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INTRODUCTION

Joseph E. Stiglitz, Jeronimo Cortina, and Enrique Ochoa-Reza

The “age of mobility” is here to stay. Never before in human history have so many people been on the move. Today around 214 million people, or approximately 3 percent of the world’s population, live outside their country of birth. Women and girls account for half of international migrants, and 16 percent are under the age of 20 (UN/DESA 2011). South–south migration is now as frequent as south–north migration has been in the past, and while 97 percent of the world’s population does not move, migration is a global phenomenon that touches millions of lives, including many of those who haven’t themselves migrated.

International migration permeates our daily lives. Migration is a key part of globalization, the closer integration of the countries of the world. In many ways, its impacts are greater than any other aspect of globalization, e.g., the movement of goods, services, or capital. It has affected ideas, cultures, even countries’ sense of identity. Like other parts of globalization, it has been the center of controversy, but even more so: in many countries, debates about migration have become central to politics. International migration as a transnational and global process has reshaped the meaning of national borders.

Ironically, while migration may have the most profound effects on both receiving and sending countries, it has remained the part of globalization least subject to international regulation. In recent years, though, a number of international forums have been created to understand the migration process better—and to shape the process so that it yields greater benefits to both the recipient and sending countries. These include the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD),¹ the Global Migration Group (GMG),² and a wide number of regional consultative processes (RCPs) on migration.³ Together, they are proof that migration has