



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
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STATEMENT

BY

MS MICHELE KLEIN SOLOMON

PERMANENT OBSERVER

**AT THE 66TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AGENDA ITEM 28: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN**

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Constituting nearly half of today's 214 million international migrants, women increasingly move on their own. Often women move to expand their livelihood opportunities as the principal wage earners for their families, making decisions that empower them and society as a whole.

At the same time, women migrants face dual vulnerabilities as women and as migrants. They are more exposed than men to the risk of exploitation and gender based violence.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), as the principal intergovernmental organization working on migration, strongly believes that migration can be an empowering experience for women, provided that the circumstances of the migration, the status of the female worker and the policies in countries of origin, transit and destination uphold the principle of safe and legal migration.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the Secretary-General's Reports in connection with this item and would like to comment briefly on three of them.

First, we took particular note of the Report on Violence against Women Migrant Workers (A/66/212) and its recognition of our efforts in this area.

We welcome the Report's emphasis on the protection needs of women migrant workers who frequently face difficult living and working conditions, increased health risks and a lack of access to social services.

As the Report notes, the ILO Convention on Domestic Work has also focused attention on migrant women, who work in gender segregated areas such as home, child and elder

Permanent Observer to the United Nations

122 East 42nd Street • Chanin Building • 48th Floor • New York, NY 10168-1610
Tel: (212) 681-7000 • Fax: (212) 867-5887 • E-mail: unobserver@iom.int • Internet: www.iom.int

care. The unregulated and informal nature of their employment and their limited access to support networks continues to offer them little or no protection from possible exploitation or abuse.

Gender sensitive migration policies are essential to promote the legal and safe migration of women migrant workers, including women domestic workers, while also protecting human rights. Fostering interstate dialogue and enhancing bilateral, regional, interregional and international cooperation is a key component of such policies.

Second, with respect to the Secretary-General's Report on the Status of the CEDAW (A/66/99), IOM seeks to advance efforts towards fulfilling CEDAW General Recommendation 26 on Women Migrant Workers by ensuring migrant women are identified and supported by all IOM projects and services in order to ensure respect for their rights. Migration management policies that incorporate gender components help address the issue of discrimination against migrant women to ensure respect for their rights, regardless of their status, and ensure their protection from violence and exploitation.

Third, we turn to the special situation of rural women.

As stated in the Secretary-General's Report on Rural Women (A/66/181), women's responsibilities and roles may increase as a result of men migrating. In such cases, women not only have to shoulder domestic roles, but are additionally required to perform agricultural and other income-generating duties.

Moreover, rural women wishing to migrate often have limited access to information about legal migration opportunities, thereby increasing their vulnerability to unregulated recruitment agencies and smugglers.

We welcome the theme of the 2012 Commission on the Status of Women and look forward to discussions about the special situation of rural migrant women there.

Mr. Chairman,

As we work towards women's advancement, it is important to include consideration of migrant women in national development strategies and programs. Through their personal initiative and sacrifice, women migrants better their own lives and those of their families, and, by doing so, contribute to social and economic development.

Thank you.