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**Statement by**

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**ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN  
KENYA**

**To**

**The United Nations Thirty-Ninth  
Session of the Commission  
On Population and Development**

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## **KENYA'S EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

***Mr. Chairman,***

It is an honour for me to address this assembly today. Let me begin by congratulating you and your colleagues on your election and by thanking the Population Division for their excellent work in organizing the Thirty-Ninth Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development. I also feel honoured to have the opportunity to share with you Kenya's experience in the field of International Migration and Development.

***Mr. Chairman,***

In Kenya the main source of data on international migration and development has been the national Population and Housing Censuses which are normally carried out after every ten years.

***Mr. Chairman,***

Kenya has carried out six Population Censuses. The 1999 Population and Housing Census was the fourth since independence in 1963 and the sixth since the first one carried out in 1948.

The others were undertaken in 1962, 1969, 1979 and in 1989. This makes Kenya one of the wealthiest countries in Africa in terms of population data.

The main objective of these censuses has always been to ascertain the country's population size by enumerating all persons both Kenyan and non-Kenyan who were within the borders of Kenya on a specified time. The other objectives include the collection of data on population size, composition and spatial distribution.

## **2 CURRENT STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA**

***Mr. Chairman,***

In 1994, Kenya was among the 179 countries which actively participated in the International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo Egypt and adopted a 20 year Programme of Action which among other things committed nations to address issues relating to international migration and development which include documented and

undocumented migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons.

***Mr. Chairman,***

International migration in Kenya accounts for less than two percent of the total population. The main components of the international migration in Kenya include foreign population, refugee population and Kenyans leaving the country to work or study abroad.

The main concern on international migration and development in Kenya has been the emigration of skilled manpower to countries with higher incomes in both the developing and developed regions including Southern Africa, the so called 'brain drain' and the refugee movement from neighboring countries.

### **3 FOREIGN POPULATION**

The 1999 Population and Housing Census report indicates that foreign population is less than two per cent of the total population in Kenya.

The number of Kenyans living abroad is not known due to lack of data on emigration. Hence no indices on net international migration has been computed for Kenya.

### **4 REFUGEE MOVEMENT**

Political turmoil and ethnic conflicts in neighboring countries has contributed immensely to emigration of people from these countries to Kenya making it to play host to a large number of refugees.

For instance, in 1999, there were 223,401 refugees living in Kenya from different countries. However, this number has been decreasing due to return of some of the refugees as result of the attainment of peace in their countries such as the Rwandese, Burundi, Congolese and Sudanese among others.

### **5 KENYANS LIVING ABROAD ('BRAIN DRAIN')**

Kenyan emigrants consist of students, skilled laborers, refugees and Diversity Program (green card lottery) winners. A large number of Kenyan immigrants to countries like United States of America today went there as students. There is evidence that Kenya has the greatest proportion of students in the United States among other African countries.

Economic and social factors such as provision for subsequent change of immigration status, occupation and education selective nature of the visa

granting process has been the dominant push and pull factors attracting Kenyan immigrants to United States of America.

Available data indicate that 642 nurses have been officially working outside Kenya.

## **6 REMITTANCES**

*Mr. Chairman,*

It has been realized that the development of more efficient ways of sending money such as bank wire transfers, Money Gram International Money Orders, and Western Union services has facilitated regular sending home remittances from abroad to relatives at home by the Kenyan immigrants.

The money sent home from abroad is used for relatives' consumption, payment of school fees, investment and debt payment. Since majority of the Kenyan families are poor, with over 50 per cent living below the poverty line, a large portion of the money sent is used for buying food, medicine, clothes and other basic needs.

It was estimated that last year Kenyans living abroad remitted back home fifty billion Kenya shillings, an equivalent of US \$684 million.

## **7 PROGRESS MADE TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES POSED BY INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN KENYA**

Kenya has made a lot of progress in addressing the challenges posed by international migration.

- The Government of Kenya recently created the Ministry of Immigration and Registration of Persons to handle issues relating to internal and international migration in the country.
- The Government of Kenya has ratified and continues to implement the conventions on Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. It has also ratified the 1951 Geneva conventions and protocols as well as the 1969 OAU conventions.
- In 2003, the Government of Kenya enacted Refugee Act 2003, to provide a policy framework for addressing the plight of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons.
- The Government of Kenya has implemented resettlement programmes involving provision of land, security and essential services to refugees

in camps, including tax exemptions for commodities meant for refugees.

- Kenya has played host and chaired peace talks for hostile factions from neighboring war torn countries in the region such as Sudan, Somalia, Uganda among others to facilitate conflict resolutions
- Repatriation programmes in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have been carried out by the Government of Kenya.

## **8 CHALLENGES IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA**

*Mr. Chairman,*

During the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development ICPD+10 Programme of Action, Kenya learnt a number of lessons related to international migration and development. These include:

- Arresting the brain drain of skilled manpower and attracting domestic and foreign investment
- Putting in place measures for re-integration of returning nationals and managing the problem of terrorist attacks on Kenyan soil
- Improving surveillance and response capacities in light of the increasing levels of sophistication, especially of international traffickers, that require high technology to detect.
- Addressing civil conflicts in neighboring countries to reduce large influx of refugees into Kenya who create an additional burden on Kenya's economy.

## **9 WAY FORWARD**

To reap maximum benefits in international migration, the Government of Kenya needs to put in place a number of interventions that include: -

- Improve the economic situation and the environment for professional growth by arresting the brain of skilled manpower and attracting domestic and foreign investment.

- Improve surveillance and response capacities to handle the challenging problems of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons.
- Intensify community based conflict resolution initiatives for hostile factions from the neighboring war torn countries.

## **10 CONCLUSIONS**

The net international migration in Kenya remains unknown since data on emigration from Kenya that would be used together with immigration data from census are lacking. In this regard, it is recommended that data on emigration be collected and processed to advise policy.

***Finally, Mr. Chairman,***

Given Kenya's Strategic position and enabling environment in world affairs, I would like to appeal to the international Community to continue collaborating with us by investing in further research in population and development dynamics and particularly in the field of international migration and provision of services.

**THANK YOU**