



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Statement by Mr. George Talbot
Chargé d' affaires a.i.**

ON BEHALF OF THE RIO GROUP

**on the
Follow-up to the ICPD and
International Migration and Development**

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Rio Group: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Permit me to extend congratulations to you on your election as Chairman and to commend the other members elected to serve on the Bureau. We are confident that your leadership will facilitate the achievement of the objectives of this session.

The Group supports the perspective of the Bureau in emphasizing the achievement of universal access to reproductive health by 2015, HIV/AIDS and migration and development as three issues of particular relevance to the Commission's work arising from the World Summit Outcome. The strengthening of the regional commissions to play a more active role will enable more effective follow-up to these outcomes and the Follow-Up to ICPD in particular. In this regard, the Rio Group reaffirms the need to harness greater political will both to advance implementation of the ICPD as well as to promote the achievement of its objectives.

Mr. Chairman,

In no area is this need as pronounced as in relation to international migration and development – the theme of focus for this session. With its multifaceted dimensions and impacts on the developmental process in our globalized world, international migration must necessarily assume prominence on the agenda of international development. The increased movement of people is a defining contemporary reality. Its discussion within the Commission's mandate of considering questions that impact on population and development to foster the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action is therefore most timely.

International migration has a profound impact on development and the challenges arising from the phenomenon engender much debate. Yet, with greater and more structured collaboration at all levels, international migration offers a valuable contribution to global development.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration has played and plays an integral role in the evolution Latin American and Caribbean society - whether in the migratory flows to the region in the colonial period or the present reversal of flows that globalization has occasioned. There were some 25 million migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2005, up from 21 million in 2000, some 13% of the world total. The US remains the favourite destination and several Caribbean countries have as many as 20% of their population abroad. Almost half the migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean do not have proper documentation. For this reason, issues pertaining to international migration and development hold special significance for the region.

From the perspective of our region, international migration presents special opportunities and challenges. The Report of the Secretary General underscores the potential net benefit and economic impact of international migration for developed as well as developing countries. The benefits include the significant positive social and economic impacts that can result from remittances to sending countries. These benefits are best realized with the safeguarding of the

rights of migrants, especially women, and the establishment of frameworks to promote circular migration.

A closer look at remittances - seen as one of the more direct and tangible benefits - is instructive. Based on ECLAC figures, the region's share of total remittances is the largest in the world. For many countries of the region, the level of remittances is considerable and growing rapidly, accounts for at least a tenth of GDP and is therefore of macroeconomic significance to them. The Report of the SG observes that remittances are the largest of all North-South financial flows and have the greatest impact upon improving the situation of ordinary people and providing relief from poverty.

However, the ways in which such remittances are utilized could pose serious challenges for public policy. For instance, research at the regional level reveals that the impact of remittances in reducing poverty in the population as a whole is not very significant. Further, a conservative estimate shows that it may take as many as 30 years for a country to recoup through remittances the investment - relating only to the costs of education and training - it has made in human resource development. In addition, the patterns of use remittances at household level, their measurement, the cost of transfers and the productive potential and impact on well-being are questions that demand further attention.

It is therefore clear that remittances cannot serve as a reliable replacement for development assistance, investment or strategies to achieve real growth in developing countries. The potential impact of remittances could be improved, however, by reducing the transfer costs of migrant remittances, facilitating their flow, increasing the percentage of remittances that flow through official channels, encouraging opportunities for development-oriented investment in recipient countries by beneficiaries that are willing and able to do so, and enhancing the capacity to monitor and measure such flows.

Mr. Chairman,

Members of the Rio Group are convinced that several significant hurdles must be surmounted to facilitate the greater mobility of people while better optimizing the benefits of international migration for development. The more pressing of these are: safeguarding the social, labour and human rights of migrants regardless of their migratory status, responding to the implications of the trend towards the feminization of migration, moving from brain drain to brain circulation, building national capacity to manage migration systems, and boosting cooperation and understanding on international migration at the international level. The magnitude and complexity of international migration makes this an arduous endeavour, since in many instances a single country serves simultaneously as a point of origin, transit and destination. In this context, support for destination developing countries in attending the increased demand for public services, education, health care and housing is key. Such efforts are nonetheless necessary.

Mr. Chairman,

Owing to their sometimes-tenuous legal, social, economic and political status, migrants are often at particular risk of infringements of their human rights. The protection of the well-established rights of migrants is therefore a matter of urgency. The Rio Group supports the strengthening of arrangements of both a multilateral and bilateral nature to assure the protection of the rights of all migrants on a systematic basis.

In particular, the Group encourages countries to consider acceding to the principal international agreement in this area, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.

Mr. Chairman,

More women are now leaving homes to become migrants. Indeed, women now constitute more than fifty percent of international migrants. In light of the peculiar place of women in the structure and functioning of societies, especially in developing countries, and their key roles in the success of developmental initiatives and the achievement of the MDGs, the increasing trend towards the feminization of international migration is an issue of deep concern for the Rio Group. There is need for special attention to the situation of women as migrants.

A related concern is that of the deep impact of the brain drain, which is especially pronounced on smaller economies, on the developmental prospects of countries. The danger is real. For many countries, the continued depletion of their human capital prevents them from reaching a critical mass of human resources necessary to foster long-term economic development. This loss strikes at the heart of efforts to achieve and sustain development.

The situation of many countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region in which they lose the healthiest, most talented and most highly skilled professionals, and especially female nurses and teachers, has resulted in a human resources deficit in the healthcare and educational systems of some countries. This has serious implications for the development potential and well-being of populations in sending countries, especially countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and could reduce the likelihood of many of these countries meeting the relevant MDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the potential benefits of brain circulation are now well established and despite the pursuit of innovative mechanisms to create linkages with their migrant communities, we are disappointed that the full benefits of brain circulation and return are not being realized. Without doubt, the promotion of greater mobility and brain circulation is not only in the interests of sending and recipient countries and the migrant but also makes good economic sense. In order to facilitate brain circulation, our Group supports measures including enabling the easy flow of remittances, portability of pensions and other entitlements, maintenance of linkages with the home country, encouraging cultural and language maintenance, facilitating establishment of diaspora organizations and considering dual nationality schemes.

Mr. Chairman,

Because of the multifaceted nature and impacts of international migration, Governments need to formulate policies better reflective of the complexity and delicacy of the realities and effects of the phenomenon. Many countries are severely constrained in their capacity to develop adequate migration systems. Since states share common grounds as points of origin, transit and destination for migrants there are common migration interests and common migration challenges. As highlighted in the UNFPA report, Investing in People: National Progress in Implementing the ICPD Programme of Action 1994-2004, there is need for a “high degree of coordination of different types ... including intra-sectoral, inter-sectoral, inter-institutional, international and inter-functional.

The Rio Group believes that it is also critical to strengthen the multilateral framework for action in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the adverse impacts of migration. Greater coherence of is a dire need in this area. Additionally, such outcomes would be helped through greater coordination in such practical aspects as effective means of collecting, analyzing and disseminating timely and reliable data on migration.

Latin America and the Caribbean region has a long record of endeavours to grapple with these difficult questions, including the establishment of intergovernmental coordination processes to streamline our own collaboration on migration. We commend these processes, including the outcomes of the Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico City from 30 November – 2 December 2005, the Latin American, Caribbean and European Union Experts Meeting on Migration held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia in March 2006 and the Ministerial Meeting from the Mesoamerican Countries, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Ecuador held in Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala in March, to the consideration of the Commission and stand ready to share further insights on our own national experiences in the hope of contributing to an elaboration of best practices.

In working to achieve our shared objectives and common vision to reduce the crippling incoherence of migration policy on development, enhanced coordination and collaboration at all levels should be guided by the principle of shared responsibility. Many United Nations bodies and specialized agencies are taking practical action within their mandates but there is need for an integrated approach and comprehensive treatment of issues pertaining to international migration at the global level.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group thanks the Chair for the draft texts he has provided as a basis for negotiations on resolutions on the Methods of Work of the Commission and on International Migration and Development. The Group attaches great importance to optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission in achieving its mandate by reviewing its method of work, including through consideration of the suitability of such approaches as longer-term frameworks for its programmes.

We take this opportunity to stress our support for the proposed comprehensive review of and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action in 2009 and the decision to premise the subsequent programme on the outcome of the review as well as taking account of the on-going process of reform of the ECOSOC in terms of its impact on the programme and methods of work of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group will remain seized on these issues and looks forward to collaborating with colleagues and providing more specific details in the course of our deliberations in this session. We must now exercise the political will equally to assure success in this enterprise as in that of the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

I thank you.