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UNESCO's contribution

- 1** The United Nations Secretary General has proposed to create a global consultative forum within the UN on international migration¹. This would be an open-ended body involving Government representatives active in international migration, which would enable the elaboration of constructive approaches towards international migration and ensure fruitful cooperation between Governments and the UN system, along with the International Organization for Migration, IOM. This major initiative indicates the growing awareness of the policy importance of international migration among States and within the international community. This document outlines UNESCO's proposed contribution to this process.

- 2** UNESCO's mandate to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science, culture and communication is highly relevant to the issue of international migration and development. Based on its mandate and within its areas of competence, the Organization could contribute to the consultative

As a **clearing house**, by gathering, transferring, disseminating and sharing available information, knowledge and best practices in international migration and development, and to identify innovative solutions and policies.

As a **standard-setter**, through its conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications and through its major normative instruments that provide standards in terms of respect of cultural diversity and in approaching cultural diversity from a human rights perspective.

As a **capacity builder** and initiator of **international cooperation** for researchers and policy-makers in the area of international migration and development.

4 Migration and education

Migration and education are deeply intertwined processes. Education is certainly a key factor among the complex forces that drive modern day migration. People may migrate because they have acquired skills that can be used in foreign labour markets, or because they wish to study and acquire training abroad to enhance their professional opportunities. Alternatively, underdeveloped training opportunities may undermine people's socio-economic perspectives, thereby encouraging them to seek opportunities abroad.

A central issue in the international mobility of workers regards the recognition of qualifications and of technical training. Migrants with unrecognised competencies may see their socio-economic perspectives jeopardised: this generates frustration among migrants as well as labour market tensions; it also reduces their integration perspectives while decreasing their positive impact on the economy. It is therefore in the interest of both Governments and migrants to ensure the recognition of skills acquired in different countries, especially in the contemporary context of internationalisation of higher education. Since the sixties, UNESCO has been functioning as a standard-setter to develop normative instruments in the field of academic mobility and the recognition of qualifications. Regional conventions exist in all regions (Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, the Arab World, the Asia Pacific); in addition, a Mediterranean Convention represents a unique instrument of interregional cooperation. These treaties constitute a base for further developments in the field of international cooperation in training recognition, which is an important component in the fostering of smoother migration processes.

A central feature of contemporary migration flows is skilled migration. While this corresponds to the current context of economic globalisation, it also raises major concerns for sending countries in terms of brain drain. States that invest in education resent their citizens' departure to developed countries and the loss of skills this generates. Migration policies need to fully incorporate this element in order to maximise

7 Migration and cultural diversity

Migration is a major source of cultural diversity. Throughout the world, migrants have brought with them parts of their culture of origin, leading to increasingly multicultural environments, especially in urban settings. Cultural diversity is widely recognised as an asset in a globalising world and as a stimulating source of socio cultural change. It is also a challenge, however, as the coexistence of people of different cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds may threaten social cohesion and lead to fragmented societies. In

