dominicana.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.siemca.iom.int>

## Workshop on Information Sharing in Insecure Environments


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IOM and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations of the US Department of Defense co-sponsored an in-depth workshop last month regarding "Information Sharing in Insecure Environments."

Participants in the Monterey, California workshop included more than 40 representatives from international organizations, NGOs, the armed forces and government civilian agencies that are tasked with delivering humanitarian assistance

following natural disasters or armed conflict, many times in insecure environments.

Given the critical role that information plays in the assessment, preparation and delivery of vital humanitarian assistance to populations in need, as well as the complex relationships between all actors involved, the workshop was a valuable opportunity to review existing guidelines and make recommendations for improvement.

The five-day workshop was hosted by the Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies at the Naval Postgraduate School. 



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Information plays a critical role in humanitarian assistance.

# Coming Full Circle

Zlatko Pasalic  
IOM Washington

On May 26 this year, it is going to be exactly eight years since my family and I first moved to the United States. These eight years have been filled with a lot of sadness, frustration, anxiety and difficulty that accompany anyone's quest to adjust to a completely new way of life. However, it has also been a time of great self-discovery, growth, hope and the realization that the reason why we first decided to come to this country—a search for a new home—has been fulfilled.

Now, as I come to work as an intern at IOM Washington every morning, I am apt to smile and reflect upon the irony of working for the organization without which I may never have come to the United States in the first place. When I was asked if I wanted to contribute a short story to this month's newsletter detailing my journey from being a refugee of the Bosnian war living in Germany to a young student in Washington, I jumped at the chance. I

felt it was important to illustrate the work of IOM and the real impact it has on people's lives. If part of IOM's ultimate mission is to help

those people, wherever they may be, who have lost their home and are looking to find a new one, then let my story stand as a reminder that this mission, while ongoing, has managed to change the lives of countless families for the better.

The war in Bosnia that started in 1992 caused a lot of human suffering and anguish. It left thousands dead and countless others were forced from their homes to destinations unknown in search of respite from the violence that

had engulfed the region. I was one of those refugees. I left my hometown and my family, together with a group of other kids my age, on a bus that was heading towards Germany—I was ten. We were all leaving the only place that we had ever known, a place that up until the war had been a fantastic place to grow up. Who could imagine leaving the green valleys and rivers of our hometown, the endless games of soccer and the lure of fruit-laden orchards beckoning to be ransacked by little boys like us, in spite of the orchard owner's threats to send his dogs at us for doing so? Yet, there we were on our way to Germany, a place only known to us through World War II-era movies and

*We were all leaving the only place that we had ever known, a place that up until the war had been a fantastic place to grow up. Who could imagine leaving the green valleys and rivers of our hometown, the endless games of soccer and the lure of fruit-laden orchards beckoning to be ransacked by little boys like us?*

open arms by families that did their utmost to give us little Bosnian war refugees anything our hearts desired, as if that would somehow lessen the pain and guilt we all felt for having left our families to the turmoil of an ever-nastier war. All the things that were offered to us, things most of us had not even seen before, just made us feel more guilty about living in such luxury while our families were forced to endure bombings, hunger and death all around them. As the war dragged on, we all did our best to integrate our-



Zlatko Pasalic, a recent intern at IOM Washington, left Bosnia at the age of ten, living in Germany before coming to the US in 1998.

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their depiction of seemingly all Germans as Nazis.

Germany turned out to be the opposite of that as we were all welcomed with

selves into a society that, while hospitable to us, also never let you forget that you were an outsider.

The war ended in 1995 with no victor, just a lot of losers as wars tend to do. By 1996, my mother and brother were able to join me in Germany. However, Germany had other plans as it passed laws that required all refugees to return home now that the fighting had stopped. What they did not understand is that even if fighting stops, people do not necessarily have a home and a future to go back to. We as a family knew that our future lay not in trying to rebuild our home in a country still torn apart by ethnic conflict, nor did it lie in a country that did not want us there. We were left looking for a fresh start, and that is when we decided to go to the one country known as a place where people can start afresh—the United States.

With the help of IOM we were able to

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start the process of application to immigrate to the United States, a process that took about a year and which included numerous interviews with US immigration officials, tons of paperwork and medical certifications. However, in the end we were given the airplane tickets and all the entry documents required for our journey to the United States. It was 1998, and we were about to be given the second chance we were all hoping for.

The memories of our journey to the United States have become a little blurry, probably due to the excitement and exhaustion that I felt throughout the trip. The one thing I remember vividly is the IOM plastic bag, a bag that contained all our documents with a big, bright blue IOM logo that I kept clutching the whole time we were en route to the United States. A second memory is the one I have of us landing at the

Spokane Airport. The city looked so huge and brightly illuminated that it led my brother to proclaim that it looked like Las Vegas. Spokane did not turn out to be Las Vegas, but it did offer us a first taste at what America had to offer.

About a year later, we were joined by my father and the family was finally together again for the first time since I left in '92. We made our new home in Seattle and we have not looked back since. My parents found jobs and bought a house recently, thus literally starting a new home for us. My brother graduated from college and now works as a computer programmer. I am currently in Washington, DC pursuing a master's degree and trying to figure out how to make my mark on the world. In short, we have created new lives for ourselves and we are grateful for the opportunity that we have been

given to succeed. The feeling of belonging somewhere and having a home cannot be adequately described, and we are looking forward to the future with a lot of optimism and hope. Having been on the receiving end of someone's aid that allowed my family to find a new home, I am more aware of the need to extend that aid to others around the world.

The internship with IOM has given me the opportunity to learn more about the various aspects of the organization's missions and field work, as well as the growing importance of IGOs in international disaster relief. I feel these lessons will serve me well in whatever career I end up working in later in life. I am proud to be working with IOM and I am even more proud that I could tell the story of the real-life impact this organization has on people's lives. In a way, it is like coming full circle! 🌍

## Promoting the Health of Irregular Migrants in Costa Rica

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An estimated 400,000 Nicaraguan migrants live in Costa Rica, many without a valid work visa. Essential to the production of pineapple, melons, coffee and other agricultural crops, this migrant population also works in construction, as domestic workers, and in other sectors in the Costa Rican economy.

Can these men and women, and their families, access health services in Costa Rica, a country known for human rights?

According to IOM's Rosilyne Borland, the answer is yes and no. "In Costa Rica, certain groups are guaranteed access to health services, regardless of their immigration status or their ability to pay, such as pregnant women and children under 18," she explains.

Despite the perception that migrants from Nicaragua are putting heavy pressure on the social services of the country, including the public health system,

clear information is lacking. "We know that in the northern part of the country, migrants are receiving health care at the first level of attention, even when their access isn't guaranteed by law. When they are referred to the second level of care, things become more complicated, and more migrants are excluded. More information is definitely needed," Borland adds.

As part of a collaborative effort with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the country's Ombudsman's office and the Ministry of Health, IOM participated in a recent health and human rights training workshop in San Carlos, a town located near the border with Nicaragua in an area that is home to an estimated 40,000 Nicaraguans.

The training focused on groups that are often excluded from health services, including adolescents, women, people living with HIV and AIDS, and migrants.



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*IOM's Rosilyne Borland presents during a recent health and human rights training workshop in Costa Rica.*

The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to hear from health staff from the area and to learn from their experiences. Many spoke of how they felt a sense of obligation as health professionals to provide services to migrants, regardless of their immigration status. Borland says, "There is a clear sense of the need to respond to the health needs of migrants in order to have a healthy community overall."

The workshop was held as part of a UNFPA project focusing on HIV and AIDS and marginalized populations, through support of the OPEC Fund. 🌍

## New Book Explores Link Between Intra-Caribbean Migration and Conflict

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**M**igration is, by its nature, transnational and thus requires international cooperation if it is to be managed effectively. Various push and pull factors are contributing to the increase in migration flows, and mixing of people is creating social and economic pressures that have the potential to evolve into tensions within and between states, affecting stability and development in the Caribbean region and beyond.


So far, little policy-oriented thinking has been directed towards the management of intra-Caribbean migration with a view not only to preventing violent conflict, but to managing migration in a law-abiding and constructive manner through cooperative arrangements, involving governmental authorities and interested civil society organizations.

As part of the global "Initiative on Conflict Prevention through Quiet Diplomacy," Human Rights Internet (HRI), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the University of the West Indies (UWI) have engaged scholars and practitioners to comment on various aspects of intra-Caribbean migration and conflict potential and provide concrete recommendations in the upcoming publication "Intra-Caribbean Migration and the Conflict Nexus." The editors hope that the book will provide fodder for an informed debate and contribute to policy development.

As the first volume devoted exclusively to assessing the linkage between intra-regional migration and potentially violent conflict in the greater Caribbean, the compilation will not focus on the Caribbean diaspora, but current migration trends and themes with-



*The book will be launched at the upcoming Iberoamericana Conference taking place in Madrid 18-19 July.*

in the greater Caribbean that pose challenges to stability, peace, and social and economic development. It may also serve as an example for examination of similar challenges elsewhere in the world. 

For more information or to request a copy, contact Taryn Lesser at [migration@hri.ca](mailto:migration@hri.ca) or fax a request to Human Rights Internet at 613-789-7414.

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