

Statement by H.E. Mr. Javier Loayza Barea (Bolivia)

**to the
Commission on Population and Development**

4 April 2006

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Commission on the subject of international migration and development, an issue that is widely recognized as extremely important in an era of increasing global interdependence.

International migration is a complex phenomenon of a global nature and with many dimensions. As Chairman of the recent 44th session of the Commission for Social Development, I would like to focus my remarks today on the social dimensions of migration. At its recent session, the Commission for Social Development decided to transmit to the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development at the 61st session of the General Assembly, the Chairman's summary of a panel discussion held during its 42nd session on "International migration and migrants from a social perspective". Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to provide you with an overview of the results of this discussion.

Although international migration involves relations between sovereign states, it is essentially the result of decisions of individuals and families. It has demographic, economic, legal and social facets. It has a North-South dimension, but not uniquely, as the movements of people across the world are increasingly diversified. It has a strong regional dimension, notably when regions have embarked into processes of cooperation and integration. And international migration is an inherent and critical aspect of the current process of globalisation.

International cooperation in this area should therefore build on existing forms of cooperation, notably the various regional processes. The main objectives should be to better manage migratory movements, to protect international migrants, and, as part of the process of cooperation, to establish a normative framework acceptable to all countries concerned. The aim is to have a notion of shared responsibility.

Means to these objectives include a change in the overall negative perception that currently marks migration in parts of the world, a great effort at communication on the positive role of migrants – notably their economic contribution to host countries. Remittances are definitely important from an economic and development viewpoint, but they are part of a personal income. The main issue for bilateral and international cooperation is to ensure that remittances can be easily and cheaply transferred by the immigrants themselves. The question of brain-drain is a concern to some developing countries that are losing people essential to their development. At the same time, not all developing countries benefit in return from a "brain-gain."

Besides improving communication and disseminating accurate facts, an equally great effort is needed to producing reliable information and data adjusted to the changing realities of international migration. Moreover, an active involvement of governments and other national and international, public and private actors is required. As international migration is still primarily the result of income and resource differences and imbalances between countries and regions, the effects of international economic, trade and financial trends and policies on employment and income opportunities in countries of emigration should be carefully assessed. All forms of international cooperation are linked. Also, strengthened and effective international cooperation on migration and the situation of migrants will depend on the quality and coherence of related national policies.

Mr. Chairman,

A social perspective on international migration and the situation of migrants is a legitimate and useful facet of a more active international cooperation. This social perspective ought to be focused on the perceptions of the issue, on the well-being of the migrants, and on the effects of migration on the social fabric of the countries concerned. A clear and secure legal status, a decent job yielding a sufficient income, access to social services and social benefits, are key elements of the well-being and personal security of immigrants. Their social protection is essential to their integration. The protection and enhancement of their rights remain fundamental and should not be seen in terms of the costs involved, but rather in terms of building a peaceful and harmonious world community. Exploitation, discrimination, xenophobia and racism towards immigrants are scourges that must be eliminated by forceful and coherent policies at all levels. The situation of women and children, often victims of exploitation and abuse, requires determined forms of cooperation.

An important aspect of international cooperation on migration from a social perspective also requires the establishment or strengthening of efficient mechanisms for dialogue, exchange of information and knowledge, and exchange of experiences between governments and other actors concerned. Such an exchange should integrate elements such as the evolution of technologies, demographic trends, questions of security, and the various gaps, inequalities and forms of poverty that ought to be eliminated. During these processes, the involvement of the migrants themselves and of organizations of civil society as well as the private sector, is critical.

In closing, let me reiterate, as Chairman of the 44th session of the Commission for Social Development, that providing opportunities for all social groups to contribute to society remains one of the cornerstones of social integration and socially-inclusive development. This is all the more critical for migrants in our increasingly interdependent world. It is imperative that we advance together so that we do not create new sources of exclusion.

Allow me to wish you a very successful session.

Thank you.