



Chapter 8

International migration and globalization

In previous eras, population movements have taken place side by side with the development of contacts and flows between different societies and cultures. In particular, large human migrations played a fundamental role during the first phase of globalization, which took place between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this respect, the present situation is paradoxical, because in a world which is more interconnected than ever, in which financial and trade flows have been liberalized, the mobility of persons runs up against severe barriers which restrict it (see in this respect chapter 2 of this book).¹ As Tapinos and Delaunay (2000) point out, international migration currently seems to be excluded from the new globalization process. This exclusion is the biggest difference between the new trends in the world economy and the two great previous periods of globalization. This narrow view of “globalization”, leaving out the human mobility factor, raises a threefold question of ethics, political realism and economic efficacy, as well as the question of the long-term sustainability of this type of world development strategy (p. 48).

¹ Ignoring the contribution made by migration all over the world to the intensification of relations in the fields of economic activities and labour, social and political links and cultural affairs and values, the present discussions of globalization “rarely consider international migration at all, or if they do they deal with it as a residual category, an afterthought” (Stalker, 2000, p. 1).

The difficulties placed in the way of migration just at a time when real-time exchanges are being promoted—to which end barriers impeding the free circulation of goods and ideas are being demolished—reveal the asymmetrical aspects of a form of globalization which includes some individuals, population groups, countries and regions but at the same time excludes others (Castells, 1999). Although the number of migrants has always been small compared with the world population, at other times in the past—such as that of the boom in trade which accompanied the first phase of globalization—it nevertheless represented a much larger proportion than the present level of 3%. Clear signs of the limited nature of the present degree of globalization of migration—compared with financial globalization—are that free movement of persons between countries is limited almost exclusively to one region of the world (the European Union) and is the subject of debates and case-by-case negotiations on international agreements aimed at permitting only temporary movements of persons with qualifications directly connected with business or the provision of services.

The fact that most migrants move in spite of the persistent barriers to their entry shows up the incompatibility between the restrictive approaches adopted and a world which is advancing towards growing liberalization of other flows. It is this inconsistency which is largely responsible for the big increase in the number of migrants without official papers and the emergence of migrant transit areas, as well as providing fertile ground for one of the most serious crimes against human rights: the trafficking of persons across frontiers. The increase in such situations highlights the need to promote broader agreements among countries to secure better governance of international migration, to recognize the fundamental role of civil society in formulating measures regarding human migrations, and to foster full respect for the rights of migrants.

In recent decades Latin America and the Caribbean has become a source of outward migration to the most varied destinations. At the present moment, one out of every ten of the 150 million international migrants (IOM/United Nations, 2000) was born in a Latin American or Caribbean country, and this is a minimum figure, for it takes no account of the number of persons who migrate (and work) in an irregular capacity, without official papers, and nor does it include temporary, circular or return migrations. The available information indicates that nearly 20 million Latin Americans and Caribbean are living outside their country of birth, and half of them emigrated during the 1990s, especially to the United States, though during the same decade new migration flows to Europe emerged which are on a smaller scale but are registering unprecedented growth rates. The intraregional migration which accompanied the different stages in the development of the Latin American and Caribbean countries in the past still retains some of its traditional features, but it is now on a smaller scale, due partly to the decline in the attractiveness of the main countries of destination (Argentina and Venezuela).

Analyses show that there is an enormous gap between what is generally imagined and what is really the case as regards the magnitude and consequences of immigration. Although sounder and more general evidence is still needed, that which exists is very different from the simple opinions which emphasize the negative repercussions of migration and only serve to heighten prejudices and increase the feeling of rejection against some immigrants. One example of how great this gap is may be found in a study commissioned by the United States Congress from a broad group of specialists (Smith and Edmonston, 1997). Leaving aside the inherent complexity of the wide range of factors involved, this study concludes that the existing evidence shows that immigration has had a relatively minor impact on the wage and job opportunities of the competing local groups Immigration affects above all the well-being of the immigrants themselves (p. 11). In reality, the “condemnation” that popular opinion applies to immigrants has no backing in scientific knowledge (Mármora, 2001). Only very rarely has it been shown that immigrants adversely affect working conditions—this would only appear to be the case in a context favouring illegality—and social services. Why, then, are prejudices persisting and even sometimes getting worse? The answer to this question calls for profound reflection on aspects going beyond the ambit of migration itself.

I. The interactive nature of migration and globalization

1. Factors which promote mobility and heterogeneity

The complexity of the present international migration of persons from Latin America and the Caribbean is due to the great diversity of factors which stimulate and characterize it. It is no longer sufficient merely to identify countries as sources or recipients, since it is also necessary to consider those which, because of their geographical position, have become areas of transit towards a final destination, and there has also been a big increase in the number of such destinations. Furthermore, migration is no longer limited to such a clearly identifiable human group as in the past: the range of the types of persons involved—whose migration affects the social reproduction of their families and the development of their communities of origin—is increasingly broad, and in their places of final destination they establish links with diverse social groups, build up networks of contacts which stretch across national borders, and use different strategies and means for their movements.

The basic determinants of international migration lie in the inequalities which exist in levels of development, and the enormous magnitude, persistence and flagrancy of those inequalities in the globalized world of today heighten the so-called pressures for migration (UNFPA, 1998). Thus, in recent decades the Latin American and Caribbean countries have registered an unstable economic performance, and the modest recovery glimpsed in some of them during the 1990s has barely been sufficient to reverse the serious consequences of the “lost decade” of the 1980s (ECLAC, 2001a). The very uneven distribution of the benefits offered by the international economy is very evident in the region, whether in terms of the shortcomings in human capital and knowledge, the changes in the role of the State in the social field or, more generally, the structural insufficiencies of development. At the same time, the precarious nature of employment and the heightening of social tensions have given rise to a generalized feeling of social vulnerability in the region; in view of the widespread perception of insecurity, risks and defenselessness—reflected in public opinion surveys widely disseminated by the mass media—, emigration is being increasingly seen as an option for coping with difficult living conditions, an uncertain employment outlook, and dissatisfaction with the results of the prevailing development pattern. In the final analysis, the reduction of social disparities and convergence of economic conditions are fundamental for reducing the incentives for migration in the long term; meanwhile, the countries of the region will have to live with international migration, facing up to its many consequences, but also taking advantage of the opportunities it offers.

The developed economies have always needed workers from less developed countries. This demand, which is sometimes beyond the immediate influence of business cycles, operates through the establishment of dual labour markets which offer opportunities for the employment of foreign workers at both extremes of the range of skills.² In theory, to the extent that the inflow of foreign workers helps to fill the gaps in the domestic supply of labour, migration can be a means of adjustment in the recipient countries, but it can also operate as a factor to keep down wage increases and drive up capital surpluses, and this is basically why local workers are against large-scale immigration.

It is well known that the immigrants with the lowest levels of skills enter the labour markets to occupy jobs that are usually scorned by the local population (in sectors such as primary industries, agriculture or personal services, for example). Through the possibility of reducing labour costs, some employers obtain benefits from such migrant flows. At the same time, the foreign workers may build up social capital and attain upward occupational mobility. Although there is a demand for these workers and many of them carry out activities which are vital for the

² Although less consistent, this situation is also observed in the Latin American and Caribbean countries which receive immigrants.

expansion of the economy, they are generally subject to strict regulations on migration—for example, through annual quotas or temporary hiring programmes—and in a number of cases these represent barriers to their entry and permanent residence; this causes some migrants to work without the necessary official papers, thus heightening the negative perception of immigration which often exists in the recipient countries.

The migration of skilled workers has other features. Although it is not a new phenomenon, the growing demand in the developed countries for foreign workers with specific skills means that the barriers impeding their mobility need to be reviewed. Those with high qualifications are in a better position to take an active part in such mobility, as reflected in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which, among the ways of providing services, includes their provision by natural persons, with emphasis on the temporary movement of skilled personnel.³ Although this Agreement provides for quantitative restrictions and additional requirements (such as a work permit), which are a source of controversy in its application—since they involve the consideration of each case separately—the basic idea is that such movements are complementary to trade and allow the developing countries to increase their participation in world trade, which could help in the long run to reduce the incentives for migration (Iredale, 2001; UNFPA, 1998). The developed countries naturally make deliberate efforts to attract scarce specialists—in some cases this forms part of their human resources policies—and these efforts are welcomed in many segments of the societies of origin of the migrants.⁴ Particularly striking is the increase in the demand by those countries for immigrants with increasingly specialized skills—such as those connected with engineering and technology in the general field of information processing—which causes them to offer conditions that cannot be matched by the nations of our region.

At the beginning of the 1990s, some 300,000 Latin American and Caribbean professionals and technicians—some 3% of the total number existing in the region—were living in countries other than those of their birth; over two-thirds of that total were concentrated in the United States (Villa and Martínez, 2000), where it is estimated that 12% of all persons with a degree in science or engineering are foreigners, mostly from developing countries (Pellegrino, 2000). The outflow of such human resources has given rise to very serious discussions in the region, because their importance cannot be measured only in quantitative terms. The traditional debate on the brain drain, which stresses its negative repercussions—since it is a factor which helps to widen gaps, undermines the formation of critical masses, and affects income distribution—is now combined with proposals designed to stimulate the circulation and exchange of highly skilled human resources (“brain circulation” and “brain exchange”), with the aim of making migrants into links between the local and global scientific and technological development networks and agents for the transfer of knowledge and technology (Pellegrino, 2000). From the point of view of the countries of origin, these proposals seek to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by globalization, but their practical application is hindered by the labour flexibilization practices of the big corporations, the retention of the most outstanding students in the universities of the developed world, the enormous disparity between the working conditions and salaries offered by the two types of countries, and the absence of suitable environments for the reinsertion of former migrants.⁵

³ Under this Agreement, the United States grants a minimum of 65,000 visas for professionals each year, valid for up to three years (IOM-United Nations, 2000); the system of preferences in the United States legislation provides for the admittance of up to 140,000 persons with special qualifications each year (INS, 2000).

⁴ The big corporations play a fundamental role in this process: for example, a few years ago Bill Gates reacted to a possible reduction in the number of visas for highly skilled workers by saying that if the idea was to prevent firms like his from working in the United States, then such a measure would be “masterly” (Stalker, 2000, p. 135).

⁵ Analysis of the figures for temporary admittance of migrants in the United States indicates that persons from Latin America and the Caribbean—unlike those from Europe or Asia—are not yet participating on a large scale in the arrangements for the circulation of professionals and technicians (Pellegrino, 2000).

The growing opportunities for individuals abroad are all too obvious compared with the very limited capacity of the developing countries to retain their most highly qualified personnel. However, these opportunities do not always become a reality: many skilled migrants do not succeed in maximizing their benefits because of difficulties in securing official recognition of their qualifications, and in addition to the requirements and limitations on free mobility they face obstacles in finding a suitable place in their countries of destination (such as rules giving priority to local personnel), so that their potential contributions are reduced (ECLAC, 2000g; Iredale, 1998; UNFPA, 1998). In some recipient countries, there is a debate on whether the increase in the immigration of professionals and technicians is a factor tending to depress wages among the most highly qualified groups in the labour force: an association of events which was observed in the 1990s among scientists and engineers in the United States (Espenshade and others, 2001). Although these circumstances bring in a note of caution with regard to the prospects of forming a global market of skilled human resources, they do not detract from the role that these migrants can play in the transfer of technology, and their importance should serve as an incentive to seek best practices—active policies—through which the source countries to make better use of their potential. Some of the integration processes in the region are instructive in this respect, since they envisage measures to facilitate the mobility of professionals⁶ and the joint formulation of postgraduate programmes. Thus, the creation of employment opportunities—together with permanent training—for highly skilled workers is a priority task on the regional agenda.

2. Migrant culture and the formation of transnational communities

International migration has always aided in cultural exchanges and—withstanding the challenges raised when individuals, groups and communities of different cultures, ethnic groups and religions live together—it is reasonable to expect that it will continue to forge multicultural spaces and spread ideas and values. Globalization involves opposing movements, however: expectations of mobility become widespread, but the restrictions on movement become tighter all the time. The new technologies in the fields of communications and transport facilitate international mobility, and moreover, thanks to better schooling, together with more information on the situation in other countries—with messages on standards of living and codes of values which heighten the perception of the supposed advantages of migration—there are now many more persons interested in migrating. In the final analysis, the *right to migrate* is an option for all those with a minimum of human capital who are not able to materialize their aspirations to social mobility in their countries of origin, whose restrictions on the exercise of economic and social rights end up by undermining the *right to stay*. Thus, international movements of persons and families—in search of something that their own countries only offer them symbolically—are based on increasingly informed decisions, accompanied by the perception that such moves involve decreasing risks and costs. This is the current attitude to migration, the motives for which are now relatively independent of purely economic considerations.

One of the cultural manifestations of globalization is the transition from territorially-based national identities to others which are perhaps less comprehensive but are of a trans-territorial nature. Migration has led to the emergence of new actors who, organized in communities and linked together through networks, maintain close links with their areas of origin (to which they send remittances and information) and represent collective referents of identity in the areas of destination (Portes, 1997a). These transnational communities⁷ are a clear example of the interactive

⁶ The Andean Community has lengthy experience in instruments for the protection of workers, and there are initiatives under way in MERCOSUR for following up the labour markets and formulating common workers' protection laws (Martínez, 2000).

⁷ This transnational status is associated both with the exchanges between migrants and their areas of origin and their continual crossing of political and cultural frontiers (Canales and Zolniski, 2000).

role of international migration and globalization within the context of the explosion of identity marking the fragmentation of societies today (Castells, 1999, vol. II). Social networks and communities form part of an affirmative strategy of migrants in defence of their cultural features, the expression of their demands for citizenship, and protection both from restrictive attitudes to immigration and practices of social rejection (as exemplified in the working conditions of many migrants and anti-immigration feelings). To a large extent, they act as feedback factors promoting migration flows and further the diversification of human mobility.

The transnational communities benefit from the traditional associations of migrants, but they are more complex than these: they promote cultural events —dances, dinners, festivities and typical products— and they legitimize the diversity of the recipient societies. They are geographically extended social units, with close relations and supportive links, and even sponsor transnational micro-entrepreneurial initiatives (Portes, 1997a and 1997b). They often function with tensions, conflicts and contradictions that recreate the context of structural inequality of their communities of origin, and thereby serve as a matrix for the social reproduction of their members in their destination countries (Canales and Zolniski, 2000).⁸ The heterogeneity of their members, the potential of some of them for resistance and opposition, their different forms of organization, their international links and their complex relations with the market and the State make these transnational communities a mandatory element of reference of indisputable importance for the design of measures to deal with the question of migration. Their interactive relation with globalization is particularly evident in the case of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the United States.

3. Persistence of barriers and institutional difficulties which restrict mobility

The restrictive logic underlying the measures applied by many governments with regard to international migration is based on their responsibility for safeguarding national sovereignty, which justifies institutional controls over the entry and continuing presence of foreigners. The extension of this logic to the rules on migration is not in keeping, however, with the international nature of this phenomenon or the factors which stimulate it, both in the countries of origin and those of destination. Entrusting migration policy to the police agencies responsible for guarding the frontiers is undoubtedly an unsuitable option for dealing with a phenomenon of such economic, social and cultural complexity. The result is the aggravation of restrictive practices which are not in line with most governments' declarations on migration⁹ and are in contradiction with what is happening with international trade. Thus, States have agreed to eliminate many barriers to the movement of capital and goods and services, without prejudice to negotiations on specific matters, provided that the procedures followed do not run counter to the rules laid down in the global agreements. In the case of international migration, however, such general frameworks do not exist, although the challenges raised by this phenomenon have led States to acknowledge that unilateral action is not enough. How, then, can general agreements be reached on migration, over and above the provisions governing mobility in the field of business and the supply of services which are included in some international instruments?

⁸ Their members may have homes in different places, which gives rise to travel circuits that combine variable stays and travel frequencies within clearly transnational living spaces.

⁹ The Eighth United Nations Inquiry among Governments on Population and Development (1999) shows an increase in the number of governments (28% of the total number of respondents) which consider that the level of immigration is too high; many of them reported that they have control policies (especially in respect of persons without official documentation, refugees and asylum-seekers). Of the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, 62% said that they had no official position on immigration levels but 15% declared that the level of immigration was too high and 18% said they wanted to reduce it (United Nations, 2001b).

In principle —leaving aside other polemical objectives— strict regulation of migration is usually seen as a means of protecting national labour markets. Only exceptionally, however, do foreigners come to account for a major fraction of the labour force of a country; they are usually only a modest proportion of the total and occupy positions left unoccupied by local workers, so that they rarely displace the latter. It is possible, however, that their participation in the labour market may help to depress wages in their destination country. The probability that this will occur is greater when there is a substantial presence of migrant workers without official papers, who, since they are outside the trade unions and collective bargaining mechanisms, may help to produce a decline in real wages. This has led to allegations that the employment of foreigners without official papers at lower wages than those of local workers will undermine the existing collective agreements, foster the replacement of local workers with foreigners in some sectors, and weaken their contribution to national income (Abella, 2000).

Although the migration policies of most countries continue to be adopted on the basis of their own unilateral criteria, there were some signs in the 1990s of support for regional-level initiatives in this field. In line with this new spirit, it was explicitly recognized at the Symposium on International Migration in the Americas that “international migration is a multi-faceted phenomenon which involves all countries and which calls for international dialogue and cooperation, but that this should in no way impinge upon national sovereignty in establishing the necessary legal and political instruments to deal with international migration” (ECLAC, 2000g, p. 7). This recognition, which does not deny each country’s right to regulate immigration, is a promising sign of the gradual adoption of more flexible common principles in the Americas. In order to deal with the many issues involved in international migration it is necessary to move beyond official normative approaches of an essentially restrictive nature, which extend to much of public opinion and feed prejudices on this phenomenon; this means promoting a progressively more flexible approach which facilitates migratory movements and protects the population groups involved.

The task of making the rules on migration more flexible is particularly feasible at the intraregional level (especially in border areas), since restrictions on the flow of foreign workers should begin to slacken as integration processes gain greater depth and it is recognized that migratory exchanges provide a complementary labour component in strategic sectors. It is precisely within the traditional restrictive context that the questions of undocumented migration, “illegal” workers and unfair competition in the labour market become manifest (Mármora, 1997). The opportunity provided by the subregional integration agreements for advancing in these areas must be seized in a decided and systematic manner, recognizing the multisectoral nature of the issues involved in international migration and adopting policies guided by the pursuit of convergence. The restrictive logic, which means closing the door to the possibility of settling in a country other than one’s country of origin, leads to serious tensions: many migrants not only find it difficult to exercise their right to live in their country of birth but also to settle in another country or return to their country of origin.¹⁰

4. Global forces and the future of migration

International migration is a historically important process which forms an indissoluble part of human evolution. In the past, in response to changes in economic, social and political circumstances, it has aided in the expansion of trade and the economy, helped to create new nations and territories, fostered urbanization, opened up new spaces for production, and made decisive

¹⁰ The 1999 United Nations Inquiry shows that most of the governments of the region do not have an official position or policies on emigration (United Nations, 2001b). Although this dilemma has not given rise to much discussion in the region (public initiatives designed to keep emigrants in touch with developments in their countries are weak or non-existent), lately governments have begun to display greater awareness of the important role played by communities of their citizens abroad.

contributions to social and cultural change. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, the world witnessed a type of migration fundamentally consisting of two opposite flows: the voluntary migration of Europeans, which played a key role in the economic convergence of some regions of the Old and New World, and another flow involving the (often forced) migration of workers of varying origins, but mostly Asians (coolies), to tropical regions, which resulted in the further expansion of the inequality of the international order. These flows, which were promoted by different forces, were readily accepted by the destination countries. Nowadays, however, there is concern over some conflictive aspects of migration affecting not only the countries of origin and destination but also the migrants themselves (such as the risk of heightening inequalities and the risks associated with undocumented status).

Everything seems to indicate that, at least in the short and medium term, migration will continue to be stimulated, in a highly interconnected world in which the profound international economic disparities and the acute structural shortcomings of the developing countries will become increasingly visible. In addition, the developed countries, with their ageing populations, will strengthen their strategies designed to attract skilled human resources and will keep up their demand for less-skilled workers, the new contingents of which cannot easily be absorbed by the labour markets of the developing countries, although in some of the latter the labour supply will gradually diminish as a result of demographic transition processes. In this context, the further spread of values and information, typical of a migrant culture which reasserts the legitimacy of the right to emigrate, together with the consolidation of organized actors in this field, will make it easier to take the decision to migrate.

From a strictly economic standpoint, experience shows that the change of countries from being sources of migrants to recipients of them will only take place in a small number of cases; the developing countries which have made this transition have done so by taking advantage of their low labour and manufacturing costs and exporting labour-intensive products (Richelle, 1998). Most of the developing countries, however, will suffer the disruptive effects associated with development processes and will increase their outward flows of migrants in the short term, especially when better wage levels continue to be the exception rather than the rule in those countries. The strategies of the developed nations and the big corporations aimed at increasing their competitiveness may erode the stock of skilled human resources in the developing countries, thus further widening the economic gaps. In view of this prospect, it would be worth investigating the repercussions that the relocation of production activities could have on employment in the developing countries; transfers of services would appear to be the most promising developments in this respect, and this option could be strengthened in the subregional integration processes, provided that wage differences do not increase still further and the member countries of the agreements make effective progress in assuming the commitments required for deeper integration.

II. International migration patterns of the Latin American and Caribbean population

In the information on the international migration of persons from Latin America and the Caribbean, two main patterns may be identified: emigration to destinations outside the region, and exchanges among countries of the region itself. A third pattern is that corresponding to the traditional immigration from abroad (mainly from Europe), which registered high but variable rates between the second half of the nineteenth century and the years following the Second World War; in recent decades, however, the region has ceased to be so attractive for Europeans and the stock of such immigrants, which has aged through lack of renovation and gone down through death and the return of former immigrants to Europe, went down from some 4 million persons in 1970 to less

than 2.5 million in 1990. In recent decades, emigration to destinations outside the region has been the main migration pattern of Latin America and the Caribbean, its most distinctive feature being the marked preference for emigration to the United States, although, on a smaller scale, there has also been an increase in the number of migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean in European countries (such as Spain and Italy), Australia and Japan.

1. Emigration to the United States

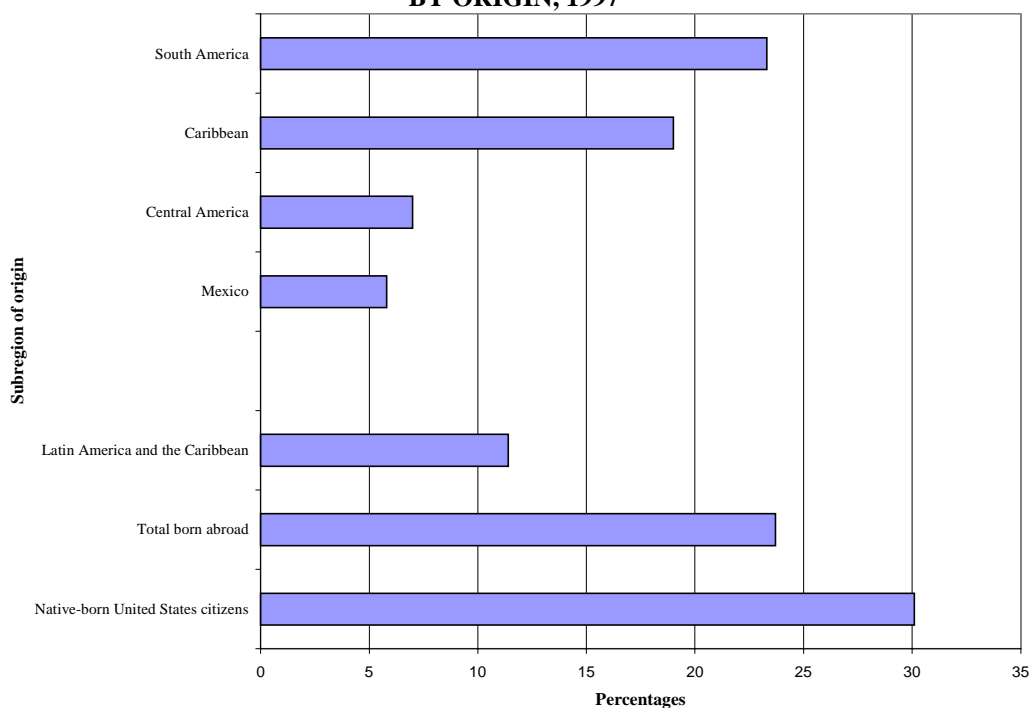
The traditional emigration of Mexicans and citizens of Caribbean countries to the United States has been accompanied in recent decades by that of Central and South Americans, reflecting the serious structural limitations many countries have in retaining their population. In addition to the greater incentives to emigrate, this increase has also been due to the greater ease of emigrating as a result of the consolidation of communities of migrants in the recipient countries. After registering a big increase in the 1970s, the stock of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the United States as of 1990 stood at 8.4 million persons (Villa and Martínez, 2000). The figures from the 2000 Current Population Survey—although not strictly comparable with the 1990 census data—indicate that there was strong growth in the 1990s too, since the stock came close to 15 million persons, representing over half of the total number of immigrants in the United States (Lollock, 2001; Schmidley and Gibson, 1999). Because of these tendencies, which took place in a context of constant revisions and amendments to the United States rules and policies on migration with the aim of controlling undocumented migration and the illegal trafficking of persons, migration from Latin America and the Caribbean is seen as a very important social phenomenon for the United States, thus fuelling the debate on its repercussions and making it a leading issue in that country's relations with the nations of the region.

It is in this context that the “new bilateralism” between Mexico and the United States is being designed. From the point of view of Mexico, the regularization of the migratory situation of its undocumented nationals, the increase in admission quotas, the establishment of programmes for temporary workers and the introduction of common border control arrangements are priority issues in the negotiations which were resumed early in 2002. In the words of President Vicente Fox: “Mexico and the United States have agreed that they need to agree ... emigration is not simply a problem that must be solved, but also an opportunity that must be taken” (*El Mundo*, 5 September 2001). For the United States, these negotiations are a fundamental step towards their aim of securing “orderly” immigration and combating the trafficking of persons; they also have to do with the importance of the population who identify themselves as “Latino” or “Hispanic” and who, according to the United States census of the year 2000, amount to 35.3 million persons (including both immigrants and citizens): that is to say, 13% of the population of the United States and the largest ethnic minority in the country (Grieco and Cassidy, 2001).

The Latin American and Caribbean immigrants to the United States form a heterogeneous group of varying origins and socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics. With their total of over 7 million in 1997, Mexicans are a clear majority in the total stock; although they are numerous, no other contingent of natives of the Caribbean (mainly Cubans and Dominicans) or of Central America (especially Salvadorians) amounts to over one million persons. The Mexican immigrants are equivalent to 7% of the population of Mexico, the Cubans and Dominicans amount to almost 8% of their respective populations of origin, and the Salvadorians are equivalent to over 10% of their country's population (Schmidley and Gibson, 1999).

Taken as a whole, a majority of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the United States are males: a feature which is highly influenced by the high proportion of Mexicans, which, together with the Central American contingents, among which family groups are common, also influences the socio-economic composition of the immigrants, which is marked by a high proportion of persons with relatively low skill levels. Among the South American and Caribbean immigrants, there is a higher proportion of persons with mid- or high-level qualifications, although this proportion is still below the average for the native-born population of the United States (Villa and Martínez, 2000) (see figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1
**UNITED STATES: PERCENTAGE OF PROFESSIONALS IN THE LABOUR FORCE,
 BY ORIGIN, 1997**



Source: A. Schmidley and C. Gibson, "Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States, 1997", *Current Population Reports*, series P23-195, Washington, D.C., United States Bureau of the Census, 1999 (<http://www.census.gov>).

The occupational breakdown of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the United States also varies according to their origin (see table 8.1). Among Mexican workers, a substantial proportion work in agriculture, although the majority (54.4%) are employed in industry, retail trade and construction. Central American immigrants are spread over the various branches of industry, retail trade and services (especially personal services). South Americans are mostly in industry, but a substantial proportion of them work in professional services. The employment profile of Caribbean immigrants comes closer to that of native-born Americans, since almost a quarter of them are in the professional services sector.

Table 8.1
**UNITED STATES: DISTRIBUTION OF THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION,
 BOTH NATIVE-BORN AND BORN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN,
 BY BRANCHES OF ACTIVITY. DATA TAKEN FROM THE 1990 CENSUS**
(Thousands)

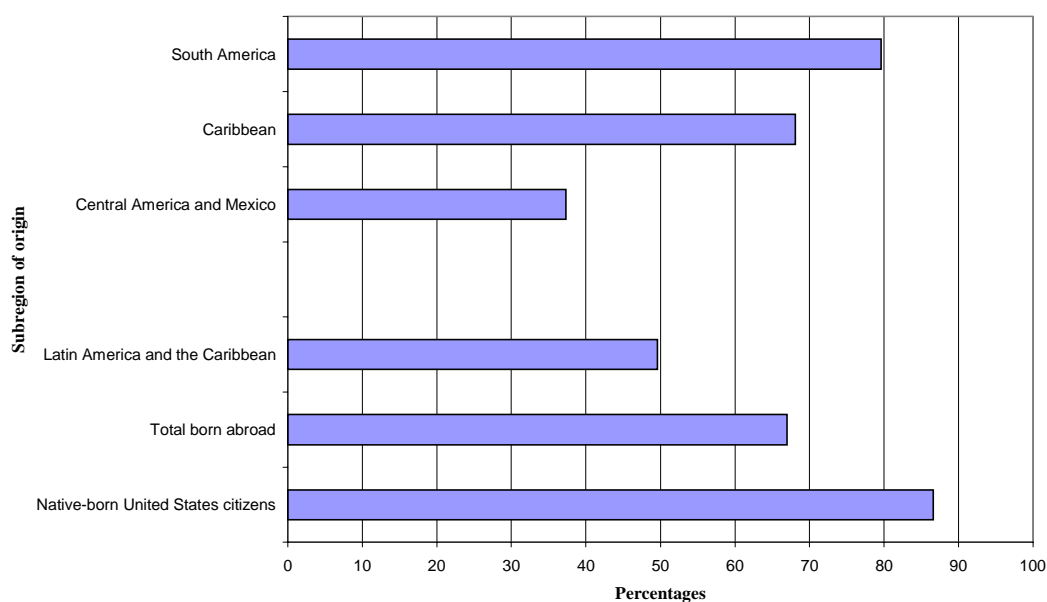
Branches of activity	United States		Others, by origin							
	Native-born	%	Mexico	%	Central America	%	South America	%	Caribbean	%
Agriculture	2,694	2.6	312	12.9	16	2.6	4	0.8	13	1.2
Mining	695	0.7	11	0.5	1	0.2	1	0.2	1	0.1
Construction	6,534	6.2	252	10.4	52	8.6	26	5.4	61	5.4
Manufacturing	18,242	17.4	642	26.5	127	21.0	104	21.5	181	16.1
Transport	4,695	4.5	59	2.4	21	3.5	27	5.6	67	6.0
Comunications	2,944	2.8	22	0.9	6	1.0	6	1.2	23	2.0
Wholesale trade	4,592	4.4	120	5.0	26	4.3	23	4.8	52	4.6
Retail trade	17,561	16.7	425	17.5	114	18.8	81	16.7	163	14.5
Finance	7,332	7.0	50	2.1	28	4.6	32	6.6	95	8.5
Small commercial establishments and repair shops	4,970	4.7	139	5.7	55	9.1	40	8.3	71	6.3
Personal services	4,545	4.3	176	7.3	76	12.6	45	9.3	84	7.5
Professional services	24,925	23.7	189	7.8	75	12.4	86	17.8	278	24.8
Public administration	5,287	5.0	25	1.0	8	1.3	9	1.9	34	3.0
Total	105,016	100.0	2,422	100.0	605	100.0	484	100.0	1,123	100.0

Source: S. Lapham, *The Foreign-Born Population in the United States. 1990 Census of Population*, Washington, D.C., United States Department of Commerce, 1993 and *Persons of Hispanic Origin in the United States. 1990 Census of Population*, Washington, D.C., United States Department of Commerce, 1993.

The average level of education of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants taken as a whole is lower than that of immigrants from other parts of the world or of the native-born United States population, but the heterogeneity of their educational level is no less than that observed in respect of their other socio-economic characteristics. Thus, taking the percentage of the population aged 25 or older who have completed their secondary education, the difference between South Americans and the native-born United States population is drastically reduced, as also in the case of the discrepancies between Caribbean immigrants and those from other regions (see figure 8.2). In the final analysis, the image of immigrants from the region, taken as a whole, is affected by the high proportion of Mexicans and Central Americans, whose level of education is relatively low. The most significant aspect, however, is that the educational profile of immigrants is associated with their polarization in the field of employment: those with the highest qualifications enter the most dynamic sectors of production or research and academic fields, whereas those with less schooling work in activities that require a low level of qualifications. The fact that the latter are in the majority is linked with the high incidence of poverty among immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean (Lollock, 2001). Even so, however, immigrants generally have a higher educational level than that of their populations of origin, which shows the selective nature of the migration process. Furthermore, the number of skilled immigrants is very large compared with the supply of human resources of similar educational level in their countries of origin, which backs up the assertions of those who highlight the negative effects of the emigration of such people (Pellegrino, 2000).

Figure 8.2

**UNITED STATES: PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AGED 25 OR MORE WITH
AT LEAST FULL HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION, BY ORIGIN, 2000**



Source: L. Lollock, "The Foreign-Born Population in the United States. Population Characteristics", Washington, D.C., United States Bureau of the Census, 2001 (<http://www.census.gov>).

A further aspect of immigration to the United States concerns the dynamics of admissions (i.e., officially documented immigration). The corresponding data reveal that in the last three decades persons from the region represented over 40% of the total number of all immigrants admitted, and this proportion even exceeded 50% in the first half of the 1990s (see table 8.2). In line with the figures on the total stock of immigrants, Mexicans occupy the first place among admissions of persons from the region, followed by persons from the Caribbean (mostly Dominicans, Cubans, Jamaicans and Haitians), while in the 1980s Salvadorians also occupied a noteworthy place (see table 8.3).

Table 8.2

**UNITED STATES: TOTAL NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED, AND TOTAL
COMING FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, 1971-1998**

(Thousands)

Period	Total	Latin America and the Caribbean	Percentage of total
1971-1980	4,493	1,813	40.4
1981-1990	7,338	3,458	47.1
1991-1994	4,510	2,341	51.9
1995-1998	3,095	1,278	41.3

Source: United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), *1998 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, D.C., United States Department of Justice, 2000.

Table 8.3
**UNITED STATES: IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES OF
 LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, 1971-1998**
 (Thousands)

Country of origin	Period			
	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1994	1995-1998
Mexico	640	1656	1400	531
Caribbean	741	872	437	385
Cuba	265	145	48	89
Dominican Republic	148	252	180	120
Haiti	56	138	81	60
Jamaica	138	208	72	67
Other Caribbean countries	134	129	56	49
Central America	135	469	267	156
El Salvador	35	214	117	62
Other Central American countries	100	255	150	94
South America	297	461	237	206
Argentina	30	27	14	9
Colombia	78	123	54	50
Ecuador	50	56	31	29
Other South American countries	139	255	138	118
Total, whole region	1,813	3,458	2,341	1,278

Source: United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), *1998 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, D.C., United States Department of Justice, 2000.

What are the main reasons why immigration to the United States is allowed? According to that country's rules on migration, most admissions are granted on family grounds (kinship with United States citizens and family reunification), which suggests that the decision to migrate is not always due directly to reasons of employment (see table 8.4).

Table 8.4
**UNITED STATES: IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN,
 BY SUBREGION OF ORIGIN AND ADMISSION CLASS, 1998**

Subregion of origin	Total	Admission class				
		Kinship with United States citizens	Family reunification	Employment	Refuge and asylum	Other
Mexico	131,575	71,731	55,140	3,586	41	1,077
Central America	35,679	20,814	9,470	4,048	843	504
Caribbean	75,521	31,665	24,908	2,361	15,480	1,107
South America	45,394	26,765	11,116	5,706	712	1,095
Total, whole region	288,169	150,975	100,634	15,701	17,076	3,783

Source: United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), *1998 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, D.C., United States Department of Justice, 2000.

2. Emigration to other destinations

The information on emigration from Latin America and the Caribbean to destinations outside the region other than the United States is incomplete and suffers from problems of comparability in both concepts and time; even so, the total stock of such emigrants in the year 2000 may be estimated at a little over 2 million persons (see table 8.5). The search for destinations other than those traditionally used began to take on greater importance in the 1970s and 1980s, when the overthrow of democratic regimes in many countries and the profound economic crisis of the “lost decade” increased the propensity to migrate. In the 1990s, the shortcomings of labour markets and the incipient support networks for migration led to the maintenance (or even the intensification) of some migration flows established in previous decades. Apart from the impulse given by these factors, migration was also boosted by the return of former emigrants from abroad and the return of those who obtained recognition of their right to citizenship of the countries of origin of their parents and ancestors (Villa and Martínez, 2001).

Table 8.5
**LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANTS IN EUROPE AND IN OTHER
 COUNTRIES FOR WHICH INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE, AROUND THE YEAR 2000**
(Thousands)

Country where present	Total
Austria a/	2
Belgium	5
Denmark	1
France a/	42
Germany	88
Italy	116
Netherlands	158
Norway	15
Portugal	26
Spain	150
Sweden	20
United Kingdom b/	500
Total Europe	1,123
Australia	75
Canada	553
Israel	78
Japan	285
Total, all countries with available information	2,114

Source: CELADE IMILA Project.

a/ Figure corresponds to 1990.

b/ Thomas-Hope (2000).

In Canada, the stock of immigrants from the region—which was extremely small up to the 1960s—rose from a little over 320,000 persons in 1986 to nearly 555,000 in 1996. The traditional flow of immigrants from the Caribbean (mainly from Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti), which accounted for half of that stock, has been supplemented in recent decades with an inflow of immigrants from Central America (mainly Salvadorians), whose rapid growth was reflected in a total of almost 70,000 persons in 1996.

Various European countries have received immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, the main concentrations being observed in the old colonial metropolitan countries (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain) and Italy. There was a very heavy inflow of Caribbean immigrants into the United Kingdom from its former colonies from the end of the Second World War up to 1962, when that country decided to put an end to its policy of free admission for citizens of the Caribbean Commonwealth; although the inflow of such immigrants still amounted to 625,000 persons in 1980, the number had gone down to less than 500,000 by 1991 (data from the OPCS, censuses and labour force surveys, cited by Thomas-Hope, 2000). Two thirds of the almost 150,000 immigrants from the region registered in the Netherlands in the year 2000 came from the Netherlands Antilles (www.statline.cbs.nl). In contrast, Spain mostly receives natives of Latin American countries, and it may be estimated from the data of the regularization campaign for migrants recently carried out in that country that the stock of Latin American immigrants, which amounted to 50,000 persons in 1981 (Palazón, 1996), had increased to 150,000 by the year 2000 (www.mir.es), the bulk of that total being made up of Ecuadorians (29,000), Peruvians (28,000), Dominicans (27,000) and Colombians (25,000). Latin Americans also predominated among the 116,000 immigrants from the region present in Italy in the year 2000, with Peruvians (33,000), Brazilians (19,000) and Ecuadorians (10,000) making up the largest groups (www.istat.it).

The stock of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in Australia amounts to rather more than 70,000 persons, among whom Chileans predominate (www.immi.gov.au). The stock of such immigrants in Israel is of similar size, the majority of them from Argentina (www.cbs.gov.il). Finally, according to information from the Immigration Office of the Ministry of Justice of Japan, in the year 2000 over 300,000 non-native residents in that country were Latin Americans (<http://jim.jcic.or.jp/stat/stats/21MIG22.html>); the fact that 80% of these were Brazilians and another 14% Peruvians suggests that most of these persons (born in Brazil and Peru) are descendants of Japanese immigrants (*nisei*) who arrived in those countries in the early decades of the twentieth century.

3. Intraregional migration

Migration among the countries of the region has deep historical roots and is associated both with labour market factors and factors of a conjunctural nature (including local socio-political conflicts). This migration pattern registered a marked increase in the 1970s, when the number of migrants doubled, reaching almost two million persons, but in the 1980s, because of the economic crisis, it slackened, as reflected in the modest increase in the stock of migrants to only 2.2 million (Villa and Martínez, 2000). Almost two thirds of these migrants were concentrated in Argentina and Venezuela (see table 8.6): countries which have registered a marked decline in immigration and, recently, an increase in emigration to countries outside the region.

Argentina, whose stock of intraregional immigrants came to rather more than 800,000 persons in 1990 (equivalent to almost 3% of the country's population), is the traditional destination for migrants from neighbouring countries, who mostly work in agriculture, industry, construction and services. Under the stimulus of the petroleum boom of the 1970s, Venezuela received large numbers of immigrants from Colombia, as well as persons from the Southern Cone who had been

forced to leave their countries, and by 1990 it had 660,000 immigrants from inside the region (3.4% of the national population). In Central America, the socio-political upsets of the 1970s and 1980s, together with structural shortcomings in development, gave rise to a considerable increase in the stock of immigrants (mainly Nicaraguans and Salvadorians) in Costa Rica, where the total stock came to 300,000 persons in 2000 (8% of the country's population) (INEC, 2001). In the 1970s and 1980s, Mexico received substantial immigration from Guatemala and El Salvador and also became established as a transit zone for migrants on the way north. Something similar—with smaller figures but even greater economic, social and cultural effects—occurred in the case of Belize. Various other Central American countries also act as transit zones for migrants from South American countries and other regions.

Table 8.6
**LATIN AMERICA: NUMBER OF PERSONS BORN ABROAD, BY REGION
 OF ORIGIN AND COUNTRY WHERE PRESENT, AROUND 1990**
(Thousands)

Country where present	Year	Region of origin				Total	%
		Latin America	%	Rest of world	%		
Argentina	1991	807	50.2	799	49.8	1,606	100.0
Bolivia	1992	46	24.7	140	75.3	186	100.0
Brazil	1991	115	15.0	652	85.0	767	100.0
Chile	1992	66	57.9	48	42.1	114	100.0
Colombia	1993	67	62.6	40	37.4	107	100.0
Costa Rica				
Cuba				
Dominican Republic	1993			
Ecuador	1990	53	69.7	23	30.3	76	100.0
El Salvador	1992	19	73.1	7	26.9	26	100.0
Guatemala	1994	31	75.6	10	24.4	41	100.0
Haiti				
Honduras	1988	30	88.2	4	11.8	34	100.0
Mexico	1990	85	24.9	256	75.1	341	100.0
Nicaragua	1995	20	76.9	6	23.1	26	
Panama	1990	38	61.3	24	38.7	62	100.0
Paraguay	1992	166	88.8	21	11.2	187	100.0
Peru	1993	23	43.4	30	56.6	53	100.0
Uruguay	1995	46	53.5	40	46.5	86	100.0
Venezuela	1990	660	64.5	364	35.5	1 024	100.0
Total		2,272	48.0	2,464	52.0	4,736	100.0

Source: CELADE, IMILA Project.

Note: The information available from the 2000 censuses gives a proportion of 16% of immigrants from the region (out of a total of 520,000 persons) in Mexico and a proportion of 63% (out of a total of 82,000 persons) in Panama.

There is intensive circulation of persons in the Caribbean: apart from the already long-standing migration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, the expansion of tourism activities in a number of island countries has generated employment opportunities which encourage territorial mobility. In 1990, over half of the Caribbean immigrants came from that same subregion, and the proportion was even greater in the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the United States Virgin Islands

and Barbados (see table 8.7). The effect of this intra-Caribbean migration has a marked effect on the populations of origin, since in Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines between one sixth and one fifth of the population have emigrated elsewhere in the region. An important aspect of migration in the Caribbean is the return of former emigrants, which has multiple socio-economic repercussions, such as the transfer of savings (including retirement pensions), investment in local social welfare projects, and the organization of activities involving high skill levels (Thomas-Hope, 2000).

Table 8.7
**CARIBBEAN: NUMBER OF PERSONS BORN ABROAD, BY REGION
 OF ORIGIN AND COUNTRY WHERE PRESENT, AROUND 1990**
(Thousands)

Country where present	Year	Region of origin				Total	%
		Caribbean	%	Rest of world	%		
Antigua and Barbuda	1991	8.3	67.5	4.0	32.5	12.3	100.0
Bahamas	1990	4.0	15.0	22.6	85.0	26.6	100.0
Barbados	1990	12.9	60.3	8.5	39.7	21.4	100.0
British Virgin Islands	1991	5.8	71.6	2.3	28.4	8.1	100.0
Dominica	1991	0.9	33.3	1.8	66.7	2.7	100.0
Grenada	1991	2.8	62.2	1.7	37.8	4.5	100.0
Guyana	1990	1.0	27.0	2.7	73.0	3.7	100.0
Jamaica	1990	3.3	11.5	25.3	88.5	28.6	100.0
Montserrat	1991	1.4	66.7	0.7	33.3	2.1	100.0
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1991	1.6	48.5	1.7	51.5	3.3	100.0
Saint Lucia	1991	3.0	53.6	2.6	46.4	5.6	100.0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1991	2.7	64.3	1.5	35.7	4.2	100.0
Trinidad and Tobago	1990	37.1	73.8	13.2	26.2	50.3	100.0
United States Virgin Islands	1990	23.3	70.8	9.6	29.2	32.9	100.0
Total		108.1	52.4	98.2	47.6	206.3	100.0

Source: F. Mills, 1990-1991 *Population and Housing Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean*. Regional Monograph, *Intraregional and Extraregional Mobility, the New Caribbean Migration*, Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), 1997.

One of the features of intraregional migration is the growing proportion of women and highly qualified persons. Although the flows display considerable heterogeneity, this “feminization” of migration is due both to the possibilities offered by the labour markets and to considerations of family reunification, while the increased migration of highly qualified persons, for its part, although due to the unequal employment conditions between countries, also helps to improve the profile of intraregional migration (Villa and Martínez, 2000). Another feature of intraregional migration which has been becoming more marked with time is the increase in forms of temporary migration for varying periods which do not involve moving house; this expansion of “living spaces” is associated with subregional integration initiatives, greater economic openness and the territorial restructuring of the economies of the region (see box 8.1).

Box 8.1

CHANGES IN THE MOBILITY OF PERSONS IN ONE AREA OF MERCOSUR

Interaction between the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires and Uruguay has always been favoured by geographical, economic and cultural proximity, so Buenos Aires has a substantial concentration of Uruguayan immigrants. What details are available on other forms of mobility as components of this interaction? The information on the movement of persons—all types of movements, without distinguishing length of stay—provides some valid clues for the formulation of hypotheses on what happens with respect to the movement of persons in an integration area. Thus, movements to and from Uruguay (mainly Montevideo) represent some 40% of the total entries and exits of persons in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. The persons in question stated that the reasons for their journeys were visits to friends and relatives, the use of services and commerce, and work connected with business and government activities, and many of them said they travelled very frequently. Among those going to Uruguay—mostly from Buenos Aires—by far the main reason given for their travel was summer tourism, followed to a much smaller extent by business matters (commerce, meetings, services).

This information gives grounds for formulating the hypothesis that traditional migratory movements, involving a change in the habitual place of residence of the persons in question, is only a part of the intense mobility observed. Leaving aside tourism—which follows long-established circuits—the novel feature is that some of the reasons for travelling given by frequent travellers are the same as those associated with traditional migration, which suggests that there has been an expansion of living spaces and that there is a close association with the functioning of social, business and institutional networks operating in both territories which extend across national borders and mainly involve highly qualified workers. How far these new forms of mobility are encouraged by formal integration processes and how far they simply represent the continuation of existing dynamics are open questions; what is clear is that, with increasingly low transport costs, these movements allow some persons to attain objectives which could previously only be achieved through traditional migration.

Source: Rodolfo Bertoncello, “Migración, movilidad e integración: desplazamientos poblacionales entre el Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires y Uruguay”, document presented at the Third International Colloquium on Geo Crítica, Migración y Cambio Social (Barcelona, Spain, 28-31 May), 2001 (www.ub.es/geocrit).

III. Potential and problems of migration

1. Remittances

Monetary transfers by emigrants to their countries of origin form a close link between migration and development. Although there is no doubt that these remittances are an important source of foreign exchange, factors such as the varying forms of the transfers (family or collective), the channels of transmission (formal or informal), the costs of transmission and the ways the money is used (consumption, saving or investment) make it difficult to evaluate their actual and potential impact on the development of the recipient communities. Because of the informal nature of many transfers—an unknown proportion travel in the pockets of emigrants, relatives or friends—the central banks are unable to estimate their amount accurately. Even so, it is calculated that in the region they totalled over US\$ 17 billion in the year 2000 (see table 8.8). Mexico, with almost US\$ 7 billion, is the main recipient in the region and the second largest recipient in the world, after India; although their incidence in the national economy is relatively low (1.1% of GDP), remittances nevertheless bring in more money than that generated by most export branches. Their impact is much greater on the economies of El Salvador, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Jamaica (where they represent between 8% and 14% of the GDP of those countries and, in the case of El Salvador, are equivalent to 48% of the value of total exports). The amounts remitted to Brazil, Colombia and Peru are also considerable, although their impact on GDP is small

(0.2%, 1.3% and 1.3% respectively). In the 1990s there was rapid growth in the amount of remittances, especially in Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru and Honduras.

Table 8.8
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MAIN COUNTRIES RECEIVING REMITTANCES,
1990 AND 2000 a/

	Millions of dollars		Average annual variation 1990-2000 (%)	% of GDP		% of exports	
	1990	2000		1990	2000	1990	2000
Latin America and the Caribbean	4,766	17,334	13.8	0.4	0.9	2.7	4.2
Mexico	2,492	6,573	10.2	0.9	1.1	5.1	3.6
El Salvador	357	1,751	17.2	7.9	13.6	36.7	47.8
Dominican Republic	315	1,689	18.3	4.5	8.5	17.2	18.8
Colombia	488	1,118	8.6	1.2	1.3	5.6	7.2
Brazil	527	1,113	7.8	0.1	0.2	1.5	1.7
Ecuador	50	1,084b/	36.0	0.5	8.0	1.5	18.7
Jamaica	136	789	19.2	3.2	10.8	6.1	23.3c/
Cuba	...	720	2.5	...	15.0
Peru	87	718	23.5	0.2	1.3	2.1	8.4
Guatemala	107	563	18.1	1.4	3.0	6.8	14.9
Honduras	50	410	23.4	1.6	6.9	4.8	16.3
Nicaragua	10d/	320	41.4	0.9	13.4	2.6	34.0
Other	147	487	12.7	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4

Source: ECLAC, on the basis of figures from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), *Balance of Payments Statistics. 2001 Yearbook*, Washington, D.C., 2001; Cuba: estimates by the country.

a/ Only the inflows of remittances declared by the country in question are taken into account.

b/ Figure for 1999.

c/ Figure for 1998.

d/ Figure for 1992.

A report by the Inter-American Development Bank states that on average Latin American and Caribbean migrants send their families US\$ 250 between eight and ten times a year (IDB, 2001), which highlights the great saving effort made by many emigrants. This is particularly so in the case of Central American migrants: although the kind of employment they obtain in their countries of destination only provides them with quite low incomes, they nevertheless give substantial support to their families, a high proportion of which are living in poverty;¹¹ according to surveys made by ECLAC, over 80% of the family remittances received in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua are used to buy food (ECLAC, 1993 and 2000b). The counterpart to this is that the personal and social costs of emigration are reflected in numerous cases of broken families and children left in the care of relatives or friends.

The use of remittances for productive purposes is restricted by the fact that the recipient families do not have many options for forgoing their use for consumption; furthermore, interest rates on the bank accounts of small savers are usually negative, and the lack of credit and technical assistance programmes inhibits the development of business skills; thus, a large part of the family businesses set up with remittances are tiny businesses for the sale of food, tailors' shops or retail trade. Many micro-enterprises run by returning emigrants or their families have very limited horizons and register high rates of failure. Some of the most enterprising emigrants set up

¹¹ According to the household survey carried out in Honduras in 1997, 83% of the households receiving remittances were below the poverty line and 58% were indigent (Perdomo, 1999).

prosperous businesses in the United States or other countries of destination, but only rarely do they establish production or trade links with their countries of origin, for example in order to import “nostalgic” or “idiosyncratic” goods (local foods or handicraft goods). Other emigrants, especially those of retirement age who intend to return to their homeland, acquire land, animals and agricultural implements there. Generally speaking, there are few examples of successful promotion of the productive use of remittances through public policies.

The potential of family remittances is expanded through those generated by migrants’ organizations; although these resources are much smaller than those of family transfers, they serve to finance social and community infrastructure works such as the construction of sanitary, educational, sporting and religious installations, the provision of basic services, and road construction (Alarcón (no date); Orozco, 2000). Although the productive links between emigrants’ organizations and their communities are still only incipient, there are promising examples in Mexico (see box 8.2), while the National Competitiveness Programme of El Salvador proposes, through the establishment of bank branches and national credit unions in the United States, to strengthen financial links with emigrants and offer tax incentives to Salvadorian investors who live outside the country.

Box 8.2

**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES IN MEXICO IN SUPPORT OF
COLLECTIVE REMITTANCES**

There are many associations of Latin American and Caribbean migrants in the United States; in 1998, for example, Mexicans had 170 clubs in Los Angeles and 120 in Chicago. These associations very often send collective remittances to their places of origin, mainly for social infrastructure works. One example of a government programme which seeks to complement these contributions is the *Tres por Uno* (“Three for One”) programme which the Mexican state of Zacatecas began to operate in 1986 and reformulated in 1996. The programme provides that for every dollar received from associations of Zacatecans abroad for community improvements, the federal, state and municipal governments will contribute a further dollar each. In 1997, one year after the programme had been reformulated, nearly 100 projects totalling some US\$ 5 million were carried out in 27 municipalities. The programme promotes infrastructure and development works in rural areas and involves the community in the taking of decisions and the contribution of municipal resources, thus creating positive synergies in the investments which help to give them deeper community roots. Its success is due to the noteworthy level of organization of emigrants’ clubs in the United States.

Other successful programmes are *Mi Comunidad* (“My Community”), which is connected with in-bond assembly industries in the state of Guanajuato, and the *Afinidad Jalisco Banamex* debit card, which is designed to bring down the commissions charged by electronic transfer firms. All these determined efforts to give support to emigrants, their families and their communities come under the Programme for Attention to Mexican Communities Abroad, set up in 1990 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is based on the efficacious action of Mexican consulates. Within this same field, health programmes for the families left behind by emigrants in Mexico are being carried out, as well as some production projects for micro-enterprises, in coordination with the National Solidarity Enterprise Fund.

Source: R. Alarcón, *The Development of Hometown Associations in the United States and the use of Social Remittances in Mexico*, Tijuana, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (no date).

Little is known about the various costs that emigrants must pay in order to save the money they send to their countries of origin; in addition to those connected with the move itself and disruptions in family structures, there are others relating to working conditions, the adaptation to different cultures (starting with the need to learn another language) and, in general, the conditions of everyday life. There are also transfer costs—the combined effect of the commissions charged by specialized firms and unfavourable exchange rates—which are relatively higher the smaller the remittances are (ECLAC, 2000b). The gradual generalization of electronic transfers (instead of the postal services and informal couriers) and the growing competition in the provision of this service are helping to bring down those costs, however (Orozco, 2000).¹² Another aspect requiring greater analysis is the dependency effect that remittances have for the recipient families and communities; the size and regularity of the flows of resources are subject to fluctuations—some of them linked to the economic and social environment in the countries of origin and destination, and others to the behaviour and situation of individuals after some time has elapsed since their emigration—which can have serious repercussions on the recipients. As for promoting the productive use of remittances, there is still a wide field to explore, ranging from the provision of incentives—through measures to give technical and credit support, to reduce risks or to exempt from taxes—to the formation of associations among emigrants, recipients, communities, national and local public bodies and private agents; such measures must be considered as complementary to the countries' development efforts and must respect the decisions of the persons involved.

2. Lack of protection and vulnerability of migrants

Apart from the gravity of the trafficking of persons—a crime that countries and the international community should punish most severely—migration also involves other forms of lack of protection and vulnerability. These occur when migration is not a voluntary action but is due to compelling political or environmental reasons and exposes the migrants to the precarious status of being refugees and the complex problems of resettlement and reinsertion.¹³ As these movements are due to sudden unforeseen circumstances, it is hard to make conjectures about their future evolution, but their incidence will probably go down insofar as countries advance in their democratization processes and become better prepared to cope with natural disasters. Undocumented status, due to overstaying the authorized period of presence in a country, and consequent deportation, are two common features of present-day migration (see box 8.3). Both of them may involve the violation of human rights—as for example through arbitrary arrest, extortion and abuse of authority—which is usually accompanied by discriminatory treatment of migrants on account of their origin, qualifications or ethnic background. Although irregular forms of hiring workers are very widespread because of the more flexible labour rules now current, foreigners are particularly exposed to abuses because they lack legal protection, especially in the case of undocumented migrants.

¹² Data for Mexico indicate that between 1994 and 2000 electronic transfers increased from 43% to 70% of the total number of transfers, while thanks to greater competition it has been possible to reduce transaction costs. Thus, for example, Western Union, one of the best-known agencies in this field, has reduced the cost of sending up to US\$ 200 to Latin American or Caribbean countries from US\$ 22 in 1999 to US\$ 15 in 2001. The effects of competition are also to be seen in the reduction of the profit margins of firms providing electronic transfer services. The data for Mexico show a decline in those margins from 11.1% in 1999 to 4.1% in the year 2000.

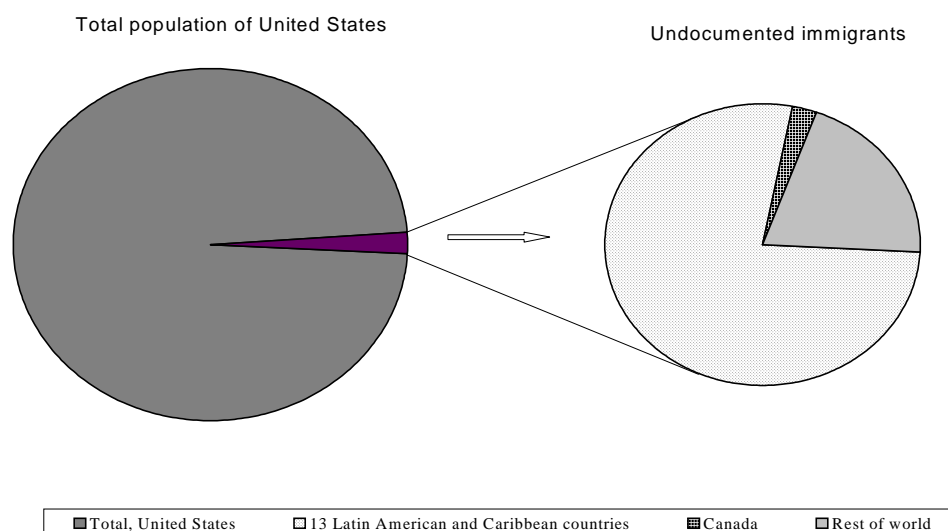
¹³ According to the World Refugee Survey, 2000, there are some 14 million refugees in the world and an even larger number of displaced persons within their own countries (IOM/United Nations, 2000; Crisp, 2000).

Box. 8.3

UNITED STATES: ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONS WITHOUT OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Using a combination of demographic and statistical procedures, it was estimated that in 1996 there were some five million undocumented immigrants in the United States; this is equivalent to almost one-fifth of the total number of foreigners present in the country. Mexicans formed 54% of this stock, followed by Salvadorians and Guatemalans (less than 10% in each case). The reason for the undocumented status of most of these immigrants was “entry without inspection”; in the case of natives of other regions, the reason was usually “nonimmigrant overstays”.

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS



Source: United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), *1998 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, Washington, D.C., United States Department of Justice, 2000.

The rigorous entry controls and strict supervision of length of stay adopted by many countries in order to try to reduce undocumented immigration have proved ineffective. As they take little account of the factors which lead people to migrate, they only scratch the surface of a phenomenon which has very deep roots. Experience indicates that the problem of undocumented migration is an elusive phenomenon which increases when controls over migration are made stricter: when this happens, migrants—sometimes encouraged by the demand of unscrupulous entrepreneurs for cheap labour—develop strategies for staying longer than the officially authorized time at any cost. The control measures, based on restrictive rules, ignore the potential contribution of migrants to the economic prosperity of the recipient societies, provide fertile ground for the generation of extremely negative public images of migration, and foment xenophobic and racist reactions (UNFPA, 1998), as well as having to do with the emergence and expansion of criminal organizations that manipulate the migration industry and make big money from the traffic in persons.¹⁴

¹⁴ Although these organizations concentrate on migration to the developed countries, concern over their existence is shared by the countries of the region: thus, in the Declaration of Quebec City, adopted at the Third Summit of the Americas in April 2001, it is

3. Citizenship and human rights

Protection of the fundamental human rights of migrants in the countries of destination is a matter of great concern at present. Awareness of the abuses and hostile and discriminatory treatment suffered by many persons because they are foreigners (non-citizens) has given rise to intensive discussions in civil society whose content gradually seeps up to government circles. Effective recognition of the instruments on migration which form part of international law is essential in order to guide this discussion, but the reluctance of many governments to ratify those instruments prevents their principles from being incorporated into national legislation and policies.

There is an extensive range of international instruments on migrants. Under the leadership of the International Labour Organization (ILO), numerous international labour standards have been formulated, a number of which have received the approval of the international community and been incorporated in conventions and agreements on the rights of migrant workers, but in view of the marked disparity observed between the letter of the treaties and their actual application, the great challenge at present is to ensure that States obey the agreements they have signed (Perruchoud, 2000). Although some instruments probably need to be redesigned in order to adapt them to the prevailing situations, there are others whose validity is beyond doubt. Among these are the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which recognizes that many migrant workers and their families are not protected by national legislation, establishes international definitions of migrant workers, and lays down rules for respecting the specific human rights of all migrants, whatever their origin or status. Since it is aimed at putting an end to exploitation and to all irregular situations in migration, its application would represent a decisive step forward towards incorporating the question of the human rights of migrants in all initiatives dealing with current international migration (see box 8.4). The Convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1990, and in order for it to come into force it needs to be ratified by at least 20 States. Up to the beginning of 2002, this Convention had been ratified by 19 States, including six from the region (Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Uruguay), while another three countries (Chile, Guatemala and Paraguay) have signed it (www.december18.net). The large number of provisions of the Convention, which mean that it must be analysed very carefully before its ratification, and the concern of some States that its application might encourage the arrival of still more persons in irregular situations, have militated against its entry into force.

Strict adherence to the rules—and determination to follow the arduous road to ensuring their strict application—is a necessary but not of itself sufficient condition for advancing in the fulfilment of the agenda on migrants' rights. Transnationalization and the new forms of citizenship made necessary by international migration raise unprecedented challenges for the present globalization process: among other aspects, they call for recognition of the role of transnational migrant communities and promotion of the conscious intervention of civil society. In the case of the communities, their action should not be allowed to become a *de facto* policy for the defence of fundamental rights, since this could eliminate the incentive of the fulfilment of obligations which are the responsibility of governments, while with regard to civil society in the countries of destination, redoubled efforts should be made to educate society in the field of non-discrimination, which is a long-term task.

proposed to strengthen mechanisms for hemispheric cooperation to take effective measures against trafficking in human beings (www.summit-americas.org).

Box 8.4

THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MIGRANT WORKERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 45/158 of 1990, reaffirms the fundamental rights of migrant workers and their families, without distinction, and offers States a uniform system of national legislation, for the effects of which both officially documented and undocumented immigrants are recognized as such workers. The rights envisaged in the Convention include:

- Freedom to leave any State, including their State of origin, and freedom to enter and remain in their State of origin (article 8);
- The right to life (article 9);
- Prohibition of being subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (article 10);
- Prohibition of being held in slavery or servitude or being required to perform forced or compulsory labour (article 11);
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (article 12);
- Prohibition of being subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home, correspondence or other communications (article 14);
- Prohibition of being arbitrarily deprived of property (article 15);
- The right to liberty and security of person and prohibition of being subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention; in the event of their detention, they have the right to be informed at the time of arrest, as far as possible in a language they understand, of the reasons for their arrest (article 16);
- Prohibition of being subjected to measures of collective expulsion (article 22).

Special emphasis is placed on the right to equality with nationals of the State concerned before the courts and tribunals (article 18) and with regard to remuneration and other conditions of work (article 25). Such equality shall also extend to urgent medical attention (article 28) and access to education (article 30). Upon the termination of their stay in the State of employment, migrant workers and members of their families shall have the right to transfer their earnings and savings and their personal effects and belongings (article 32). The Convention also enumerates other rights of migrant workers, whether or not documented, and their families: the right to liberty of movement in the territory of the State of employment (article 39), the right to form associations and trade unions (article 40), and equality of treatment with nationals of the State concerned as regards access to housing, vocational training and social services. The Convention also seeks to prevent the entry and illegal employment of migrant workers in an irregular situation; the measures suggested include the imposition of sanctions on persons who organize illegal or clandestine movements of migrant workers and on employers of undocumented workers (article 68). States shall maintain appropriate services to deal with questions concerning migration through the formulation of relevant policies, exchange of information, the provision of information to migrant workers, and the provision of consular services (article 65).

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (<http://www.unhcr.ch>); R. Perruchoud, "Legal standards for the protection of migrant workers", paper presented at the Symposium on International Migration in the Americas, San José, Costa Rica, 4-6 September 2000.

IV. Proposals for a regional agenda on international migration

The foregoing considerations provide grounds for the identification of at least three main items for a regional agenda on international migration: governance of migration, links with emigrants, and measures to prevent some of the risks associated with migration.

1. Governance of international migration

The current forms taken by mobility represent opportunities for development, but also definite risks of different kinds—such as the traffic in persons, xenophobia, problems of undocumented status, and the lack of protection for migrants—which must be addressed through an integral approach. Most countries are at once countries of destination and of origin, while a considerable number of other countries are transit zones, so that actions on migration, if they are to be realistic and efficient, cannot be limited to unilateral measures. All this explains why the governance of international migration must be tackled through dialogue and cooperation, taking a multilateral view which recognizes the complexity of the phenomenon and provides for areas of national autonomy in policy design and implementation. This is an issue which should be given the highest priority, since it seeks to enhance the benefits of migration while reducing the risks for migrants and the countries involved. While it is essential to seek mechanisms for concerted action among States, provision must also be made for the active participation of civil society, a number of whose organizations play a fundamental role in the defence of migrants. The governance of current migration is a necessity for all countries, and its bases go beyond the merely quantitative dimension, since they involve recognition of the fact that migrations are part and parcel of social, economic and individual processes and acceptance of the need to progress towards more objective and modern forms of management (Mármora, 1997).

Most of the countries of the region actively participate in intergovernmental forums on migration, which shows their political will to agree on a concerted strategy in this matter. Such forums—especially the Regional Conference on Migration and the South American Conference on Migration—form the core of a strategy of shared governance, so their consolidation can help in the establishment of mechanisms which are binding on all parties. In order to progress in this direction, various measures need to be taken, including:

- promoting the deliberate incorporation of migration and its governance into the agenda of the international community in order to reach increasingly broad agreement on this matter;
- signing and ratifying the international instruments on the protection of migrants and also taking steps to ensure that the provisions of those instruments are effectively fulfilled;
- consolidating and extending the areas of authority on migration in the various regional and subregional multilateral agreements;
- establishing explicit bilateral agreements both between Latin American and Caribbean countries and between those countries and others outside the region which are recipients of migration flows from the region.

With regard to policies on migration, globalization will make it increasingly necessary to progress from "migration control" to "migration management" in the broad sense, which does not mean that States must give up their right to regulate the entry of foreigners and their conditions of residence, but rather that they should agree to formulate reasoned admission policies (CELADE, 1995; Meissner, 1992) which cover residence, return, family reunification, restoration of links, cross-

border transit and the transit of persons to third countries. A global agreement on migration policies could serve as a framework for general agreement on the international movement of persons, establishing general principles and guidelines on various aspects which require international consensus (CELADE, 1995). A global agreement of this type calls for successive rounds of negotiations and means progressing from unilateralism to international consensus. "But if the main aim of this discussion is simply how many controls and restrictions are to be added, this would be as if the rounds on international trade had been organized merely to increase the existing barriers, instead of reducing them in the light of a world which is more open and integrated for the free circulation of goods" (Mármora, 1997, p. 12). In proportion as the incipient initiatives for dialogue and cooperation on migration prosper, the present restrictions on mobility in general will gradually lose their backing and legitimacy.

Ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is imperative for all the governments of the region, because of its inclusive and comprehensive nature. Likewise, on the basis of the strength deriving from the commitment thus established, those governments could likewise call upon the countries which receive migration from the region to ratify that instrument as well. The Convention would thus not only technically enter into force but would also gain greater legitimacy. The next step would be to ensure its due fulfillment in every country.

Multilateral consensus initiatives include the integration blocs, intergovernmental forums on migration, and other mechanisms of a subregional nature. The integration blocs —MERCOSUR, the Andean Community, the Central American Integration System, the Central American Common Market, and the Caribbean Community— have already made substantial progress towards extending their field of operations beyond specific agreements on matters of trade and are beginning to advance in matters connected with their social agenda, which must include specific recognition of the importance of migration. In this sense, the subregional integration agreements offer opportunities that must be taken, since they represent particularly suitable spaces for dealing with migration as a vital component of partnerships between members whose asymmetries are smaller than in the case of developed countries. The main intergovernmental forums on migration are the Regional Conference on Migration —set up in 1996 by the countries of North America and Central America— and the South American Conference on Migration, which was established more recently and is made up of 11 South American countries.¹⁵ The participants in these forums must maintain an ongoing exchange of experiences in order to gain a full understanding of the phenomenon of migration and strengthen the benefits derived from it. Action must also continue to be promoted in order to address common problems and make determined progress towards the achievement of consensus, forms of cooperation —as for example in the areas of management and legislation— and binding commitments, with their fulfilment being evaluated in the light of each country's needs. The governments of the region must give their fullest backing to these initiatives, which should be copied by the Caribbean countries. There are also other subregional-level mechanisms (such as the Puebla-Panama Plan and the Rio Group) which emphasize concern with matters of migration; in this case links should be established with the appropriate specialized forums (the Regional Conference on Migration and the South American Conference on Migration), which can provide fundamental background information for debates and initiatives which complement their own fields of operation.

Another area of multilateral initiatives is the Summit of the Americas. In the Declaration of Quebec City, signed in April 2001 in Canada by the heads of 34 States of the Americas, the countries

¹⁵ The Regional Conference on Migration, which brings together countries with strong emigration, immigration and transit flows, has an operational instrument (the Plan of Action) which includes joint action on matters of migration and development, human rights of migrants, and migration management; one of the most promising features of this forum is that it has opened up a dialogue with organizations of civil society. The South American initiative is in the process of institutionalization and has begun to outline a short- and medium-term programme of work.

recognize the economic and cultural contributions made by migrants to receiving societies as well as to their communities of origin and commit themselves to ensure dignified, humane treatment with appropriate legal protections, defence of human rights, and safe and healthy labour conditions for migrants, as well as to strengthen mechanisms for hemispheric cooperation to address the legitimate needs of migrants and take effective measures against trafficking in human beings. The Plan of Action includes explicit commitments on migration, human rights and equity, which the countries assume as their responsibility for the coming years. This Plan calls for the strengthening of cooperation among States to address, with a comprehensive, objective and long-term focus, the manifestations, origins and effects of migration in the region; it also provides for close cooperation among countries of origin, transit and destination in order to ensure protection of the human rights of migrants (www.summit-americas.org).¹⁶

The multilateral agenda of the region must include efforts to systematically address questions of migration in other processes, such as those relating to cooperation programmes between the European Union and Latin America; it is worth recalling that these programmes include six areas recognized as having close links with migration: development, the environment, democracy, regional integration, education and humanitarian aid. The Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government is likewise a suitable forum for the consideration of these matters, as at its eleventh meeting (held in Lima in 2001) it not only recognized the contribution made by migrants both to their countries of origin and of destination but also declared that it is necessary to strengthen bilateral and multilateral dialogues in order to address the question of migration in an integral manner and take measures to ensure equal treatment for migrants, fully respecting their human rights and eliminating all forms of discrimination that affect their dignity and integrity (www.oei.es).

Likewise within the context of multilateral initiatives, the countries of the region must make a determined effort to secure a review of the conditions and limitations which, under the terms of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, affect the temporary movement of qualified personnel. The aim is to secure genuine, effective liberalization of labour markets by eliminating the factors that restrict such movement: the imposition of standards regarding qualifications which favour the mobility of persons among the developed countries but hamper that of nationals of developing countries is a restriction which is incompatible with the opening of markets. In this respect, the World Trade Organization could be an appropriate forum for promoting more flexible movement of qualified personnel at the global level, taking advantage of the comparative advantages which the Latin American and Caribbean countries have in various specific branches (such as construction and tourism). Within the region, a new appraisal must be made of the limitations affecting their own horizontal commitments (such as the requirement that foreigners must be registered in professional associations and their subjection to certain provisions of the laws on migration); the integration agreements are a suitable option for progressing in this respect.

Bilateral agreements cover matters of mutual interest for countries, such as cross-border transit, circulation of workers, social security, and the recognition of courses of study and professional qualifications; although the negotiation of these agreements is usually less complicated than in the case of multilateral agreements, the aspects covered are dealt with in greater depth. A recent promising example is the "new bilateralism" between Mexico and the United States, which, apart from short-term considerations, opens up a space for discussion and agreement on the measures the two countries propose to adopt. Although there are many examples of bilateral agreements in the region, many are not operational or have become out of date; redoubled efforts should therefore be

¹⁶ Among other actions included in the Plan of Action are: establishment of an inter-American programme for the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants, including migrant workers and their families; cooperation and exchange of information among States concerning illegal trafficking networks, including the development of preventative campaigns on the dangers and risks faced by migrants; and the establishment of linkages with subregional processes, such as the Regional Conference on Migration and the South American Conference on Migration (www.summit-americas.org).

made to renew their validity. To this end, the countries should seek to strengthen their arrangements for bilateral dialogue, following the principle of seeking policy convergence —such as the harmonization of rules and procedures— on international migration.

2. Links with emigrants

Recognition of the economic, social and cultural potential that emigrants represent for their countries and communities of origin can help countries to take due advantage of one of the externalities of migration; the strengthening of stable links with fellow-citizens and their communities abroad will increase the direct benefits of emigration. In order to do this, it is necessary to identify the most suitable types of links and develop mechanisms to make them more stable. Other initiatives that countries could consider include:

- facilitating remittances of money (with emphasis on the most successful experiences of some countries in this respect) and encouraging their use for community and productive purposes (without prejudice to the right of persons and families to use these resources as they see fit);
- using links with emigrants as a means for permitting the legitimate exercise of those persons' right to participate in the political processes of their countries of origin;
- taking advantage of the contributions that scientists, professionals and technicians who have emigrated can make to their countries of origin;
- using contacts with emigrant communities abroad to promote idiosyncratic products.

Functional regulation of remittances would make it possible to obviate the excessive commissions charged by some firms specializing in making transfers. Ways should also be sought to allow the recipients of remittances to enjoy favourable exchange rates on terms which are appropriate to their needs (as regards the monetary value of the transactions). Measures should also be taken to encourage investment by emigrants in projects of common interest (as in the case of the state of Zacatecas in Mexico, for example), micro-enterprises, and other sustainable ventures, through the provision of credit support and technical assistance.

Every effort should also be made to guarantee that citizens residing abroad can still exercise their civic rights in their country of origin.¹⁷ The exclusively national nature of political rights is seriously open to question in view of the present intense mobility of persons, so democratic systems should guarantee the participation in electoral processes of all those who comply with the relevant requisites, without obliging them to be physically present in their country of origin. In order to dispel any prejudices that such participation could arouse, initiatives in this direction should be subject to broad discussion and should be integrated with other actions designed to deepen democratic systems: a proposal which has found support in a number of countries of the region. Furthermore, although many developed countries have progressed in their discussions on the partial political inclusion of foreigners —as part of the general granting of social and economic rights— the traditional idea that citizenship only gives political rights to the nationals of a country still predominates (Calderón, 2000). This debate must necessarily take account of the trends towards the transnationalization of the rights of the individual and fundamental values, especially those of democracy.

Links with emigrants also contain high potential for scientific and technological development, which is a matter of fundamental importance at a time when the progress of societies is linked to access to and incorporation of knowledge and information. Everything indicates that the demand for

¹⁷ Only one country of the region has a Constitution which expressly prohibits those living abroad from voting; in all the others it is possible to vote by returning to the country to do so. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras and Peru have legislation which permits votes to be cast from abroad.

highly qualified human resources will continue in the developed countries, so that —barring coercive measures— keeping such persons in their countries of origin will be by no means easy, as well as being a source of controversy. One alternative would be to develop and strengthen academic links, promoting communication by electronic means and temporary visits and giving determined support and encouragement to the formation of networks of researchers and shared research programmes; in addition, measures should be taken for the effective incorporation of technicians and scientists who have emigrated into national science and technology projects. The inclusion of these initiatives in national human resources training policies would help the countries of the region to cope with the losses of human capital they have suffered (which are even more difficult to tackle in the case of emigrants who work for transnational corporations) and would make it possible to take advantage of their experience without it being necessary for them to return on a permanent basis. Countries should reject the idea that the emigration of highly qualified personnel is an irreversible fact and should acknowledge, instead, that this phenomenon goes beyond purely quantitative dimensions.

Taking advantage of their organizational potential, communities of emigrants abroad could serve to introduce and spread the use of idiosyncratic national products, thus helping to form potential markets for their sale. Such products —foodstuffs and craft articles— have proved to have great acceptance in communities of Latin Americans and Caribbean nationals living in the United States.

3. Measures to prevent the risks associated with migration

The risks faced by persons who migrate to other countries in search of better opportunities or in order to rejoin their families or escape from persecution are increasingly evident, so the design of preventative measures is of fundamental importance. As a starting point, international agreements and States must recognize a basic principle: the use of police procedures should be reserved only for combating actions which really do constitute crimes, especially those committed by criminal organizations engaged in the trafficking of migrants. Although the criminal nature of such actions is beyond dispute, prosecution of them should not extend also to the victims of such traffic, and in the application of the relevant international instruments (the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two protocols) a clear distinction should be made from the common minor offences of failing to possess the necessary official documents, since undocumented migrants are not criminals. Care should also be taken to ensure that punitive actions do not have adverse effects on migrant communities and networks. Another complex issue is that of deportation, which sometimes extends even to the interception of migrants in transit; in order to avoid arbitrary actions in the application of such rules, international agreements should be promoted which clearly identify the cases subject to punishment.¹⁸

It is well known that undocumented or irregular migration involves serious risks for the migrants in question. Although this is a matter which gives rise to great controversy, there can be no doubt that the countries of origin should develop measures of an "educational" nature designed to minimize those risks and put migrants in a stronger position to cope with the legal and social vulnerability to which they are exposed. Some efforts have already been made in this respect, such as the educational campaigns promoted by the International Organization for Migration, but these need to be put on a much larger scale in order to inform potential migrants —and the population in general— of the fact that their entry and presence in another country means assuming legal responsibilities, facing difficulties in gaining access to employment and services, and knowing that they may have to accept living conditions that are not in keeping with their traditions. This information could be provided through programmes shared by the countries of origin, transit and destination of migrants.

¹⁸ The Regional Conference on Migration has made important progress with regard to procedures on the trafficking of migrants and deportation, which can serve as an example for other countries of the region.

The foregoing also has to do with facilities for the integration of immigrants. Although most democratic countries of the world have inclusion mechanisms —such as the right and obligation of children to go to school, or the right to family reunification— measures need to be agreed upon for ensuring the expansion of the social and economic rights of immigrants, which includes the necessity to respect the culture of their recipient country, since all countries must seek to protect their social cohesion. The establishment of mechanisms for the possible granting of full political rights for foreigners and the possible recognition of forms of dual citizenship are also matters worth analyzing, both in the societies of origin and of destination.

From a different angle, measures should also be considered to reduce the dangers associated with discrimination and xenophobia. A first step in this direction would be for States to ratify the relevant international instruments and undertake to give full rights to immigrants. In the Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in the year 2001, governments acknowledge that xenophobia is one of the main sources of contemporary racism and that violations of migrants' human rights are part of discriminatory and racist practices; they also reaffirm that while every country has the sovereign right to formulate and apply migration policies, these must be consistent with the rules and standards laid down in international instruments on human rights (www.unhcr.ch). Among the concrete actions associated with this objective is the development of forms of education furthering non-discrimination, which involve both the inclusion of special modules in regular school education and sensitization programmes aimed at business associations, professional associations, trade unions, departments responsible for administering migration, and persons responsible for shaping public opinion. It is important that efforts should be made in the region to review the contents of some educational programmes so as to help foster peaceful coexistence and respect for persons of other origins.