

Hundred and seventy-fifth session

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Item 57 of the provisional agenda

UNESCO'S ROLE AND THE CHALLENGE OF ILLEGAL AFRICAN MIGRATION

SUMMARY

This item has been included in the provisional agenda of the 175th session of the Executive Board at the request of Senegal on behalf of the African group.

A revised explanatory note together with a revised proposed decision are attached.

Decision proposed: paragraph 11.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

1. The flow of migration from Africa has undergone radical change since 2005. In quantitative terms, first of all, it is clear that individual strategies are being replaced by collective strategies characterized by more regular and larger movements. For instance, the available figures show that between January and August 2006 more than 23,000 migrants attempted to emigrate illegally to Europe from the coasts of West Africa alone. Other waves of emigrants sail from the Mediterranean coast while some others are now knocking on the doors of South Africa.

2. Second, in qualitative terms, the resources deployed confirm that there are organized networks and infrastructure that make it possible to cross desert areas, to brave a dangerous stretch of ocean and to bypass the border security arrangements of transit and destination countries.

3. The quantitative importance and new forms of these migratory flows have sometimes led to heightened tension at borders and even within several countries of North Africa and Europe, where there have been violent scenes and loss of human life. Aware of the seriousness of the problem, the African Union placed the issue of African migration on the agenda of its summit in Banjul in June 2006. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has launched a high-level dialogue on international migration and development and established a Global Forum on Migration and Development.

4. The people trying to emigrate to Europe are young Africans aged from 17 to 30 years who have three levels of educational background:

- the vast majority have completed secondary level and have then left the education system;
- a significant number have given up or failed at the beginning of higher education, a year before or a year after the university entrance level examination;
- it is reported that one in four has completed higher education.

5. Thus, in qualitative terms, these educated would-be emigrants represent a double loss for the countries of origin and families who have funded that education. First, there is a loss of brain power and qualified labour, which will be put to work for another economy even if some may plan to return to the country of origin; and, second, there is a definitive loss when the person trying to emigrate dies in the attempt.

6. This kind of emigration has three essential aspects:

- **humanitarian** with the images of distress, shipwreck, exhausted bodies and sometimes drowned destinies;
- **security** because these new forms are the source of threatened destabilization and persistent tension on the borders of the countries concerned in the region, which are forced, understandably, to take increasingly firm security measures;
- **economic and social** due to the multiple ramifications of such migration in the countries of departure, transit and destination: job insecurity, problems of cultural integration, brain drain, job losses, increased social security expenditure, and migrants transferring money and social investments to their country of origin.

7. This major development has marked recent relations between Africa and Europe to such an extent that it is at the top of all the international policy agendas of Europe, the United Nations and the African Union. This is due to the scale of the tragedy and the phenomenon and to the fact that nothing seems to be able to stop the massive flow of migrants to Europe, the Gulf countries and to rich African countries.

8. Current circumstances should therefore encourage the development of a new approach, the search for innovative solutions and the involvement of additional institutional actors. While the root causes of the migrations may well be economic, the response must not be limited to waiting for the future development of the poorer regions of the world, including Africa.

9. By virtue of its mandate, UNESCO is responsible for education on the one hand and has an ethical vocation on the other. It should therefore be able to respond to the deep concerns of the States involved about the migration from Africa and to apply to it a comprehensive strategy. In the short term, the Organization can legitimately make use of its influence to reach out to these young people looking for a better future and involve them in a direct dialogue in which States and civil society will be invited to participate. The purpose of such a dialogue will be to reach a better understanding of these young people's plans and expectations and above all to dissuade them from running the risk of migrating under such conditions and to put into perspective the myth of Europe as being the only prospect for the future. In the medium and long term, UNESCO should strengthen its subprogrammes on technical and vocational education for Africa in the context of the chapter on education and globalization, which is based on the two following main lines of action "Responding to opportunities and overcoming challenges". These training modules will be designed and developed in conjunction with the International Labour Organization and national economic actors and will mainly endeavour to offer better targeted complementary professionalizing training at all levels of education.

10. In order to guarantee resources over the long term, it would be useful to endow the Organization with a sustainable funding mechanism to ensure that the programme has sufficient means.

Proposed draft decision

11. In the light of the foregoing, the Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Having regard to the Constitution,
2. Having examined document 176 EX/16 Rev.,
3. Considering that African migration is a matter of deep concern which warrants being taken into account by UNESCO in its Education and Social and Human Sciences programmes,
4. Noting that the African Union at its Banjul summit, acknowledging the multi-faceted character of migration, has recommended concerted action,
5. Recalling the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families that entered into force in July 2003, and the obligation for all States to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms,

6. Further recalling that UNESCO has selected as priority targets its programmes on Africa, LDCs and young people,
7. Stressing the importance of UNESCO's fields of competence, in particular the social sciences, education, culture and communication in resolving the problems of international migration and development,
8. Invites the Director-General to define UNESCO's role by virtue of its mandate in the context of the High-Level Dialogue initiated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Global Forum;
9. Requests the Director-General to establish an intersectoral working group in the Secretariat, which will be required to make practical proposals in UNESCO's fields of competence in order to respond to the problems of migration and development;
10. Further requests the Director-General to report to it at its 176th session.