MISSIO
Beyond Migration. German-African dialogue on Migration and Development: aspects and challenges for politics and Churches

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Complexity of the mobility in Africa: first indicators.

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This introduction to the debate intends to highlight some of the core migration challenges in Africa which clearly indicate the complexity of the various issues in their societal motivations and consequences as well as need for global governance rather than solely national responses. The text then focuses on a number of premises and/or policy dimensions that would contribute to develop a win-win perspective.

I. What is at stake?

- There are nearly 200 million international migrants in the world today – 20 million of whom are of African origin. It roughly means that one person out of 30 in our world is a migrant and that 1 out of ten migrants is of African origin. Migration has become a societal reality in which both the fundamental hope for better life opportunities and perspectives as well as the dramatic and life endangering situations related to crisis, conflicts and natural disasters are expressed.

- Many individuals are motivated to migrate, not for reasons of conflict, but rather for reasons of economic survival or opportunities**.** In Africa this very often results in the various forms of internal and urban migration. Today, about 42% of Africa's population lives in ***urban areas***. Rural – urban movement has been noted as being '*a conscious fleeing from entrenched poverty in the rural areas'* (Sonsore 2007) The continent is experiencing urbanization rates which are twice as high as those seen during the industrial revolution in Europe. Cities like Lagos (Nigeria) and Kinshasa (DRC) have grown by a factor of 40 in the past half century whereby the last decades saw impressive numbers of arrivals. These urban areas are marked by poverty and insufficient or inadequate basic services: 70% of the urban population in Africa is living in informal and inadequate situations. In Nairobi, a city of approximately 3.5 million people, 1 million live in the Kibera slum, one of the largest informal settlements in Africa.
  It could be said that such urban migration highlights and geographically displays the gap between developing/developed parts of the countries and those marked by appalling poverty. It could furthermore be stated that this urbanization process has deep sociologic and cultural consequences: the vast numbers of people living together in such proximity, greatly affects the

traditional education models and cultures. It seems to me that Africa is on the verge of a social and cultural revolution turning its back on a difficult past but not necessarily conceiving a better future.

- Above and beyond the 200 million international migrants, millions of people have been uprooted in their own countries, displaced without having crossed international borders. It is reported that the number of people internally displaced *by conflict alone* reached 26 million worldwide in 2007, nearly half of whom are in Africa. (13 million). Sudan hosts the highest number of internally displaced persons in the world: 6 million—nearly 1/4th of the global total, with the Democratic Republic of Congo fourth and Somalia fifth (with 1.3 and 1.1 million respectively.) The DRC and Somalia are among the countries most affected worldwide by *new* internal displacement. In the DRC, for example, internal displacement has worsened since the middle of last year, principally in the eastern provinces, despite returns in some parts of the country. Other examples of conflict-induced displacement include ongoing violence in Chad and the Central African Republic, where 300,000 people have been displaced by conflict (2/3 internally), and in and between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

- On the other hand, while many migrants and refugees find themselves forced to leave home, many others are, in fact, ***returning home.*** The recent peace accord in the Cote d'Ivoire which is opening the possibility for the 700,000 internally displaced to return home is but one example of this form of migration. Also notably positive, almost half of the nearly 2 million people internally displaced over the two decades of conflict in northern Uganda have been able to return home or to transit sites nearer their homes since the signing of a "cessation of hostilities agreement" in August 2006. Though there are significant obstacles remaining, this suggests great progress, particularly considering that, in 2003, the UN head of emergency relief referred to Uganda displacement as "the biggest forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world today".

  Return migration can also be problematic, however, particularly when considering the serious challenges that arise regarding both land property and integration issues, and the dynamics of reintegrating younger generations born in camp sites. This has been demonstrated in many situations, including when the Burundi people were sent back home after a long period of nearly 30 years in camps and, as recently as 2007, at one border reception centre in Zimbabwe, where 120,000 people - the majority of them young men in their early twenties - were returned from South Africa. It is worth noting that, in many cases, affected individuals often choose not to return to their home countries, rather continuing their flight in other areas of Africa as was seen, e.g., when in 1996 camps for Rwandese citizens were closed in the Goma region.

- Furthermore, **human trafficking and smuggling** are prevalent and particularly worrisome forms of modern migration. Within Africa, some of the principal victims of these crimes are children between the ages of 12 and 16, many of whom are recruited as soldiers or sold into prostitution or forced labour. An accepted total figure of 27 million victims of forced labour is annually increased by 600.000 to 800.000 new cases. The 'business' today is worth some 15 billion US dollars. And it must be added that eradicating trafficking takes more than the superficial combat against traffickers: it takes legal channels well installed and implemented; it also needs to go against the growing social pressure on men and women to help provide for their families. This to indicate that poverty has its proper rules and ways obliging people.

- Migration that is not managed properly inevitably exacerbates **social tensions at a national level**. Recent situations in Kenya and South Africa, to name just these countries, are sufficient proof for this. Even though South Africa is traditionally attracting and hosting migrants from neighbouring countries, the swelling of the Zimbabwean presence to between 3 and 5 million provoked a violent immediate defensive reaction against the indulgence of the government, demanding stronger measures to stop the influx. Even if Kenyans have a good understanding of the issues that generated some of the more recent internal displacements to the Kibera slum, camps typically

mirror the division between the ethnic groups. In more general terms it can be said that immigration and forced mobility are frequently assumed to slow down or hamper further national development whereby African governments come under various pressures to reduce their efforts on behalf of refugees and migrants. In this perspective one could also raise the question why northern countries are found ready to spend an important amount of money on the humanitarian crisis that follows so often the forced movements but that very little seems to be done on (1) those elements that could have prevented or reduced the crisis and on (2) those elements that are much more subliminal but longer lasting sociologic consequences of such dramatic situations.

- Today, migration is also a major challenge affecting the fundamental fabrics of African societies: Africa is experiencing a fundamental change in its social and cultural heritage. It is obvious that migration is affecting the traditional cohesion in the African society, and when we recall the words of the Nigerian poet Achebe Chinua: "We'd rather have more parents than more money", one understands that the present road is moving away from this fundamental preference for a cohesive and unity oriented society. ***Families*** e.g. are separated for long periods of time, if not forever. The ancestral values of family and the education of children are greatly affected when spouses, parents and children live separated because of basic economic need or because they are blocked from family reunification. ***Feminization*** of the migration in Africa (47% of African migrants are women) is also an important and worrying indicator. An increasing number of women are travelling independently which shows that traditional patterns and roles are fading and that we are moving towards societies with many more fragmented families.

- Another challenge in this list is the discussion on the brain drain / brain gain / brain waste. I'm not fully in agreement with the present line of debate that defines brain drain to be solely negative. We have to acknowledge the individual choice, acknowledge in some cases the governmental support and encouragement to leave the country and include in our analysis the labour market potential. But indeed figures are alarming: 50 out of the 600 doctors who graduated in Zambia in 2007 have remained in the country, Kenya loses an average of 20 doctors each month and there are approximately 30.000 Nigerian doctors practicing in North America, Europe, the Middle East and in other African countries.

- And this brings me to another aspect of the complexity of the migration issue: those people have left their countries but they very often send remittances back. As is sufficiently known, it is estimated that some 300 billion US dollars are being sent home on an annual basis. This amount is 3 times as high as the official development aid world wide. It is obvious that these remittances help reduce poverty and that they contribute to the survival of many families. There are indeed indicators that where remittances make up 10% of the GDP in an African country, there is a 1.6 decline in poverty. It has e.g. been indicated that if Lesotho would no longer receive those remittances from its population abroad, there would be a 15 % increase of poverty. (Yawing 2007). Another indicator to prove how much is relied on these remittances is the situation in Somalia where some 40% of the population relies on this income. When in Europe we readily discuss the need to send people home, we tend to ignore that we fundamentally affect the survival of huge numbers of this population back home. This would be one other and major reason to look at things from a more global perspective.

These elements may suffice to give a bird's eye view of the importance and complexity of mobility in Africa. They also clearly lead to the conclusion that migration cannot be managed solely from a national perspective. Regional and mainly global perspectives are indeed part of the challenge and the role the African societies can play in the building of new global concepts based on mobility is therefore of the highest importance.

II. Towards Global Governance of mobility:

The building of Global Governance of migration has already started and broadly speaking, one recognizes growing willingness to further develop migration-related policies. It is however clear that this willingness is largely inspired by mainly economic needs, with little emphasis on guaranteeing the dignity of migrants.

In 2006 the UN created an entirely new process to examine potentials of and attitudes towards migration. The *Global Forum on Migration and Development* is an annual, primarily intergovernmental conference convening the world's migration leaders at ministerial level. The Global Forum has, for the first time ever, succeeded in raising the issue of migration for serious discussion at the international level, defying skeptics by engaging some 156 countries at its first session in Brussels last year and likely the same number of interested countries this year in Manila. Though the Forum has no decision-making power *per se*, it engages States, international organizations and civil society in examining the effects of migration on development, the effect of development on migration, related policy options and concrete measures and programs. The Global Forum and the many voices calling for better coordination in this matter are good indicators for this governance. At this stage we would see two core objectives for such governance:

1. Allow a useful management of mobility at the global level to ensure protection and accompaniment of the largest possible number of people on the move .

2. Optimise progress and development at a supra national scale aiming at win-win-win situations which include the migrants and their families, the countries of departure and the countries of arrival or transit.

Such Governance will therefore need to be built not only on economic and national criteria but also on criteria related to development, poverty, human rights and well being. ***Global Governance on migrations should therefore not aim at reducing the mobility but rather focus on the societal, individual and developmental potential of this mobility. What need to be built are structures that manage mobility, not structures that prevent mobility***.

The relationship of Afro-European policies is also particularly relevant, given current migratory trends that lead many African migrants to Europe. To date, public migration policies at both international and regional levels are gradually shifting from those that are purely restrictive in nature, to ones that are instead better defined economic responses to today's socio-economic and demographic realities. However, one could raise the question if these new definitions serve the protection of the persons and their human dignity or rather aim at responding to economic needs only. Next month, the European commission will discuss and vote a policy plan on asylum which aims at an integrated and harmonized approach to protection across the EU. A parallel effort is done on the harmonization of the migration procedures. Last October, the concept of a "Blue Card" was introduced which aimed to offer legal immigration status to skilled migrants, initially for temporary two-year periods and then for longer, even permanent terms, with rights including family reunification. Another concept was an EU plan to create new "job centers", beginning in **Mali** and followed by **Mauritania** and **Senegal,** to help to facilitate, and in truth, better manage, labour migration from Africa to Europe, largely for seasonal work in agriculture and construction.

Last year the Council of Europe adopted a framework of recommendations for its member States on *co-development,* with an explicit focus on improving north-south cooperation on development, including comprehensive approaches and structures to engage immigrants and their host countries in development partnerships with and for the benefit of people and communities in their countries of origin.

Seven ICMC recommendations in building the Global Governance on Migrations:

1. There is a need to set up ***international legal frameworks*** that are ratified, fully integrated and implemented in as many nations as possible. These frameworks would be an indispensable and preliminary condition to guarantee the protection of all people. They would be the clear indicators on rights and duties of both migrants and societies that are hosting them on a temporary or on a more permanent basis. We know that it takes time for conventions to be ratified, integrated in the national legal systems and then implemented.

2. ***Global Governance cannot be Euro centred*** or decided upon by solely the developed countries. It should include the clear commitment and responsibility of regional structures.

   - In Africa, the African Union might build and/or convene a pan-African process to discuss a regional convention for an actual legal *status*—not just rights—for so-called "economic migrants" with a clear secondary objective of exerting influence at the international level. There is already an OAU Refugee Convention and an ongoing process of the African Union on a new *Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons In Africa,"* which is being developed in consultation with the UNHCR and other UN entities, the International Committee of the Red Cross and NGOs, and currently in an advanced stage of consideration AU member states.
   - These are of course longer term roads but if we look at the rapidly evolving process of recognition of internally displaced people (10 years), there is hope to see the same efforts become conclusive for economic migrants. What we're saying is that it is time to start this work.
   - There is a UN Convention for the protection of Migrant workers and their families which has been signed by 37 countries of which 14 African countries. If Africa wants to secure its emigrants leaving the continent or employed within the continent, it needs to further promote the ratification of this convention and make sure it is integrated in the legal national systems.

3. Any tentative effort to build such governance needs to be anchored in a ***long term vision*** and not appear as a set of rules that respond to a specific crisis as perceived at one given point by those nations involved. The worst laws are always made in times of crisis. The displacement of Zimbabwe nationals e.g. should not only affect the responsibility of South Africa but should be a global concern carried by all. In such a scope it should even be made possible to consider preventive interventions within the country of departure to prevent or stop the exodus.

4. ***Migration, well being, market economy and labour are interconnected realities***. The development of global governance on migration will therefore need to be based on ***a holistic approach*** taking these elements as well as the existing tools such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into consideration. In this sense, global governance will be a process that will continuously need to find an equilibrium between economic needs and the well being of the migrant. It is essential to integrate the broader identity of the migrant; he/she is not just a commodity to serve some specific economic need. Aspects of family, religion, culture etc. are equally to be taken into consideration. This framework will also need to develop criteria on the largely discussed brain drain and brain gain. There is no brain drain if the skilled person is unemployed in his/her country of origin and offered a position in some other country. There is no brain gain if the contracted person doesn't offer specific qualities. There is furthermore no reason for considering this aspect in an isolated way because it reduces again the person to the commodity he/she is not.

5. The need to create one or more ***specific status for migrants***. There is an international status for refugees but there is no such status for the economic migrant; there is a UN intergovernmental institution to protect the refugee status and the refugee but there is no such institution in protection of the economic migrant. The existing ILO conventions n°97 (Migrations for work) and 143 (Migrations and abusive conditions) as well as many other existing conventions are not sufficiently implemented. If we would accept to create a status of temporary citizenship we would immediately need to provide

the clear and transparent definitions of the rights and obligations of the migrants which are now very often lacking.

6. ***The Global governance of migration will need to be flexible***. There are many various areas of flexibility that will need to be taken into account. By means of example I'll only mention three :

   - Migration is only temporarily defined in its routes and populations. The largest group of migrants today are the Chinese (38 million) but if one looks at the global economy, it is obvious that China will rapidly become a country of immigration. Growing numbers of Africans are today already heading in that direction.
   - It is obvious that the many national systems cannot be brought overnight into one global system dealing with the issue. Global Governance will therefore need to develop itself along interoperable definitions whereby the focus remains on mobility. The nations would continue to exercise their legal right to control their borders as well as take up their responsibility in the integration process and in the accompaniment and integration of the immigrant.
   - Another aspect of this flexibility is the need to integrate the concepts of migration and development. This cannot be done entirely on a normative basis but will require various partnership models at bilateral and multilateral level.

7. ***The global governance of migration is not a governmental issue only***. The process is about human solidarity and it therefore needs to include all actors in civil society, employers, trade unions, social services etc.

This last element would plead for a different structural approach than the existing ones. Building a mechanism that oversees, and to some extent rules, global mobility isn't that easy and it may well be that creating another UN structure for migration is not the best possible answer. In that I share the hesitation of many governments. On the other hand there is a clear need for an intergovernmental framework to accompany the process of mobility. This accompaniment will unavoidably interfere with national legislations but cannot be solely normative as it will focus on a societal process that profoundly affects the core definitions of our global village. We will need to walk this road in Africa and world wide, a road towards integrated and universal humanity.