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IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

**EXPERT WORKSHOP ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MIGRATION  
GENEVA, 6 APRIL 2006**

**OPENING REMARKS**

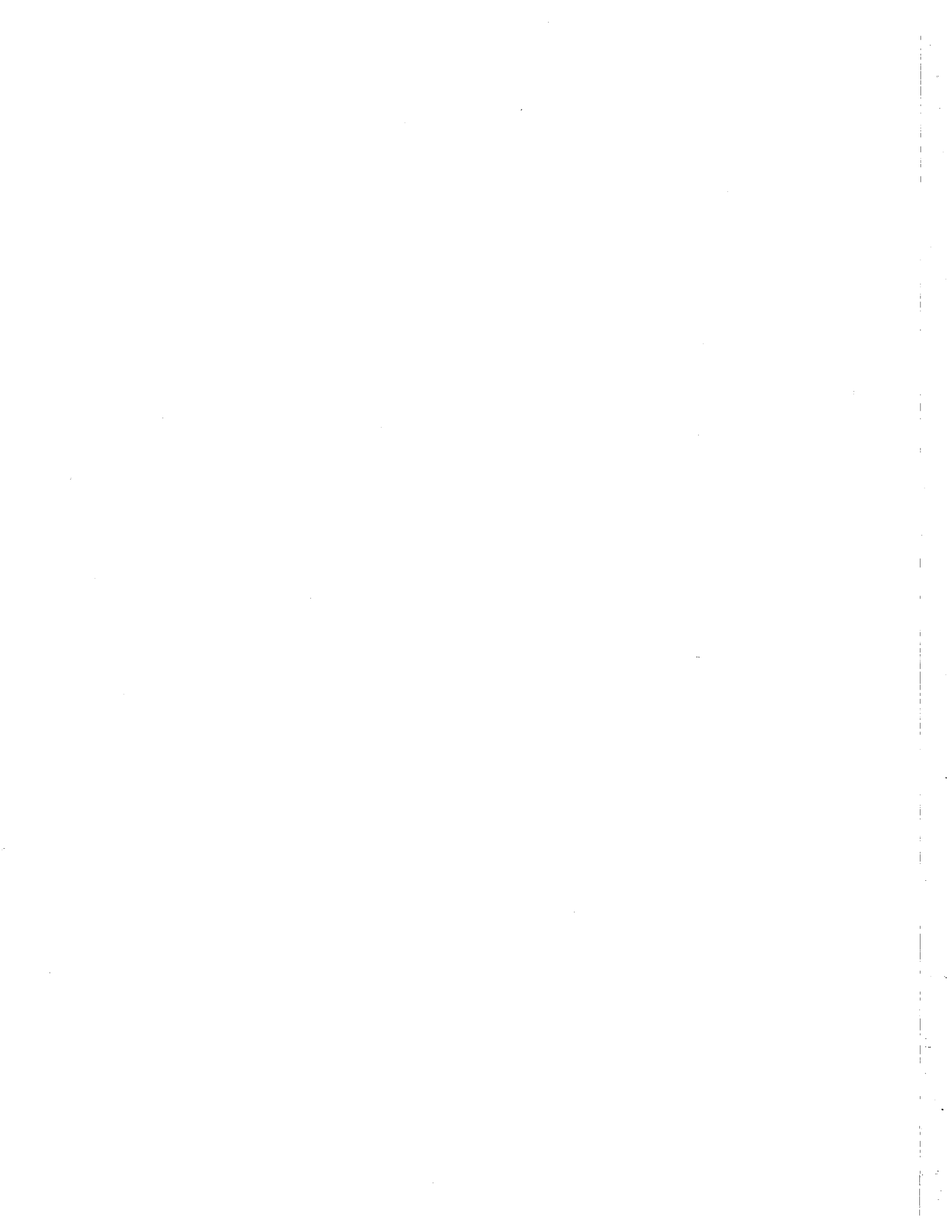
**BY**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), I would like to warmly welcome all of you here today to participate in this expert workshop on Indigenous Peoples and Migration. IOM is pleased to host this meeting and to pursue collaboration with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which we trust will be fruitful and mutually enriching.

This expert workshop is significant given that these two topics – indigenous peoples and migration – have not yet been consistently and systematically discussed within the same framework. We felt that **this** was the year and **this** is the initial opportunity to heighten attention to the social and political significance of indigenous peoples and migration. This fall, the UN General Assembly's 61<sup>st</sup> Session will host a High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. This will be an opportunity not to be missed to inject indigenous issues and concerns within this debate at the highest level possible. Additionally, we must not overlook the awakening of indigenous movements in many countries as the recent political and social developments of Latin America have indicated. These trends encourage us to pursue this discussion at a time when greater understanding and awareness of these issues is critical.

This expert workshop is also particularly meaningful for IOM as the nexus between indigenous peoples and migration has not received sufficient attention by the international community. There is a broad intersection of issues which affects both migrants and indigenous peoples – mainly social marginalization, exclusion and discrimination, but there are also the issues of human rights, legislation and policies, development, urbanization, displacement, cultural identities and traditional ways of living, trafficking, labour migration, smuggling, health dimensions, internal migration, gender and poverty - to name but a few of the most significant ones. Also, many questions come to mind some of which are: Do specific patterns or characteristics exist in the migration of indigenous peoples? If so, what are they? What is the behaviour of indigenous women vis-à-vis migration? How are they affected by migration?

Challenges faced by migrants may be magnified for indigenous peoples because indigenous migrants have characteristics of their own which need to be taken into account, and this is seldom done. What we want to explore at this workshop are both the social costs of migration on indigenous peoples as well as the potential development benefits. How can these be maximized while minimizing the adverse impacts of migration?

Also, indigenous populations' own community-based organizations can and should become further engaged in the migration discourse, including in

exploring and promoting the link between development and migration. For instance, the community organization of many indigenous peoples may help cultivate the impact of remittances throughout the whole community from their internal or international migrants. Additionally, the value put on their organization may also aid in the transfer of skills circulating throughout the entire community.

To advance the development of indigenous peoples, we must heed the objectives of the Programme of Action of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples which includes action-oriented proposals in the areas of culture, education, health, human rights, the environment, and social and economic development. These objectives include policies at the international, regional and national levels not only aimed at promoting non-discrimination and respect for human rights but also to fostering the inclusion of indigenous peoples in processes regarding laws, policies, resources, programmes and projects. Development programmes and policies should go beyond the respect for indigenous peoples' cultural integrity to also include the promotion of their full and effective participation in decisions that may affect their lifestyles and livelihoods.

Some of our IOM field missions have been well advanced in their work with indigenous communities. For example, IOM Colombia -- and we have the good fortune of their expertise at this workshop -- has engaged in many activities and projects benefiting the indigenous peoples in Colombia while keeping a focus on one of the key objectives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Decade -- namely, to redefine development policies that are culturally appropriate, including respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous peoples.

At its third session in May 2004, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recommended launching a new initiative, to include IOM and other stakeholders, to address issues relating to the large number of indigenous migrants within and beyond national borders and the particular vulnerability of indigenous women migrants, as well as the lack of adequate data on and attention to their problems. In response to this recommendation, IOM is pleased to host this expert workshop where we hope to have significant input for the Fifth Session of the Permanent Forum next month at UN headquarters. Identifying the challenges and responses thereto while also exploring avenues of cooperation amongst UN agencies, organizations and indigenous communities are necessary steps to be taken in fully exploring the nexus of indigenous peoples and migration.

I thank you all again for your participation in this expert meeting and look forward to an engaging and enlightening dialogue to meet the challenges ahead.