



PHILIPPINES

Please check against delivery

CHARTING THE COURSE OF MIGRATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATION

**Statement by
Hon. Arturo D. Brion
Secretary of Labor and Employment
UN High Level Dialogue of International
Migration and Development
14 September 2006**

Madame President:

The Philippines extends its warmest congratulations on your election as President of the United Nations General Assembly. We are confident that this meeting shall successfully achieve its goals and objectives through your wise and able leadership.

Allow me too to commend the Secretary General and the Secretariat for the comprehensive report on International Migration and Development. Migrants' increasingly significant contributions to their families, their communities and to both the sending and receiving states demonstrate the need to take them into account in any discussion of development.

Madame President:

The Philippines has more than 8 million Filipinos overseas — 8 million reasons for me to stand before you in behalf of my country today to support the convening of this high-level dialogue.

PHILIPPINE MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

556 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10036 • TEL. (212) 764-1300 • FAX (212) 840-8602 1

MIGRATION AS FAMILIAR GROUND FOR RP

Madame President:

International migration in the sense that it is happening today is a familiar experience for the Philippines.

We first launched the Philippine overseas employment program in 1974 as a conveniently available measure to ease our country's high unemployment and foreign exchange problems.

Over the years, we found that it is more than a transient strategy that we should nurture; we discovered that it is a national strategy that can have profound effects on our people's lives, our economy, and those of the countries receiving our workers. Thus, contract migration evolved for us into an endeavor characterized by protection for our overseas workers, the families they leave behind, and concern for the receiving countries hosting our workers.

DOMESTIC LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK ON OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT

The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 8042) – our principal law on migration - defines our migration policies and provides the institutional and legal framework for Filipino overseas employment.

It is characterized firstly by protection for the worker by providing regulation for the minimum terms for Filipino overseas work; for the regulation of the process of overseas deployment; for stiff penalties for illegal recruiters as well as legal protection for victims of illegal recruitment; and for on-site protection through our embassies and consulates.

This law requires the use of orientation seminars for workers to fully inform them of the realities of contract migration for them and for their families back home. These seminars also aim to ensure the migrants' adaptation to the host countries' culture and norms so they can avoid being burdens while at their foreign work.

A last measure of protection is through the reintegration programs we provide for returning workers. These programs give them the chance to readjust to the home country upon their return, and to enjoy the fruits of their foreign labor to the fullest. We provide reintegration measures too in emergency situations when we evacuate or repatriate our nationals as we have been doing in Lebanon in the recent past with the help of the IOM to whom the Philippine government and all Filipinos are very thankful.

ADDRESSING THE EVOLVING ISSUES OF MIGRATION

Madame President:

Migration, in the current sense of massive movements of people across borders, by its very nature gives rise to complicated issues that go beyond the mere hosting of foreign nationals within one's borders. It is a complex phenomenon involving the possibility of conflicts in the political, economic, social, cultural and demographic spheres for the countries of origin, transit and destination. Thus, its management, even in the best of times, is a complex matter.

A significant step in addressing these complex issues is to view them positively — i.e., that migration, whether inflow or outflow, is dictated by a country's needs and the satisfaction of these needs is sufficient motive for countries participating in migration parties to cooperate. Where needs can be satisfied so that potentials for gain exist, reason dictates that countries should communicate and cooperate with each other to spread and share the adjustment pains and thus achieve maximized gains for everyone.

HARNESSING MIGRATION AS TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Madame President:

Another significant step is to view migration and the cooperation that its handling requires from the prism of development.

The development of any nation requires assets and resources and their effective use. In migration, people and their skills are the assets that result in productive gain. These are the assets that receiving nations utilize for their economic activities. These are the same assets that earn the remittances

the home country receives from its overseas nationals, and the very same assets that generate the brain gain migrants use in their home country after working overseas.

In these lights, both the countries of origin and destination benefit and have every reason to continuously nurture and replenish their common asset - the migrant workers' skills.

For migrants and their countries to reap the fullest benefits from migrants' remittances, the flow of these funds must be facilitated, i.e. rendered cheaper and more affordable, as well as faster and safer. This is another area where cooperation between the sending and receiving countries is acutely needed and will go a long way in furthering development.

The return for good of temporary migrants to their home country saves the receiving country the trouble of providing for residents with less than full economic utility, and is thus a gain for the receiving country. The latter should thus encourage this one-way trip by helping the sending country who absorbs all the burden of providing for its elderly and previously productive nationals. This help can best come by contributing to the sending country's reintegration efforts.

HUMAN RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

Madame President:

Because migration involves relationships between and among individuals and nations, it must rest on principled foundations to ensure its smooth, safe and orderly flow. One of these principles should be the protection of the human rights of individuals. Only with such foundation, cemented by the principles of fairness and equity, can governments maximize the productive capacity of individuals and earn for themselves the full developmental effects of migration.

These foundations can only be maintained too under a rule of law for no relationship of any kind can fruitfully subsist without rules of reason acceptable to all. To this end, the Philippines encourages all States to consider ratifying and taking measures to effectively implement existing legal instruments affecting migration, the rights of migrants, and the assistance the family of nations should give them.

Madame President:

Our experience tells us that among migrants, some are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, discrimination, and are easy prey to the crimes of trafficking and smuggling of persons. I refer to women and children who are already special concerns of specialized agencies of the UN. The Philippines proposes that further and added attention be given to them as vulnerable migrants needing focused universal support.

SUSTAINING THE POLITICAL MOMENTUM

Madame President:

I close my statement with the hope that the political momentum generated by this high level dialogue will lead to the critical mass of support for the establishment of a forum or an appropriate mechanism for the regular discussion and exchange of ideas and the enhanced cooperation among governments, civil society and all stakeholders on migration and its vast developmental potentials.

THE HUMAN FACE OF MIGRATION

Madame President:

I close this statement too on the reiterative note that migration is about human beings who uproot themselves from their familiar surroundings to venture and grope their way into the strange and unfamiliar. This is the human face of migration that we should all consider above everything else as we examine its multidimensional aspects.

Thank you for your kind attention.