

PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION

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The XXI century is the century of migration. In this century we will see migration as it has never been seen in history, on the assumption that migration is the eternal movement of peoples. It is a phenomenon that has been occurring since the beginning of mankind and has been developing non-stop since the first human populations started to grow. Only thus was the rest of the world populated, this is the only way we can explain our own nation. In the future, the movement will be intensely larger, which poses many challenges. One of them is maintaining a humanitarian vision of migration and its implications.

Why do I say that the 21st. century will be the century of migration? There are several reasons:

1. The growing inequality in wealth that exists between nations. A few countries, which fortunately are increasing, but a handful of countries possess 90% of the world's wealth and a large number of countries possess 10% of the wealth generated in the world. This inequality will cause those who have no opportunity, or who have very low standards of living, to move to places where they can have greater opportunities.
2. Growth rates in population are very different. Strangely enough, the growth rates of the richest countries in general tend to be lower than the growth rates of the poorest countries. This emphasizes the difference in global wealth even more, together with the urge to migrate to other countries.
3. The exponential growth of technology. In 1903, just a little over a hundred years ago, the world witnessed the first flight of the Wright brothers. The Wright brothers flew on a plane and the distance was, I think, 7 meters. After those first experiments some years went by before aviation began to

develop. This was an experiment that showed it could be done, but it was not the birth of aviation as such, which began later. In 1969, man reached the moon. This growth in less than a century, in this area, gives us a very clear idea of the meaning of the development of transportation. Then, if there are more people, unevenly distributed, and if wealth is unevenly distributed, and there are means to transport large population groups more rapidly and economically, then the movement of people we will see in the 21st. century will be immense.

4. The process of political modernization is also unevenly distributed. The number of democratic countries is on the increase. But many countries are struggling between traditional forms of governance and modern forms of government, and this step is usually generated through conflict. Social conflicts arise, there is political unrest, very high levels of violence can result, which is another factor that promotes migration.

If we were to summarize this concretely, migration is caused mainly by two types of phenomena: economic and political. People go where they can find a decent way of life, materially, and they also leave countries where they cannot find the security or political stability necessary to develop with their family. All these phenomena are converging so that in the 21st. century we will witness the largest population movements in history. This raises a number of challenges for the international community.

Migration certainly also has many positive effects. People, who have little productive capacity in developing countries, have their productive capacity enhanced when they move to developed countries. Highly developed countries are often overwhelmed by high income, salary levels, etc. They feel they can no longer perform certain activities that have become economically impossible, but influx migration allows their facilities, machinery, etc. to be reused because migrants work in much cheaper conditions.

There are also many cultural and other types of benefits. For example, the *Colegio de México (Mexican College)* in Mexico. This was the number one research institution in social sciences. It was the number one for excellence in all its areas of

activity. It was founded by Spanish migrants, and was not called the *Colegio de México (Mexican College)* at the beginning, but the *Casa de España (House of Spain)*. It was the place where Spanish migrants arrived, those intellectuals who were expelled from or fled Spain during the Spanish Civil War shortly before the Second World War. They arrived with a wealth of knowledge and began here to convey here what they had learnt in Europe, and so trained generations of Mexicans.

Another clear example is the Lebanese who have had to leave their country. Now they form a Lebanese community in Mexico featuring truly outstanding and remarkable people, Lebanese immigrants who came to Mexico, people who came to our country in very adverse conditions, and precisely because they had left behind a very troubled place, they were willing to do anything to survive here, and they were very successful in their areas of expertise.

There are other foreign intellectuals, politicians and academics in Mexico who have done a wonderful job for our country. They have had an important role in the advancement of our country. I think it is worth celebrating diversity, it is worth welcoming foreigners. However, it is important to note that the positive effects of migration also have another side, which are the negative effects of migration.

The negative effects of migration are mainly social. I would you to consider a small community in the United States and imagine you are American, and suddenly a few Mexican migrants arrive in this small community of perhaps 100,000 or 125,000 thousand inhabitants. At first they are warmly welcomed, and when they see they can employ them in different tasks, then more come over, and then even more, and there comes a time when the original inhabitants start to feel besieged. There are now a considerable number of migrants with a different religion, with a different culture, with a different language, who look physically different. Americans begin to feel threatened in their way of life, they begin to feel threatened in the local culture in which they grew up, in which they developed and that they value, as we value our own. They begin to feel the threat that results in rejection and that translates into anti-immigrant movements, which we have to face, and we must be aware that many of these reactions are perfectly natural, understandable, and we have to deal

with them and confront them, and dealing with them will be a cultural challenge that we must all undertake.

All these reasons imply challenges for the international community. These challenges are emphasized by the growing awareness of human rights. For a very long time until World War II, the internal affairs of each State were considered as issues to be resolved by that State. Fortunately, after the terrible humanitarian tragedies of World War II, there was awareness that the community of nations had an obligation to guarantee human rights and the international law of human rights began to develop.

International law was created to regulate relations between States. It had nothing to do with individuals, but when the community of nations began to care for human rights, they had to change the paradigm and accept the fact that international law must see to the welfare of individuals, that there is a right over and above the sovereignty of nations, and that it is the duty of solidarity of all nations to care for peoples. We cannot remain indifferent and allow each country to solve immigration problems as they please, but we have to make sure that everybody is everyone's responsibility, and that everyone is taken care of from the standpoint of the human rights and dignity of the individual person.

Therefore, the international community must find ways to ensure that every migratory movement, which will happen in large numbers during this century, is legal, orderly and safe. Those are the three objectives that should be defined by the international community. This, from the standpoint of diplomacy, can only be achieved through international negotiation. This is a political challenge as well as a legal challenge.

If the challenge to overcome opposition to migration is a cultural challenge, it is a political and legal challenge. Of course, we have to face it in two ways:

1. Through bilateral agreements between countries of origin and destination who have to reach agreements on the humane treatment of migrants.
2. Through multilateral agreements. This means that within the United Nations or any other United Nations body or regional agency, such as the OAS, the

African Union or the Council of Europe, we have to reach agreements setting out the minimum standards that must be observed by a specific group of countries.