



I Forum of Regions on Migration Process

# RESPONSES OF TERRITORIES, OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PEOPLE

DAKAR, SENEGAL - December 1, 2 and 3, 2025

## GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

The early years of the 21st century have witnessed an exponential increase in migration from the South to the North, from Africa to Europe, from Latin America to North America, very often irregular and almost always under dramatic conditions.

This phenomenon represents a major geopolitical challenge affecting Africa and Europe alike, as well as both Americas. Urgent responses are being sought everywhere to address it. It is a complex issue that lies at the center of media attention, as well as of associations and human rights defenders who seek human and politically acceptable solutions.

Unfortunately, it seems that all actors involved are condemned to propose repetitive and often inadequate solutions, forgetting that these migratory flows originate in governance failures in African or Latin American countries, as well as in ill-adapted policies imposed





on the Global South. Meanwhile, unbearable images of crowds on fragile boats heading to Europe through the Mediterranean or the Atlantic, of lifeless bodies on coasts or in the Sahara Desert, or long queues at the U.S. border, keep repeating year after year without adequate responses being offered.

These images reflect the major dilemmas posed by contemporary migratory flows for so many men and women fleeing misery or seeking safety from the conflicts ravaging their regions. They are in search of a hypothetical “El Dorado.” This situation is all the more worrying given that, for decades, European or North American countries have proclaimed the end of mass immigration, focusing instead on controlling or even repressing the phenomenon, especially when it is considered “illegal” or clandestine.

Today, European countries, former colonial empires, seem to erase their shared history with citizens of their former colonies, finding no alternative but to turn inward through already well-established measures. Some regret that only one alternative remains for migrants: to take the dangerous routes of oceans and deserts, risking their lives to reach Europe, according to the tragic expression “Barça ou Barsakh” (Barcelona or death).

The acceleration and massification of migration to the North can be explained by a combination of multiple factors: persistent poverty, high youth unemployment, rapid demographic growth, and inadequate social and educational policies. In other words, this situation results from the failure of current governance models as well as aid and cooperation policies. These policies have not succeeded in resolving the structural issues that hinder GDP growth and negatively impact human security and the economic and social development of the South.





Youth unemployment, which has become endemic, is one of the main factors worsening migratory flows within this demographically dominant group in Africa. There is broad consensus that this unemployment is closely linked to poor governance in African countries. In 2015, countries committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the 2030 Agenda. However, most indicators remain in the red in many Southern countries.

Identified as the greatest social threat of the 21st century, youth unemployment and endemic inactivity today represent a time bomb, the effects of which could be devastating for a continent like Africa.

This social threat also represents a major challenge for European leaders, who must become fully aware of the issue in order to work with African countries to develop more appropriate responses than those implemented so far. Otherwise, the closing of borders would mean that Europe—the continent of human rights—would be accused of failing to live up to its human, historical, and universal responsibility.

Support for the development of Southern countries should not be limited to Official Development Assistance (ODA), but should also be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 by member states, aiming for greater solidarity and knowledge-sharing to design ambitious, but above all effective, public policies based on good governance.

This awareness, far more effective than any repressive measure or prohibition of illegal immigration through unilateral border closures, is a prerequisite for Europeans to rethink their paradigms of migration and development aid policies. Since independence, these





policies have not succeeded in protecting African populations from misery and poverty. Nor has there been sufficient effort to combat corruption (according to some World Bank experts, part of ODA ends up in tax havens). In this sense, it is an endless trap, fueled by inadequate national policies that jeopardize African economic development and, paradoxically, feed the migration routes.

## THE KEY ROLE OF REGIONS

In the face of this complex and painful phenomenon, regions are not mere spectators: they are fundamental and strategic actors. Being closer to communities, territories, and local realities, regions have a better understanding of the structural causes of migration. As such, they are especially capable of driving effective, tailored, and sustainable public policies that address the root causes of the problem.

Whether in Africa, Latin America, Asia, or Eastern Europe, regions can create viable alternatives to exodus by promoting local development, youth employability, social inclusion, and community resilience.

African regions, to begin with, know first-hand the despair that drives thousands of young people to embark on the path of exile. They are direct witnesses to massive unemployment, social disintegration, and lack of opportunities. But they are also bearers of hope: they have resources, capacities, creativity, and a young population with immense potential. In this sense, regions can and must become the engine of change, transforming socioeconomic conditions so that migration is no longer the only option.





In Latin America, regions facing large migratory flows—such as those of the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras), or the border regions of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru in response to Venezuelan migration—have had to mobilize to serve both migrant populations and host communities. These experiences show that regions do not merely manage emergencies, but can also be key actors in building lasting solutions.

Meanwhile, regions in host countries—whether in North America or Europe—are also called to act. They can develop integration policies, fight xenophobia, and foster cooperation links with regions of origin. Through decentralized cooperation, they can also share knowledge, transfer technology, support entrepreneurship, and contribute to the economic development of Southern territories. This interregional collaboration, more agile and flexible than traditional state cooperation, allows for the establishment of concrete, effective, and result-oriented partnerships.

Decentralized cooperation between regions of the North and South is, therefore, a powerful tool to exchange knowledge, promote inclusive development, and prevent migration from being seen as the only option.

## A FORUM AND A PROJECT

- ✓ This first Forum is an initiative **of the Association of Departments of Senegal (ADS), in collaboration with ORU FOGAR.** It aims to be a space for reflection and debate on a set of themes focused on promoting youth employment, opportunities for local governments, and decentralized cooperation:



- ✓ **Migration, youth employment, and territorial development**
- ✓ Analysis of the challenges of youth unemployment and its links with migration
- ✓ Territorial strategies to promote sustainable employment for migrant and non-migrant youth
- ✓ **Economic opportunities for local governments to foster youth employment**
- ✓ Identification and promotion of sectors that generate local employment (agriculture, crafts, services, green economy)
- ✓ Role of local governments in creating a favorable environment for youth and diaspora entrepreneurship
- ✓ **Decentralized cooperation and migration governance**
- ✓ Capacity-building for local governments to integrate migration into their local development policies
- ✓ Exchange of decentralized cooperation experiences between Senegalese local governments and international partners on migration management and youth employment
- ✓ Establishment of multi-actor coordination mechanisms (State, local governments, diaspora, private sector)
- ✓ **Mobilization of the diaspora for local development**
- ✓ Role of migrants and diasporas in financing, skills transfer, and job creation in regions of origin
- ✓ Diaspora-led initiatives supporting youth entrepreneurship
- ✓ Experiences with professional reintegration projects for returning young migrants
- ✓ **Territorial public policies and the fight against irregular migration**



- ✓ Local employment programs to reduce the drivers of irregular migration
- ✓ Coordination with national and international agencies to offer alternatives to dangerous migration.

The first Migration Forum was born with the intention of permanence and the ambition to be held regularly in countries of origin or in transit territories.

It seeks to create a framework for deep reflection on the link between migration and economic and social precariousness in countries of origin, debating public policies implemented thus far to better understand the phenomenon and promote sustainable solutions capable of addressing it. From the regional level, the Forum aims to guide countries toward balanced economic, social, and environmental development, based on effective and virtuous governance.

The Forum will directly involve the relevant actors—returning migrants, actors at each stage (departure, transit, arrival)—with the aim of formulating collective solutions and producing a roadmap that takes into account all the SDGs. Each actor will need to assume long-term responsibilities and commitments, with the shared goal of preventing the situation from worsening, leaving no one behind, and paying particular attention to issues of gender, equality, and inequality.

From Africa, initiatives have already emerged to address this reality. At the 30th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa in 2018, the African Agenda for Migration was adopted. The AU commissioned an agency to formulate the best responses to migratory challenges.





In the same geopolitical framework, the UN Intergovernmental Conference held in Marrakech in 2018 adopted the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

In this context, and thanks to substantial preparatory work supported by political momentum from African regions, the United Regions Organization - ORU Fogar will use the Forum to launch “Yakaar, not Barsakh / Hope, not death!”, a platform dedicated to job creation in Africa. This name is intentionally symbolic: it aims to replace the Wolof expression “Barça or Barsakh” (Barcelona or death) with a message of life and hope in African prosperity.

The mission will be to promote the development of Southern regions through the creation of decent jobs and improved living conditions, in order to reduce the structural causes of irregular migration.

This will involve supporting high-potential projects in key sectors: agriculture, renewable energy, technology, sustainable tourism, and industry. Education and training will receive special attention, with the implementation of vocational training programs aligned with the needs of regional markets, especially for youth and women.

To this end, ORU Fogar will support the creation of a **Project Bank for Regional Development**, fed by its members with projects designed to meet local needs. This bank will bring together initiatives in areas such as food production, sustainable natural resource management, basic infrastructure (water, energy, transport), as well as digitalization and access to technology.

ORU Fogar is committed to mobilizing funding and technical support, forging partnerships with international organizations, governments, companies, and private





foundations. Concrete agreements between regions and donors will allow for project financing, support for entrepreneurs, seed capital, mentoring, and access to international markets.

ORU Fogar will ensure the medium- and long-term viability of projects, transparency, respect for the environment, and the rights of the people involved.

The ultimate goal is to reduce irregular migration by offering viable alternatives in territories of origin. The project seeks to strengthen local economies, promote social stability, and foster balanced development. It will require a renewed approach to international cooperation, with closer ties between continents, regions, and stakeholders to collectively face global challenges.

ORU Fogar will develop a dialogue strategy with all partners—from the European Union to regional governments—and will encourage the active participation of companies and NGOs in this initiative.

[secretariat@regionsunies-fogar.org](mailto:secretariat@regionsunies-fogar.org)

