



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

STATEMENT

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AT THE
FORTIETH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

**Agenda Item 4: General debate on national experience in
population matters: the changing age structures of populations
and their implications for development**

New York, 10 April 2007

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) welcomes this opportunity to take the floor today, to speak about the changing age structures of populations and their implications for development.

The changing nature of demographics is ever more visible. Rapidly ageing populations and falling birthrates characterize nearly all industrialized countries, while in the 50 least developed countries we see continuous rapid population growth and an overabundance of young job seekers. The Secretary-General's reports on these themes clearly illustrate the impacts of these changing demographics on societies and the need to incorporate key demographic trends into the international development agenda and national development strategies.

Mr. Chairman,

IOM shares the views of DESA, as set forth in the *World Population Policies 2005* report, that migration is increasingly intersecting with national concerns about low fertility and population ageing, unemployment, human rights and citizen rights, social integration, xenophobia and national security. These concerns, separately and together, have led over the course of the past few years to a major re-examination of international migration policies and to far greater attention being paid to the potential benefits and disadvantages accruing to origin and destination countries.

In order for international migration to respond to these challenges, migration practices must reflect broad and far-sighted policies. In our globalized world, we have managed to free the movement of goods, services and capital, but migration policies have not progressed at the same pace; indeed, in many instances, they have become more restrictive. The need for a readjustment of these policies is beginning to emerge, even if often it is only from a temporary labour migration perspective. However, we should not overlook how international migration can have long-lasting, potentially positive effects on countries where there is labour force demand as well as those countries which have an abundance of workers. International migration can inject a vibrant and educated workforce in countries that need them, and can ease economic tensions by helping to sustain pension systems. For countries of origin, the migration of their workers can relieve unemployment pressures. Additionally, sizeable benefits arise from

remittances and from the transfer and circulation of skills from overseas diasporas, both phenomena helping to reduce poverty levels. The Secretary-General's reports highlight how some governments are reconsidering the role of international migration in responding to these challenges. Many are admitting - either on a temporary or permanent basis - both skilled and unskilled migrants, and in parallel are taking more proactive measures to promote the socio-economic integration of these migrants.

Mr. Chairman,

Ageing populations also demand particular labour intensive care and assistance that may not be available when birthrates are falling and the work force is declining. When the labour demands of caring for an elderly population can not be met from domestic sources, immigration can be part of the solution. However, to be effective in meeting these specific labour demands and to ensure a safe and humane labour mobility process, proper migration management policies need to be in place. The risks of irregular migration, particularly trafficking and smuggling, are high when migration policies do not reflect real labour market needs and real-world migratory patterns.

Mr. Chairman,

For migration to serve as a resource for addressing some of the effects of ageing populations, it needs to be effectively managed. Effectively managed not only to provide the required labour needed, but also to do so via an orderly and principled migration process which will reduce the vulnerability of migrants throughout the migration cycle. A number of countries have already established bilateral agreements to facilitate and match labour demand and supply. Such agreements are a step towards ensuring a safe migration process. IOM is also working with governments and intergovernmental partners – in the latter case, in the context of the Global Migration Group (GMG) – to develop mutually beneficial migration frameworks. We certainly stand ready to offer further support and assistance wherever needed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.