

U.N. Coaxes Out the Wheres and Whys of Global Immigration - Correction Appended

The New York Times

July 7, 2002 Sunday, Late Edition - Final

 **Correction Appended**

Copyright 2002 The New York Times Company

Section: Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 7

Length: 544 words

Byline: By BARBARA CROSSETTE

Body

For years, as the number of people moving legally or illegally across national borders has grown, governments have resisted United Nations efforts to collect reliable statistics and coordinate procedures governing immigration.

The United Nations estimates that at least 185 million people -- up from 70 million three decades ago -- are now living in countries other than where they were born.

But demographers say that attempts to analyze these population movements are often frustrated by government officials who try to inflate or to obscure them.

Now, in the midst of an intensifying debate about immigration in Europe and the United States, in part fueled by fears of terrorists crossing borders, the United Nations population division will meet on Thursday and Friday in New York to begin exploring global cooperation on the issue. The meeting is expected to be the largest of its kind, attracting the participation of governments, refugee organizations, volunteer agencies and policy analysts.

"This time, people are serious," said Demetrios Papademetriou, a former public policy analyst in the United States Labor Department who is now the co-director of the Migration Policy Institute, a research organization in Washington created by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace two years ago. "There is a different air to this meeting. A lot of people are now making serious investments."

Beyond what are perceived as problems of immigration in richer countries, there is mounting evidence of threats to peace and life from migrations, often forced, in poor nations. For example, African leaders have said that the long-running Congo war cannot be resolved until Hutu refugees from neighboring Rwanda, now ruled by Tutsis, have been moved out.

Debates over immigration, said Joseph Chamie, director of the United Nations Population Division, are characterized by "a yawning lack of data, absence of theories to explain international migration, a weak understanding of the complex interrelationship between migration and development, and concerns about the social, economic and political consequences."

There are no internationally agreed upon definitions of terms like "citizenship" or "residence." Nationalist hackles rise quickly in some developed countries, especially in Europe and Japan, when demographers suggest that low birth rates and aging populations may require huge inflows of immigrants to keep economies afloat.

U.N. Coaxes Out the Wheres and Whys of Global Immigration - Correction Appended

Two years ago, for example, Mr. Chamie was publicly criticized by the European Union after talking with the media about the possible need for "replacement migration" before European governments had had a chance to consider the issue.

United Nations officials say the lack of data has often obstructed important work. Only one in three member nations ever report statistics, the United Nations says, and some governments have not been heard from for decades.

Dr. Papademetriou of the Migration Policy Institute said he hoped that the mix of private, governmental and international experts meeting in New York would "come up with solutions that allow us to husband public resources in a very effective and responsible way." The institute has established a Web site, www.migrationinformation.org, to collect information and analyses.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Correction

An article yesterday about United Nations efforts to address problems of **global** migration misstated the number of people the United Nations estimated were living outside their country of birth three decades ago, as contrasted with 185 million today. The older number is 80 million, not 70 million.

Correction-Date: July 8, 2002

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: **IMMIGRATION** (92%); UNITED NATIONS (91%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (90%); PUBLIC POLICY (90%); REFUGEES (90%); UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONS (90%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (90%); POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); TALKS & MEETINGS (78%); EUROPEAN UNION (75%); LABOR DEPARTMENTS (73%); AGING TRENDS (72%); FOUNDATIONS (72%); BIRTHS & BIRTH RATES (72%); INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS (68%); TERRORISM (55%); AGING (50%)

Organization: UNITED NATIONS

Person: CROSSETTE, BARBARA

Geographic: NEW YORK, USA (92%); EUROPE (94%); UNITED STATES (93%); JAPAN (79%); RWANDA (79%); EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES (79%); AFRICA (79%)

Load-Date: July 7, 2002

End of Document