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Statement

by

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to the Thirty-ninth Session of the

Commission on Population and Development

***Agenda Item 4: General Debate on national experience in population
matters: international migration and development***

New York, 5 April 2006

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Mr. Chairman,

1. At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Thai Delegation, to congratulate you upon your election as the Chairman of this session. The Thai Delegation also wishes to align itself with the statement made by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

2. International migration is a global challenge that requires a comprehensive, concerted and coherent global response. As pointed out in Reports of the Secretary-General before this Commission, international migration affects every nation. The challenge is not how to prevent people from crossing border, but how to better manage the flow of people in an orderly manner.

3. With almost 200 million people on the move around the world each year, the bearing that international migration will have on development can no longer be neglected. Greater awareness about gender issues is particularly needed to address the growing challenge of feminization of migration.

4. Thailand welcomes the commitment made at the 2005 World Summit to maximize the development potentials of international migration while minimizing its negative impacts. We hope that the outcomes of this Commission as well as that of the upcoming High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development this September would create a global momentum to make international migration an integral part of the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

5. Speaking from the unique position as a country of origin, transit and destination, Thailand wishes to share our national experiences and views as follows:

6. **First, with proper management, international migration can significantly contribute to national development.** Based on this conviction, the Thai Government has taken a proactive approach to encourage Thai workforce to find employment opportunities abroad and reap the benefits opened up by globalization. Past records have shown that these workers are valuable agents for development, both in their homeland and host countries. Their remittances have also been an important source of development financing for rural communities back home.

7. To assist these workers, the authorities have provided many pre-departure capacity building programs to enhance their competitiveness and skills in accordance with the demand of the labor market. One-stop service centers have been established and information campaigns have been carried out in various parts of the country to raise awareness of prospective migrant workers about societies of their destination countries as well as to help them stay clear from predatory criminal organizations. To ensure orderly cross-country management, Thailand has concluded Memoranda of Understanding with a number of countries, for example, Japan and the Republic of Korea, to regulate movement of Thai workers to these countries. At the same time, centers have been set up in various countries to protect rights of Thai workers.

8. Thailand appreciates the close collaboration between IOM and ESCAP in raising understanding of the linkage between migration and development. Last year, IOM and UN agencies jointly published the first Situation Report on International Migration in Thailand, which has since become a useful reference for government agencies and international organizations in the country. Further work of this nature should be encouraged at the regional level.

9. **Second, illegal migrants should be brought out of the dark and be regulated through an open and orderly regime** in such a way that will be beneficial both in terms of national security and economy as well as rights and security of migrants themselves. This is particularly

the case for Thailand where there are currently over 2.2 million illegal migrants in the country. Faced with this huge challenge, we have since 2004 embarked on a regularization policy by encouraging employers to persuade their employees, who have entered the country illegally, to come forward and register themselves with the authorities. Through this arrangement, the migrants would be allowed to stay and work temporarily in the country while benefiting from rights and basic services equal to those being enjoyed by their Thai counterparts.

10. In June 2005, the Thai Government decided to extend the stay and work permit for several hundred thousand registered migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR for another year. We hope that the continuation of this regularization program together with bilateral agreements on the employment of migrant workers already in place with these three neighboring countries will eventually create a legal and regular regime for labor migration between these countries and Thailand; hence, lessening the incentive for resorting to irregular channels. I also wish to inform the Commission that, since early this year, a collaborative project between IOM, the Ministry of Labor and the National Human Rights Commission entitled "Awareness Raising of Migrants' Rights" has been implemented to sensitize government officials and employers about migrants' contribution to the Thai economy and the importance of respecting their basic rights.

11. **Third, closer coordination and cooperation at all levels is vital to combat the threat of people smuggling and trafficking in persons, especially women and children.** These are serious crimes that dehumanize human beings, undermine human dignity and destroy human potentials. In Thailand, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by government agencies concerned and non-government organizations working in the field. The MOU constitutes a referent framework for coordination and action among various actors.

12. Because smugglers and traffickers respect no boundaries; therefore, international cooperation is imperative to combat these criminal networks and protect the victims. For example, Thailand concluded two separate MOUs on Cooperation for Eliminating Human Trafficking with Cambodia and Lao PDR. We are currently working on similar bilateral arrangements with other countries. We have also been actively engaging in various regional processes, such as the Bali Process and the Intergovernmental Asia-Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC).

13. **Fourth, prevention of irregular migration is most effective and sustainable when it addresses root causes of the outflow, especially lack of development and economic disparities in countries of origin.** The international community should strengthen their partnerships in support of development in these countries of origin, both in terms of North-South and South-South cooperation. Immediate priority should be given to prevention of brain drain of health workers from developing countries, which has had devastating impacts on the overall public health system, especially on these countries' capacity to cope with the spread of HIV/AIDS. Greater efforts should also be made to create greater opportunities for capacity building of unskilled and semi-skilled migrant workers in receiving countries. Doing so would enable them to better contribute to development of their home countries upon their return.

14. With greater hope and opportunities at home, lesser people would be compelled to leave their countries and place their lives in the hand of smugglers and traffickers. In line with this belief, Thailand has been pursuing partnership for development initiatives with various countries in the region with an aim of promoting economic development, employment and well-being in these societies.

15. **Lastly, a serious consideration should be given to how to achieve a coherent and comprehensive global governance of international migration.** The upcoming High-Level Dialogue should mobilize momentum towards this end. We are aware that, today, there are many bilateral, sub-regional and regional arrangements, and there are currently a number of

international organizations involved in different aspects of migration. However, we believe that greater coherence at the global level is necessary to ensure that development potentials of international migration will be optimally harnessed, and dignity, rights and safety of migrants effectively guaranteed. The said governance framework should seek to build on existing network of arrangements, each of which address particular aspects of migration in particular region.

16. In concluding, I wish to inform the Commission that the Thai Government, in collaboration with APC, UNHCR and IOM, will host a Regional Workshop on the implications of the Report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) on Asia and Pacific and for the High-Level Dialogue. The Workshop will be held in Bangkok from 26 to 28 April 2006, and will involve representatives from 33 countries. We are confident that the Workshop would help strengthen coordination and partnership among countries in the region and ensure that views from Asia-Pacific are well reflected in the High-Level Dialogue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
