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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

New York, 15 May 2010

This year's commemoration of the International Day of Families focuses on the impact of migration on families around the world.

Rising social and economic disparities create both pressures and incentives for people to leave their homes in search of better opportunities. Many migrate out of necessity due to poverty, unemployment, political or armed conflicts or violations of human rights.

Parents migrate to improve the well-being of their children and other extended family members. In host countries, men and women can earn a better living and send income to family members back home. Migrants contribute to the economy of the host country, while also enriching the social and cultural fabric. Women migrant workers can gain independence and autonomy, becoming positive role models for others.

Despite its many benefits, migration also places heavy burdens on family members. Migrants can face harsh living conditions, discrimination and low wages. They often lack safety nets, and suffer disproportionately in times of economic hardship. Unemployment can push many to the bottom rung of societies. Children of migrants can face a number of emotional and economic challenges unique to their circumstances, in particular a greater vulnerability to human trafficking, child labour and violence.

To make the most of the benefits of migration, Governments should implement policies that help migrants adapt and prosper in their host countries. I call on those states that have not yet done so to ratify and implement the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. On this International Day of Families, let us renew our commitment to efforts that help and support migrant families around the world.