



International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)  
Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)

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**STATEMENT BY MS. ANKE STRAUSS, DEPUTY PERMANENT OBSERVER, AT THE  
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT, UNITED NATIONS**

**Agenda Item 5:** General debate on the further implementation of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the light of its twentieth anniversary

**New York, 11-13 April 2010**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) appreciates the opportunity to address this forty-fourth session of the Commission and will focus this brief statement on the specific link of fertility and reproductive health to the needs of migrants.

As IOM celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, today we can also see that migration affects everyone. One seventh of all of humanity is on the move internationally or domestically — one billion persons. Half of all migrants are women, many of whom migrate independently and as main income-earners. With global population growth we have seen growing numbers of migrants and increasingly complex patterns of human mobility comprising a heterogeneous group of individuals with different health determinants, needs and levels of vulnerabilities. Although migration is not in and of itself a risk to reproductive health or fertility, conditions surrounding the migration process and lack of, or limited access to, necessary health and social services can increase vulnerability of migrants to ill health. These vulnerabilities include exploitation; gender-based discrimination; low wages; sexual, physical violence as well as psychological pressures and violence at all stages of the migration process; and disparities in access to health services, including reproductive health

Regrettably, evidence that migration can adversely affect the reproductive health of migrants is growing. Both women and men are at risk, but for social and biological reasons, women are at greater risk of adverse outcomes than men. The growing number of women migrants worldwide and the fact that a large proportion of all women migrants are moving alone make this an issue of great concern.<sup>1</sup> Gender based violence and sexual abuse, unfortunately have become features of certain migration processes of women and exacerbate their vulnerability. Whether during conflict related forced migration, or as a result of trafficking, the human rights and reproductive health of migrant women are at risk.

But, Mr. Chairman, migration also has benefits for fertility and reproductive health. For example remittances can facilitate the purchase of additional nutritional and medical inputs, and knowledge gained through stay in host country can be shared back home and improve reproductive health practices and outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> UNFPA/IOM: Female Migrants - Bridging the Gaps Throughout the Life Cycle

Referring to the Secretary General's report on "Monitoring of population programmes, focusing on fertility, reproductive health and development", we support his call for *"policymakers and funders [to] [...] target scarce resources to poor and marginalized groups, while addressing the issues underlying their vulnerability. And particularly agree that these groups are [...] to include [...] migrants and population affected by humanitarian crises [...] ethnic minorities and indigenous populations."*

As the principal intergovernmental organization dedicated to migration, IOM stresses the importance of government leadership, and the need to build migration health capacities within public health systems in source, transit and destination countries to better manage the consequences of the transmission of disease and to promote the health including reproductive health of migrants, and the communities with which they are associated.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.