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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
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**Economic and Social Council
39th session of the Commission on Population and Development**

**On Item 4
National experience in population matters:
international migration and development**

New York, 4 April 2006

Mr Chairman,

My delegation firstly takes the floor to wish the Bureau well on the occasion of the 39th session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Perhaps it is worth recalling how the mandate of this Commission has developed with the passage of time. In years gone by, dire predictions as to the future composition and sustainability of the projected human global population led to radical population policies which have in turn been responsible for different but equally grave dilemmas such as the serious problems brought about by falling birth rates, and the creation of imbalances between men and women in the population, with its own social consequences. If the development of the world's peoples is to be both sustainable and sane, such flawed policies will have to be replaced by truly people-centred ones.

Today, the work of the Commission includes the examination of trends and impacts upon population and development like HIV, unknown 60 years ago, and the migration of peoples, with their respective consequences. As the population generally grows older in the developed world, the phenomenon of migration is being examined in a different light. Although it is an historic and ubiquitous phenomenon, efforts to shape it and control it by political and legal means have not always led to happy results. For this reason, my delegation welcomes the preparation of robust information and figures to be placed at the disposal of member states, so that they may judge more wisely and more humanely how to address any true problems arising from migration.

Due to the present shape of nation states, the inevitable – and we could even say unstoppable – phenomenon of migration *tout court* is occasionally looked upon as a problem to be solved. Sometimes it is painted as a threat and is manipulated for short term political gain, at the expense of the most natural rights of all human beings – the right to life, to citizenship, to work and to development. For this reason, the upcoming High Level Dialogue on the subject is very welcome; indeed it is a long overdue discussion on a perennial social question with consequences for people far beyond the 191 million or so presently considered migrants.

For receiving countries, the net economic impact of international migration is said to be generally positive. Although the presence of international migrants may have a small adverse effect on the wages of non-migrants or may raise unemployment when wages are rigid, such effects are

usually small at the national level. Over the medium and long term, migration can even generate employment and produce net fiscal gains. Studies in rapidly ageing populations indicate that migrants can contribute substantially to relieving the fiscal burden on future generations.

On the other hand, the emigration of skilled personnel can be detrimental to the development prospects of countries of origin, especially small developing countries losing high proportions of skilled citizens. However, skilled migrants who maintain ties with their countries of origin may stimulate the transfer of technology and capital.

Due to low fertility, net migration counts for three quarters of the population growth in developed countries and, by 2030, migration may account for all population growth in those countries. Therefore, migration is no longer an economic question or one to be examined just from the point of view of its consequences for sending countries. The question on the other side of the equation, the social impact of migration on receiving countries with shrinking birth rates, now needs to be better understood as well. Demographic shifts in populations on such a scale will surely have radical consequences for the entire composition of nations, and so a balance has to be struck between the evident benefits of migration on the one hand and a consideration of the social impact of large numbers of migrants in receiving countries, especially when they are not yet integrated, on the other. Furthermore, there seems to be a growing awareness that immigration cannot be the single solution to demographic and labour problems of receiving countries.

The World Summit Outcome document rightly acknowledged the nexus between international migration and development and the need to deal with the challenges and opportunities that migration presents to countries of origin, destination and transit. It is to be hoped that the resolve expressed by all the world's leaders to take measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and members of their families will be built upon, to the benefit of all peoples without distinction.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.