

**PANEL ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Statement by
MR. JOSÉ ANTONIO OCAMPO
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
New York, 8 June 2006**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Panellists and Delegates,

Mr. Sutherland has just made an excellent presentation of the reasons that international migration deserves sustained attention in the United Nations. Let me turn now to some substantive aspects of this issue and provide further support for this case.

The report of the Secretary-General shows that international migration, if supported by appropriate policies, can be beneficial for development. More importantly, it also documents how countries all over the world are working proactively to ensure that migration contributes to their development efforts.

The facts

Migration continues to be driven by the desire of migrants to better their lives and those of their families. It is therefore not surprising that high-income countries have been gaining the largest share of international migrants.

Between 1990 and 2005, high-income countries as a whole gained 41 million migrants to reach a cumulative total of 112 million migrants.

In contrast, the number of migrants in mi
million
e in countries takeen jto

accumulated number of migrants, “South-to-South” migrants are about as numerous as “South-to-North” migrants.

Worldwide, women participate in migration in almost equal numbers as men. Among the 191 million migrants in the world, female migrants constitute nearly half, and they are somewhat more numerous than male migrants in developed countries.

Remittances are most immediate benefit of international migration. Our colleagues at the World Bank estimate that worldwide remittance flows rose from \$102 billion in 1995 to \$232 billion today. The share going to developing countries has also risen, from 57 per cent in 1995 to 72 per cent in 2005. Today, developing countries receive about \$170 billion in remittances.

Wall Chart

Detailed migration estimates by country can be found in the Wall Chart on International Migration that my Department has just issued. You can find copies in the back of the room.

Migration and development

Regarding the linkages between migration and development, the nature of the debate is changing. The key aim is no longer to reduce migration through sustained development. More countries realize today that international migration will continue and probably even rise in some regions over the coming decades. And policies are changing accordingly. The percentage of countries wishing to reduce migration has declined markedly over the past decade (from 40 per cent in 1996 to 22 per cent in 2005). In Europe, for instance, rising numbers of countries are encouraging selected forms of migration.

In addition, more countries are focusing on the opportunities to pursue co-development, that is initiatives that promote the concerted improvement of economic conditions in both areas of origin and areas of destination based on the complementarities between them.

Migration and countries of destination

Today, many advanced and dynamic economies need migrant workers to fill jobs that cannot be outsourced and that don't find local takers at going wages. Population ageing also contributes to a growing demand for workers, as it reduces the number of persons of working age relative to dependants. And as younger generations become better educated, fewer in their ranks are content with lowly paid and physically demanding jobs.

Under these circumstances, migration can boost economic growth as migrants perform tasks that would go undone or cost more in their absence. Migrants complement citizens, by allowing them to perform other, more productive and better-paid jobs.

In addition, by enlarging the pool of consumers and contributing their entrepreneurial capacities, migrants can provide an additional impetus to economic growth in countries of destination.

The success of migration hinges on the mutual adaptation of migrants and the host society, which is in the best interests of both. The cornerstone of integration is equal treatment and the prohibition of discrimination of any sort as well as effective protection against racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia.

Of particular importance is to ensure that migration policies are gender sensitive and reinforce the positive contributions that migrant women can make to development.

Migration and countries of origin

For countries of origin, migration can help ease the pressures on the labour market deriving from their growing and still youthful populations. In some countries, such as Mexico, Pakistan or the Philippines, the number of migrants departing annually is almost equivalent to the annual increase of the labour force.

Migration can contribute to the reduction of poverty, especially as it expands from involving the better-off households in the communities of origin to poorer households via the operation of migration networks that help reduce the costs and risks of migration.

By generating remittances, migration helps households overcome some of the constraints they face in underdeveloped markets. Remittances can provide the capital and income security to allow households to invest in productive activities, including micro-enterprises.

Remittances have also the potential to increase incomes for households without migrants. Because of multiplier effects, every dollar in remittances may generate two or three in the local economy as remittances are spent on goods and services.

Remittances spent on health and education help to build human capital in countries of origin.

To enhance the positive impacts of remittances, it is necessary to continue working towards the reduction of transfer costs and increasing access to financial institutions, including micro-credit institutions, to migrants and their families.

Transnational communities

Citizens abroad can be agents of development.

Migrants abroad can contribute to the expansion of trade, tourism, and telecommunications in the countries of origin.

Transnational communities can be the source of expertise and knowledge, particularly through the development of professional networks with their compatriots.

Collective remittances by migrant associations can support small-scale development projects that improve living standards in the communities of origin, especially when

those remittances are matched by local or national authorities (as in the case of the 3 for 1 programme in Mexico).

Return migration

When migrants return to stay, they bring back expertise and savings. Return migrants may use their savings to start businesses that contribute to job creation, even if on a modest scale.

Returning migrants can also pass their expertise along to others as teachers or trainers, often as part of entrepreneurial activities.

In some countries, such as China or India, return migrants have contributed to achieve a critical mass of skilled workers to help launch new ventures in their countries, thus promoting economic development.

Ensuring the portability of pensions and health benefits is a measure likely to facilitate return migration.

Highly-skilled migration

Highly-skilled migration is an important and growing component of migration today. In 2000, there were 20 million migrants with tertiary education in OECD countries and about 60 per cent originated in developing countries. Equivalent information on skilled migration to developing countries is not available.

The migration of skilled migrants has a number of positive aspects. Migrants have the opportunity of acquiring or improving skills and experience abroad which will likely prove useful upon return. Even if they stay abroad, skilled migrants can be valuable resources for countries of origin: as investors, philanthropists, bearers of new knowledge, or promoters of trade and cultural exchange.

When migrants are able to employ their skills, their work clearly benefits the receiving society. But if barriers to the recognition of degrees prevent skilled migrants from using their skills fully, their capacity to contribute is compromised.

Countries with moderate to large numbers of well educated persons may benefit from skilled migration, as more people pursue an education in the hope of migrating (“brain gain”).

However, in small countries or those with relatively few skilled persons, the migration of the highly skilled may be a drain, particularly in crucial sectors such as health and education. Support for regional or even global strategies to train needed personnel, perhaps in partnership with private sector institutions, could help developing countries mitigate these detrimental effects.

Human rights

The benefits of international migration—not only for migrants themselves, but equally for receiving societies—are contingent on the protection of the rights of migrants. Labour rights are the mainstay in the prevention of exploitation and ought to be assured.

In turn, migrants, just as citizens, have the obligation to abide by the laws and regulations of receiving States.

Although there have been important advances in building international cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, it remains one of the most pressing problems related to the movement of people.

Mr. Chairman,

There is no doubt that international migration is a major issue on the global agenda. The General Assembly has recognized as much by deciding to hold a High-level Dialogue precisely on the nexus between international migration and development. I have outlined just the major ways in which migration and development interact and, as you will appreciate, I have not summarized all the facts, analyses and suggestions contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

The report makes clear that shaping migration continues to be part of the sovereign rights of States. Yet, increasingly, States have objectives that can best be reached through collaboration or via coordinated action. The High-level Dialogue presents the first major opportunity for Member States to find concrete means of enhancing that collaboration and, in the process, ensure that the potential contributions of migration to development are fully realized.