

UN meeting on migration has opened new avenues for global cooperation

In her address to Heads of State and Government gathered for plenary debate today, the President of the General Assembly said that last week's session on international migration "revealed the potential and opportunities that globalization presents as a force for improving the lives of millions of people."

The 14-15 September High-level Dialogue was the first Assembly meeting to focus directly on migration, with an emphasis on identifying ways to maximize the development benefits of migration and to minimize its negative impacts.

During these two days, nearly all of the 130-plus Governments present expressed the wish to continue an international dialogue in some form or another, Assembly President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa noted in her wrap-up at the conclusion of the Dialogue. In particular, "many of you have embraced the Secretary-General's proposal of establishing a Global Forum on Migration and Development and the offer made by the Government of Belgium to host the first meeting of the Forum next year," she said.

The Dialogue included four interactive round tables, which allowed for an exchange of views between different stakeholders: Member States, observers, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector. The meeting drove home several key points, the President concluded: that international migration is a growing phenomenon and can be a positive force for development in countries of origin as well as countries of destination, provided it is supported by the right set of policies; and that it is important to strengthen international cooperation bilaterally, regionally and globally.

The proposal of Secretary-General Annan is for a standing forum which governments could use to explore and compare policy approaches. Such a government-led consultative forum on migration and development would not produce negotiated outcomes or recommendations, according to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Migration, Peter Sutherland. Rather, it would make new policy ideas more widely known, add value to existing regional consultations, and encourage an integrated approach to migration and development at both the national and international levels.