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Migration Statistics –
A Need for More Information in the World

International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) organized together the Second International Forum on Migration Statistics (IFMS) 19—21 January 2020 in Cairo, Egypt. It was hosted by the Egyptian Government, which currently chairs the African Union (AU). The Forum gathered over 700 participants from more than 90 countries.

Director General António Vitorino (IOM) pointed out in his Opening plenary speech that experts, practitioners and decision-makers have a collective responsibility to ensure that reliable facts and robust evidence are not only produced but also used appropriately and intelligently to steer policy and programs and to combat an often-pervasive misinformation about migration. Migration flows are nowadays more diverse, complex and patterns are multi-layered. The total stock of immigrants living abroad is 271.6 million persons in the mid of 2019. It is important to monitor different groups of migrants and their integration outcomes, and to be aware of potential migration flows. When interpreting the statistics it is essential to understand that there are individuals behind the numbers.

We have to go behind the numbers and there is need to local, regional and global explanations, as Keynote speaker, Emeritus Professor Ronald Skeldon, University of Sussex and Professor, Maastricht University, was stressing out. He was also asking what is the role of work, and further role of declining populations in the developed world, and climate change in the future. His view is that the people will be less migratory but more mobile. People have also "emotional roots" where they want to return once in a while although living so-called permanently in another region.

One question discussed in the Forum was how to get access to private level data. Technology is coming and many have GSMs and for example Facebook accounts. These types of data open new dimension to gather research material. Also Angela Me, Chair of the Committee of Chief Statisticians in the UN System, highlighted the importance of the use of new technology. Some important datasets which were mentioned are Global Transnational Mobility Dataset (GTMD), Migration Data Portal and Tourism Dataset.

For measuring progress on migration-related Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) and other global commitments there is a need for better quality of data: the question is that how to modernize the national statistics in different parts of the world.

Sources

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