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**EMERGING DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION  
AND POPULATION AGEING**

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*Note by the secretariat*

**SUMMARY**

Worldwide, an estimated 175 million persons, representing about 3 per cent of world population, currently reside outside their country of birth. Of these, about 56 million persons live in the Asian and Pacific region. International migration, particularly labour migration from and within the region, is assuming greater importance. Of special significance is the increase in the proportion of women among international migrants.

International migration, therefore, has emerged as an important issue for economic and social development. The present document notes that, while international migration is beneficial to sending and receiving countries as well as migrants and their families, this population group may be vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and discrimination.

The percentage of older persons in countries of the region is rapidly increasing because of low levels of fertility and mortality, especially in the more developed economies. Structural shifts in the population age structure will have an impact on economic and social development in various ways, including by stimulating demand for international labour migration in the most rapidly ageing societies.



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## INTRODUCTION

1. During the past three decades, the world has witnessed a more than twofold increase in the volume of international migration. It is estimated that 175 million persons currently reside outside their country of birth, which is about 3 per cent of world population. Of these, about 56 million persons live in the Asian and Pacific region (United Nations, 2002a).

2. International migration, particularly labour migration from and within the ESCAP region, has rapidly increased during the past two to three decades. Labour migration has occurred mostly in the oil-producing countries of Western Asia and the newly industrialized and industrializing economies of East and South-East Asia. This is chiefly attributed to the widening disparity in the level of economic development between the countries of origin and the countries of destination and changes in population age structure, leading to low growth rates among the working-age population in the countries of destination but high growth rates in the countries of origin. The emergence of governmental and private agencies dedicated to the deployment of migrant workers has facilitated the process of international labour migration. This trend is likely to continue and even accelerate in the future as a result of the growing interdependence of nations and their markets and the increasing flow of information on the labour market situation in different countries.

3. During the past decade, there has been a marked increase in the deployment of international migrant workers. Official records reveal that the number of international migrant workers deployed from the major countries of origin, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, increased from 1 million in 1990 to 2.4 million by the end of 2000. However, the actual number of migrant workers going abroad is likely to be greater than these numbers would suggest, as there are unknown numbers of migrant workers who move within the region without registering with their national authorities. Furthermore, population movements across land borders, such as those between India and Nepal, from Bangladesh to Assam in India, or between China and the Russian Federation, are not part of the above-mentioned estimates. It has been estimated that, at the end of 2000, there were about 5.5 million foreign workers living in the main areas of destination in East and South-East Asia (Huguet, 2003).

4. Disparities in labour demand and supply and income determine much of the movement across national boundaries. Globalization has accentuated the trend in international migration, and there is considerable diversity in the types of migration flows within the ESCAP region. Broadly, such migration can be categorized as authorized or unauthorized and as temporary or long term. Each form of migration has varied impacts on economic and social development at the points of origin and destination. There is a widespread perception that some categories of migration have increased significantly and pose particular challenges. These include the movements of refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked women and children and unauthorized labour migrants. Recent evidence also indicates that the proportion of women among international migrants is increasing.

5. The demographic transition that is currently under way in most countries of the region is generating an ever-increasing cohort of young people, a trend that is likely to continue during the coming decades. This trend, together with increasing education, access to information and improvements in transportation, is likely to augment the volume of migration. Moreover, migration is becoming more complex, and its pattern is undergoing change. No longer a one-time move by an individual, it comprises multiple moves, often involving other family members.

## **I. IMPLICATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

6. International migration has emerged as an important issue for economic and social development. It not only has a significant impact on the economic development of the countries of origin, but it also has profound economic and social implications for these countries as well as the receiving countries. Migration has an impact on the lives of those involved and of their family and community members, involving factors such as the flow of remittances and income to the family and increased access to information, goods and services. Remittances of earnings are beneficial not only for migrants and their families but also for the national economy.

7. The volume of the remittances that migrant workers send home is as large as the number of migrant workers itself. These remittances have continued to be one of the most important sources of income for many families in developing countries. Although accurate estimates are difficult, several countries in the region receive over US\$ 1 billion per year in workers' remittances. Recent estimates by the International Monetary Fund reveal that remittances to developing countries exceed US\$ 80 billion per year, which is considerably higher than the amount of official development assistance provided by development agencies in wealthy countries (International Monetary Fund, 2002).

8. The measurement and the role of remittances from both international and domestic sources in the alleviation of poverty have been widely discussed. The inflow of remittances can be taken as an indicator of the economic relevance of migration. For example, remittances were 8.2 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) in the Philippines, 6.3 per cent in Sri Lanka and 3.8 per cent in Bangladesh. Of all the countries in the world, India ranked number one in terms of the volume of remittances, with US\$ 11 billion contributing about 2.6 per cent of GNP in 1999 (ESCAP, 2003a). Although no systematic study has been carried out in India to assess the impact of remittances on the economy and society, a recent large-scale field study shows that Kerala is the most important source of migrants to Western Asia, thus generating a significant share of the total of remittances to India. About 36 per cent of emigrants from India to the Persian Gulf States are from Kerala. The recent increase in international out-migration from Kerala has had an enormous impact on the economic, social, demographic, political and religious life in that state. Generally, migration has been perceived as having had a positive effect on the development of Kerala with major consequences being a reduction in unemployment as well as a decline in the proportion of the population living below the poverty line (Rajan, 2003).

## **II. VULNERABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS**

9. The Asian and Pacific region faces continuing and new challenges from global and regional development trends, all of which have profound impacts on individuals, families and communities. Even as opportunities for improving livelihoods increase, many persons in the region still face barriers to equal participation in the development process. Far too many have not acquired essential services because they live in a remote or resource-poor area, or because they are vulnerable on account of age, health, living environment or occupation. Some are denied access to services because they belong to an ethnic minority or a community considered socially inferior, or simply because they are migrants, females, aged or disabled.

10. Increasing population movement is assuming greater importance in the Asian and Pacific region. The diversity in the types of migration flows, for example regular and irregular, temporary and long-term, as well as the importance of remittances and the link between migration and development, all demonstrate the significance and seriousness of these issues. These emerging demographic issues have major ramifications, as the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific do not yet have adequate systems of social protection for such vulnerable groups as international migrants. The present document highlights the issue of the vulnerability of international migrants, particularly those that are undocumented, female, families of migrants left behind, unskilled migrant workers and domestic workers.

### **A. Undocumented migrants**

11. It has been noted that, in order to cope with their labour shortages, some East and South-East Asian countries began to import a large number of labour migrants from countries in the region that are at an earlier stage of demographic and economic transition. While in many destination countries, there are policies in place to accept foreign workers with professional and technical skills, there are no policies to accept unskilled labour. This has given rise to undocumented migration. In order to meet the demand for foreign workers, both skilled and unskilled, and to augment the workforce for economic development, these countries recently adopted various measures to employ labourers by establishing new channels of entry. Many labour-exporting countries have in place procedures to deploy official contract workers, but owing to the time-consuming, cumbersome and expensive process of deployment, workers tend to avoid the system and leave the country (Hugo, 2002). Hence, the level of undocumented migration is on the rise.

12. Undocumented migrants reportedly face high levels of abuse and exploitation, raising the issue of migrant protection. There is also a risk that these migrants, especially if they are unskilled and undocumented, often are placed in high-risk, low-paying jobs. They are forced to accept jobs that are dirty, dangerous and difficult and which local workers refuse. Migrant workers, therefore, are exposed to a higher risk of occupational hazards than are native workers. Migrant workers are seldom

aware of their rights because of their lack of familiarity with the country, culture and language (World Health Organization, 2003).

## **B. Feminization of migration**

13. Feminization has emerged as an important feature of international labour migration in South-East Asia. Earlier studies have demonstrated that an increasing number of women from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have been migrating to work in the oil-rich States of Western Asia. For example, the number of Sri Lankan women seeking employment in Western Asia consistently increased, from 9,000 in 1988 to 42,000 in 1994 and to 115,000 in 1996. The major receiving countries were Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (United Nations, 2003).

14. In recent years, there has been a growing tendency for women to migrate overseas for employment in their own right, rather than accompanying a family member. These women in many cases are more poorly educated than men (Skeldon, 2003a). A large majority of international labour migrants from Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka are female, and women constitute an increasing share of migrants from Thailand. High proportions of female migrants are engaged in domestic work. However, many female migrants from the Philippines are employed as nurses, teachers and information technology workers. Major destinations for female migrant workers have been Hong Kong, China; Japan; Malaysia; and Singapore (ESCAP, 2003a). Studies reviewed by Yeoh and others (2004) suggest that the majority of women migrating overseas are engaged in domestic work. For example, more than half of all Sri Lankan women departing for foreign employment work as “housemaids” and the overwhelming majority of Indonesian female migrants work as domestic servants in the Middle East as well as in East and South-East Asia.

15. The important factor in the sustainability of female migration is the demand for domestic workers, caregivers and entertainers. As the number of women, migrating as domestic workers has increased, so have reports of discrimination, exploitation and abuse of these workers at their destinations. It has been noted that female migrants, especially domestic workers and entertainers, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation because of the nature of their work. Unlike male workers, who are more likely to work in groups in factories, on construction sites or plantations, female migrants often work under isolated conditions, which makes it difficult for them to establish information and social support networks. As contracts for domestic workers are often weighted heavily in the employer’s favour, there exists little monitoring of working conditions. For example, domestic workers are not allowed to enter the country with their families and the conditions of their labour contracts are often unfair. Singapore has a strict policy of not permitting foreign domestic workers to migrate with their families, nor are they allowed to become pregnant during their period of employment. Even in areas such as Hong Kong, China, where there are many migrant worker organizations that actively support migrant women, foreign domestic workers can face difficult treatment, such as wage freezes and cuts (Yeoh and others, 2004).



16. Concerned with the rights of their citizens working overseas and their conditions of work, Governments of labour-exporting countries have taken a variety of measures to protect them from abuse and discrimination. Measures range from setting a minimum age for women intending to perform domestic work in foreign countries to simply laying down guidelines for recruitment and export processes for their migrant workers at the point of origin. For example, the minimum age for women intending to perform domestic work has been set at 30 years in India, 22 years in Indonesia and 35 years in Pakistan (United Nations, 2002a). Some countries are much more active in protecting their migrant workers overseas. In this regard, the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment has taken serious measures to protect its migrant workers by keeping a blacklist of foreign agencies that are banned from recruiting their nationals for overseas employment on the grounds that they failed to comply with the terms and conditions of contracts, including non-payment of salaries and non-response to complaints. The Government of the Philippines also has a long history of protecting and promoting the welfare of its migrant workers, having established the Overseas Worker Welfare Administration and reforming the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration. Most important, the adoption of the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995 is regarded as the Government's explicit declaration to protect Filipino overseas workers (Yeoh and others, 2004).

17. The impact of migration on the status of women may be both positive and negative and depends on the socio-economic, cultural and family contexts in which the movement takes place. The case of Sri Lanka demonstrates that, even though women are economically active, the majority are engaged in low-paying occupations with little prestige. Although migrant women have gained financial benefits, the negative effects may outweigh positive benefits. The lack of protection for female migrants makes them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Ukwatta, 2003).

18. The Indonesian case further illustrates that the gender dimension of migration has mostly been neglected. It indicated that women currently dominate migration from Indonesia, with about 2 million migrant workers going overseas compared with only 880,000 male migrant workers between 1994 and 1999. That pattern was mainly due to the availability of jobs as domestic servants in West Asian countries. The number of migrant workers has been steadily increasing over the past several years, mainly because of the economic crisis that Indonesia experienced in mid-1997. It stated that, although the main motivation for women migrating abroad continued to be economic, the religious factor, the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, was also an important motivation for migrating to Saudi Arabia (Hatmadji, 2003).

19. It emphasized that, aside from financial gains, migrant workers had experienced negative aspects. For instance, bad working conditions, low wages, violence, long working hours and employer verbal, physical and sexual abuse are common. With the increasing number of divorces, family problems have increased and a negative impact on child health due to the mother's absence was observed. It stressed that the lack of education of migrant workers has resulted in their limited

access to legal protection, which makes them vulnerable to manipulation by recruiting agents and to mistreatment by their employers abroad.

### **C. Families left behind**

20. International migration frequently results in the separation of family members, which in turn creates a greater dependence on the nuclear family, weakening wider kinship relationships and consequently widening the roles of nuclear family members, especially women. Families of international migrants are placed in a vulnerable situation, as those “left behind”, particularly dependent members, confront social and emotional consequences. The women left behind face many hardships, from loneliness and isolation to financial difficulties. An extended period of family separation has a number of detrimental effects, such as a higher incidence of mental disorder among women and children, lower levels of school performance and impeded social and psychological development among children, and the abandonment of the elderly. One of the consequences of the prolonged absence of migrants from the family has been marital instability and the consequent break-up of the family unit, leading to a higher incidence of divorce among migrant households (Hugo, 2002).

21. However, it has been argued that, in some contexts, the families left behind have benefited in a number of ways from international migration. Families have adopted more modern patterns of living. Remittances have provided a source of income for families who have no job opportunities. Studies have found that many families use remittances to build new houses and educate children, while small proportions of migrants use their savings to start small-scale businesses.

22. Migration has also resulted in an improvement in the economic and social situation of women within the family and the community. There is evidence that, while male relatives remaining in the village may retain overall control, male labour migration has led to an improvement in the status of the women left behind (ESCAP, 2001). While migrants experience both positive and negative effects, even women migrants in highly vulnerable and exploitative situations often indicate that migration has improved their autonomy in some areas of their lives (Hugo, 2002).

### **D. Rights of migrant workers**

23. The rights and benefits of migrant workers are often weak or not explicit, partly because much of the labour migration within the region has been clandestine or irregular. For example, in Western Asia migrant workers have limited rights as they are either hired under a guest-worker policy or under a one-year contract with the possibility of extension. Migrant workers have no flexibility to change jobs and only certain categories of workers are permitted to bring their families. Migrant workers cannot leave the country of employment without the written consent of their employers. Although bilateral agreements exist between some sending and receiving countries in the Persian Gulf region, these have little impact on the type of treatment migrant workers receive in the country of  
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employment. The recruitment and placement agencies that handle most labour migration in Asia have not been responsible, until recently, for dealing with cases of exploitation and abuse faced by migrant workers. The Governments of many sending countries are increasingly concerned about the issues related to mistreatment and abuse of their nationals employed overseas. For example, the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines have taken measures to protect their workers abroad, including insurance schemes. Many embassies of Asian countries now have labour attachés to handle migrant issues. This rising concern about migrant workers has led receiving countries to update and reformulate their migrant legislation and practices (United Nations, 2002a).

24. A study of Thai migrant workers in Japan, most of whom were illegal or undocumented, revealed that they had little or no access to health care or legal protection and that they were often abused or exploited by their employers. It was difficult for most to be accepted into Japanese society despite having lived in the country for many years.

25. An issue that deserves attention is the recent rise in transnational human smuggling and trafficking, especially the forcing of women into the sex trade. Many women are lured by the prospect of earning and saving more money than would have been the case had they remained at home (Chantavanich, 2003).

#### **E. Domestic workers**

26. As noted previously, owing to the demand for labour in the service and entertainment industries, particularly in domestic work, female labour migration in many South-East Asian countries has grown exponentially, women often outnumbering their male counterparts. At the micro level, there is a consensus among countries of origin on the benefits that female domestic workers provide for national economies. In Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; and Singapore, because of the unavailability or unwillingness of locals to take such jobs, the shortage of domestic workers is filled by foreign workers, which enables women in the host societies to enter and contribute to the formal wage economy. However, despite the economic gain derived from female domestic workers, the social costs, in particular the abuse and exploitation faced by these workers, are an overriding concern (Asis, 2003). Particular attention, therefore, must be paid to domestic service in order to eliminate women's vulnerability in those sectors. Domestic workers are vulnerable to exploitation because they have no support network, usually live in their employers' homes and have no witness in the event of mistreatment. Most importantly, they are not always protected by local labour laws (Hugo, 2002).

27. Unlike male migration, female migration has been found to have adverse effects on the stability of the family, jeopardizing in particular the well-being of children. When women migrate, men cannot fully assume the role of mother, no matter how willing they are. While children may cope with the absence of their mother in the short term, the long-term impact may be uncertain when the marriage ends owing to the mother's absence (Asis, 2003).

## **F. Migration and health**

28. The international community has paid insufficient attention to international migrants, who often remain socially excluded and are unable to benefit from the health and health care that is due them as human beings. By depriving them of access to health care, their capacity to contribute to the economies of their host countries will be seriously constrained (World Health Organization, 2003). This is perhaps the problem that is most clearly evident but least understood or appreciated (Skeldon, 2003b). Therefore, the issue of migrants' health needs to be properly addressed.

29. The degree of vulnerability of migrants' health depends upon factors ranging from their legal status to their overall environment. Although human rights law states that Governments have legal obligations in relation to the health of every person within their jurisdiction, provision of health services for irregular migrants is often considered charity or generosity of the State. Frequently, the national health care plans discriminate against undocumented migrants by allowing non-citizens to receive only emergency care. This severely affects migrants' health as they do not qualify for medical care until their health deteriorates. Efforts should be made to ensure access to basic preventive and curative health care by all persons irrespective of their status. The right to health requires that health facilities be easily accessible to this vulnerable group, as location and distance may pose serious problems. In addition, migrants may not be able to effectively use health services to prevent illness because they often lack information about what is available. It is crucial, therefore, that public health authorities be sensitized to provide appropriate information and education for migrants in the context of health care services and in the broader context of health promotion efforts (World Health Organization, 2003).

30. Finally, of particular concern within the Asian region is that an increasing volume of migration may encourage the spread of HIV/AIDS. Clearly, it is not so much the movement itself that is most important, but the behaviour of those persons that move at the areas of origin and destination. It must be recognized that the very fact of moving may make them liable to engage in high-risk behaviour, in which they would not normally engage at home (Skeldon, 2003b). International migration, therefore, can have negative effects on the health of migrants and their families. In some cases, the introduction of new diseases into the community can have a profoundly destructive impact. The spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, by men to their wives and by women returning from sex work in large cities can have devastating effects on the family and the community.

31. It is encouraging, however, to note the role of the international community in addressing the issues of health and social protection of international migrants, as indicated by the following:

(a) The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) attaches "great importance ....to the promotion and protection of the human rights of persons belonging to groups which have

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been rendered vulnerable, including migrant workers” and to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against them;

(b) The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) addresses issues of migrants and health. Among others, it urges Governments to ensure that internally displaced persons receive basic health care services, including reproductive health services and family planning;

(c) The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) urges Governments to ensure the full realization of the human rights of all women migrants, including women migrant workers; and to provide them protection against violence and exploitation;

(d) The outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly for the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1999) urges Governments in both countries of origin and destination to provide effective protection for migrants and basic health and social services, including sexual and reproductive health and family planning services;

(e) The outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001) urges the development and implementation of national, regional and international strategies that facilitate access to HIV/AIDS prevention programmes for migrants and mobile workers by 2005;

(f) The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families entered into force on 1 July 2003. This Convention entitles migrant workers to the protection of their basic human rights regardless of their legal status.

### **III. POPULATION AGEING AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

32. The percentage of older persons in countries of the region is rapidly increasing because of low levels of fertility and mortality, especially in the more developed economies. This rapid population ageing will produce a higher demand for international migration. A key aspect of population ageing is the change in the relative size of age groups in a population. One indicator of this change is the potential support ratio (PSR), which is the number of persons of working age (15-64 years) per person of retirement age (65 and over).

33. The country in the region with the highest proportion of older persons is Japan. In 2000, nearly one quarter (23 per cent) of the population was aged 65 years and over. By 2025, that figure is projected to increase to 35 per cent. As a consequence, the PSR, which was only 4.0 in 2000, will decline to 2.0 by 2025 (United Nations, 2002b). With only two persons of working age for every person aged 65 years and over, it is clear that there will be a demand for workers able to perform low-skilled and laborious jobs that older persons would be unable to perform.

34. The populations of the more developed economies of Hong Kong, China; the Republic of Korea; and Singapore will also age rapidly over the next two decades. The United Nations (2002b) projects that, by 2025, the share of persons aged 60 years and over in Hong Kong, China, will equal 28 per cent and that the PSR will have fallen to only 3.3. In the Republic of Korea, the proportion of persons aged 60 years and over will be 24 per cent and the PSR will be 4.0. In Singapore, in United Nations projections based on the assumption of a declining level of immigration, the proportion of persons aged 60 years and over will reach 30 per cent by 2025 and the PSR will be only 3.0.

35. Labour shortages have already developed in these economies, particularly in more physically demanding occupations, such as construction, sanitation, agriculture and manufacturing. These economies have attempted to respond to labour shortages through a variety of policies, including greater automation, attracting more women into the labour force and extending the age of retirement, but in addition all have admitted increasing numbers of foreign workers.

36. Although Thailand is at a considerably lower level of economic development than those East Asian economies and has a younger population, with only 8 per cent of the population over age 60, its economy is already attracting large numbers of foreign workers in such physically demanding sectors as agriculture, fishing, construction, manufacturing and domestic service. The Ministry of Labour expects to register about 1 million foreigners for documented employment in the country in 2004.

37. The very low potential support ratios and high proportions of older persons in the more developed economies of East Asia will generate a great demand for caregivers and health sector workers. While the great majority of older persons do not require personal care, many of those in the highest age groups do require increased levels of care, and demands on health services increase greatly with age.

38. The demand for personal caregivers will increase in all countries of the region over the coming decades. (Although less than 8 per cent of the population of India is over age 60, that country has 2.5 times as many older persons as Japan.) The type of care required will range from unskilled domestic service to low-skilled home care service to highly skilled services in facilities and institutions catering to older persons.

39. Employment in the health sector will need to increase rapidly at all skill levels, from physicians to nurses, to nursing aides and to unskilled hospital cleaners and other workers. Health management is therefore a rapidly expanding occupation.

40. The ageing societies of East Asia will be unable to meet this expanding demand for personal caregivers and health sector workers from their domestic labour forces, which will be greatly diminished relative to the increasing numbers of older persons. Those economies will be required to turn to foreign workers to meet much of the increased demand for personal care and health workers.

41. Public and private training institutions in the Philippines have recognized this increased international demand for health workers and have trained large numbers for foreign employment. There are currently about 250,000 Filipino nurses working outside the country.

42. ESCAP has cooperated with Governments in the region to develop regional and national policy guidelines concerning population ageing. Governments met at Macao, China, in late 1998 and adopted the Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, which were subsequently endorsed by the Commission in 1999 (see Commission resolution 55/4 of 28 April 1999). The Plan of Action recommended policies in such key areas as the family, health and nutrition, housing and transport, employment and income security, and provision of social services. The Plan of Action designated ESCAP as the focal point for the region on issues related to ageing and older persons. The Governments participating in the regional meeting in Macao, China, committed themselves to building an organizational infrastructure to address ageing issues. Many Governments in the region have since adopted national plans of action on ageing, modeled on the Macao guidelines.

43. At the global level, the United Nations convened the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid in April 2002. That Assembly adopted the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which included recommendations in the three priority areas of older persons and development, advancing health and well-being into old age, and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. In order to promote the implementation of the Plan of Action in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP convened a regional follow-up seminar in Shanghai, China, in September 2002. That meeting adopted the Shanghai Implementation Strategy: Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 and the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific 1999.

44. The ESCAP secretariat, with the support of the Government of Macao, China, is assisting Governments and non-governmental organizations to strengthen programmes on ageing and older persons. During 2004, it is organizing two subregional workshops in Colombo and Beijing designed to develop more effective methods of monitoring and evaluating projects that address the needs of older persons. In October 2004, the secretariat has planned to convene a regional seminar in Macao, China, to review the initial progress in carrying out the Shanghai Implementation Strategy.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

45. The present document has suggested that, while international migration is beneficial to sending and receiving countries as well as migrants and their families, this population group may be vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and discrimination. Governments in countries of origin and countries of destination will need to continue and strengthen their efforts to prevent the exploitation of migrants during recruitment, processing and employment. Vulnerability, uncertainty and insecurity have always been a part of people's lives. Over the past few decades, however, the causes and

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manifestations have multiplied and changed profoundly, creating new and emerging social issues that require serious attention.

46. The population dynamics described above led the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, held at Bangkok in 2002, to include a number of recommendations on international migration in its Plan of Action on Population and Poverty. The Plan of Action urged Governments to incorporate desirable aspects of international migration into national economic and social planning in both sending and receiving countries. It recommended that Governments regularize desirable migration through a number of administrative actions. The Plan of Action called for combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children. It urged strengthened regional cooperation to better manage the flow of all types of migration for the benefit of the sending and receiving countries and the migrants themselves (ESCAP, 2003b).

47. Population ageing is gaining momentum in the region owing to steady declines in fertility and mortality over the past few decades. The proportion of older persons in all countries in the region is increasing while the proportion, and sometimes the absolute number, of persons of labour force age is generally declining. These shifts have important implications for employment, health care and other social policies. Structural shifts in the population age structure will have an impact on economic and social development in various ways, including by stimulating demand for international labour migration in the most rapidly ageing societies. Governments in the region have adopted the Shanghai Implementation Strategy as a guideline for the formulation and implementation of policies to address emerging issues associated with ageing.

48. Owing to the growing importance of international migration, the Secretary-General supported the establishment of a Global Commission on International Migration, with the mandate (a) to place international migration on the global agenda, (b) to analyse gaps in current policy approaches and to examine inter-linkages with other issues and (c) to present recommendations to the Secretary-General on the governance of international migration. The Commission will submit a report by the end of 2005.

49. The Global Commission held a regional hearing for Asia and the Pacific in Manila on 17 and 18 May 2004, and sought information from Governments, international organizations, civil society and experts. At the regional hearing, the following issues were discussed in detail: (a) migrants in the labour market; (b) migration, economic growth, development and poverty reduction; (c) irregular migration; (d) migration and human rights; (e) migrants in society; and (f) national, regional and international governance of migration.



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