

The side event entitled “Achieving the future sustainable development goals: the role of labour migration” was held on 4 November on the margins of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). The event, convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), was moderated by Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General, DESA. Ambassador Shameem Ahsan, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Michelle Leighton, Chief of the International Migration Branch at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Clare Menozzi, Population Division, DESA took the floor to make presentations. The presentations were followed by questions from the audience.

The meeting acknowledged the increasing importance accorded to including migrants, migration and mobility in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda. Governments and other stakeholders had identified this as a priority at the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the seventh meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2014. The outcome document of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals also included several potential targets related to migration.

Migration had the potential to lift millions out of poverty, provide access to decent work and foster innovation. Migration, however, was not in-itself a panacea and could have negative consequences resulting in human trafficking, migrant exploitation and abuse, excessive dependence on remittances, as well as brain drain and deskilling when not approached in an holistic manner. Many LLDCs relied heavily on remittances and had large diasporas. It was important, therefore, to integrate migration into the national development programmes of LLDCs, where appropriate.

Ensuring that migrants were not compelled to go abroad by lack of decent work opportunities at home was identified as one of the priorities of the ILO’s new fair migration agenda. A number of participants called for reducing the costs of migration, including recruitment fees for migrant workers and the costs of transmitting remittances, as well as for improving the recognition of diplomas, qualifications and skills regionally and at a global level. Greater efforts were also required to strengthen the evidence-base on migration and development so that policies could be made in an informed manner.