

**Statement by
H.E. Dr. Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN
at the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development
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Mr. Chairman,

May I begin by congratulating you and your bureau upon your elections. It is our conviction that under your able stewardship, this session will see fruition. Secretariat owes our warm felicitations for presenting valuable inputs. Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement of South Africa on behalf of the G77 and China. In addition, we would like to highlight the following points:

Migrants are being considered more and more as agents of development. They can strengthen cooperation between home and host societies and contribute to development – not only through remittances, investment and entrepreneurial activities but also through transfer of newly developed skills, knowledge and technologies.

Contemporary views on migration depart from the traditional neoclassical premise of push-pull factors. The new theory considers that like most other economic flows, migration operates as an equilibrating mechanism at national and international levels. Liberalization of policies can generate significant welfare gains. It leads to superior development outcomes and to “win-win” results for both sets of countries and for the individuals involved.

Many developed countries are now leading towards rapid increase in dependency ratios. Labour surplus economies on the other hand are fraught with huge burden of unemployment. This asymmetry is the main determinant of labour migration. We fully subscribe to the report of the Secretary General when it says that the net economic impact of international migration is generally positive for receiving countries and contributes substantially to relieving the fiscal burden on future generations. At the same time, the movement of skilled personnel from poorer to richer nations creates a ‘paradox of reversed development’ in sending countries. Their market is depleted by the departure of their most productive and qualified members, which warrants proper remedial measures.

Multilateral negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) offer a framework to address migration under Mode IV of GATS, part of the treaty establishing the WTO. Departure of workers exerts a downward pressure on unemployment and an upward pressure on low wages in sending countries. On the other hand receiving countries accrue a number of beneficial effects. They are mainly through

- (i) addressing temporary and long term labour shortages;
- (ii) alleviating the demographic challenges caused by the ageing population; and finally
- (iii) reducing the pressure of illegal immigration providing an alternative through temporary movement.

Short-term movement can also mitigate as much as possible the negative effects of "brain drain" through encouraging the return of qualified nationals resulting in "brain gain".

Since the entry into force of the GATS in 1995, progress towards greater liberalization of temporary migration is inconsequential. Regrettably, the reports at hand do not address adequately the issues relating to this category of migration. In current round of negotiations, it is critically important to have full flexibilities under mode 4.

Migrant workers bear high economic, social, and political costs in their migration. They are vulnerable to exploitation. Women migrant workers are often stereotyped into the low-paid 'reproductive work'. Efforts are needed to reduce the level of vulnerability of these migrants. We must ensure the basic human rights of all migrant workers and members of their families including those without legal status.

Facilitating remittance flows is another action with potentially high payoffs, and governments can work together with the private sector and NGOs to achieve this goal. Host countries must ensure unhindered transfer of funds to the countries of origin with minimal transaction costs. Sending countries should also help migrants use remittances properly, invest back home, and reintegrate upon return.

Bangladesh is a huge labour surplus country and belongs thus to the supply side of the world labour market. Government promotes employment of human power as part of its development plan. International migration has assumed centre-stage in the policy discourse of Bangladesh. The current flow from Bangladesh is some 250,000 annually which is about 13.5% of the annual labour force.

From a meager \$576 million in 1986, the remittance from the expatriate workers has now reached to \$4.0 billion, implying an annual average growth rate of about 9.0 per cent. The various schemes introduced by the government such as Wage Earners' Development Bond, Non-resident Foreign Currency Deposit account and National Savings Scheme have attracted more remittances. These remittances make a significant contribution to the GNP and help offset negative balance of payment in our current account.

Better results can be achieved by considering the close inter-relationship between migration and development. It is also necessary to promote and enhance dialogue and cooperation at the national level between different agencies as well as at the international level. This will maximize the positive impact and minimize the negative consequences of migration.

Equilibrating factors will continue to drive migration flows. Properly managed international migration holds enormous potential for the development. The imperative, therefore, is to set channels within a rights based, sustainable, international migration policy landscape. The high-level dialogue on international migration and development next September would be a significant opportunity. We must not miss this opportunity.