

FIRST EXPERT CONSULTATION FOR BUSINESS AND CITIES ON MIGRATION AND URBANISATION

28-29 JUNE 2011, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

On 28-29 June 2011 the first Expert Consultation for business and cities on migration and urbanisation took place in Johannesburg, South Africa. Organised by Foundation The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration (THP), the event was the first in a series of some five similar consultations to be held around the world. Toronto and Istanbul are next in line; Asia and Latin America will follow. The objective of the consultations is to bring two key stakeholders in the refugee and migration domain, big cities and business, together with a view to develop practical answers to migration developments. The outcomes of each consultation will inform the next in the series and will ultimately feed into the The Hague Global Hearing on Refugees and Migration in 2012.

THP has had an ongoing engagement with the City of Johannesburg since 2006. Next to representatives from local authorities and the private sector, the consultation in Johannesburg was attended by representatives of migrant organisations, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and academia. The experts present explored the roles and responsibilities of cities and business; the challenges and opportunities to be found in the field of migration and the need for cooperation with different stakeholders to achieve concrete results. These aspects were addressed in light of the central question of the consultation: how can business and cities benefit from human mobility in achieving professional objectives?

The topic of migration seen from the joint perspective of business and cities has been advanced by THP on the basis of its former experience with separate roundtables for business and cities (Copenhagen, Porto Allegre, Jo'burg). Taking both perspectives *together* was deemed a promising approach - and unique at the moment -: having two lead stakeholders in the migration domain combine their forces and discuss where progress can and should be made to improve the lives of migrant citizens, migrant workers and indeed all members of society. They can be powerful movers when it comes to finding practical solutions in the field of human mobility.

Where cities are expected to provide basic services to all and provide and enforce the legal framework, business is expected to invest in the local economy and community and to make cities thrive. But it is too easy to blame one or the other for failures of policies that affect refugees and migrants. What is needed is a way to improve existent policies by tapping into each other's strengths. For example, if urban planning is inefficient because of incomplete data, data collecting could become a joint effort for business and cities. And there are various other areas where there is scope for joint projects. The experts in the consultation explored four key areas of cooperation in more detail:

Knowledge transfer

Business could sponsor places for people to share knowledge about their skills. Skills development platforms could be further institutionalised, involving additional stakeholders such as Chambers of Commerce, universities, and youth training initiatives, to name but a few. One could create a sector-by-sector approach to identify what knowledge is needed by specific industries and design knowledge transfer programmes in cooperation with the city.

Common planning

It was acknowledged that it is important to involve stakeholders in (urban) planning processes at an early stage to create ownership, to promote mutual accountability and to make it easier to include other actors in budgeting for projects.

Infrastructure

Infrastructural works (e.g. construction projects) illustrate both the challenges and opportunities in engaging foreign business in common planning and ensure that required skills are developed and retained locally.

Social cohesion

Both cities and business have an important stake in and should work together towards social cohesion and economic growth. Resilient communities are a favourable business environment. A sound economy stimulates social harmony. This recognition should be accompanied by promotion of social cohesion, and investments in relevant programmes.

Overall, the migration and refugee field needs to involve all stakeholders (national policymakers, academics, civil society and human rights organisations, diasporas etc.) to get things done. But cities and business, can, when they find together, be big movers for positive change.