



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

STATEMENT

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Agenda Item 4: General debate on national experience in population matters: contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals

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Madam. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) I would like to convey our appreciation for the opportunity to address this forty-second session of the Commission and highlight a few areas where the attention and the contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) to the internationally agreed development goals seems as relevant as it was 15 years ago.

In 1994 in Cairo, the international community sought for the first time to develop a comprehensive blueprint for managing migration within a broad development framework. Chapter X of the Programme of Action mapped out a series of policy directions covering, inter alia, the rights of migrants and their integration into host society, the development of orderly migration programs, the prevention of trafficking in migrants, the reduction of irregular and undocumented migration, better protection of IDPs and refugees, the promotion of the development potential of migration and the need for cooperation between countries in successfully and comprehensively managing migration. Even though at that time the stock of international migrants was estimated to be just over 125 million and our collective and global appreciation for the relevance of international migration was undoubtedly not as developed and sophisticated as it is now, the nexus between migration and development in a number of areas had already been fully identified; and it is not rhetoric to say that many of the objectives set forth in the PoA remain the goals of today. Increasingly, efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs and the ICPD PoA embrace migration as a development force, not a development failure, and governments and other actors are focusing attention on how to maximize development benefits of migration.

Madam Chair,

Concerning international migration, the global development agenda including the MDGs builds on the contribution of the ICPD PoA in at least the following four areas, 1) the inter-linkages between migration and poverty eradication; 2) the impact of climate change on population mobility and the relevance of migration in the context of mitigation and adaptation strategies; 3) the links between gender equality and migration in terms of the contribution of migration to the empowerment of women as well as the special challenges posed to gender equality by migration; and, 4) the link of migration to health.

On this latter matter Mr. President I would like to make a few considerations that may be of relevance in the context of this debate.

Health is at the heart of the MDGs. Goals 4,5, and 6 specifically focus on health but in fact all others have health components as well, and achieving them will require, amongst other factors, gender equality and empowerment of women .

The MDGs are an important way to ensure that globalization benefits are evenly spread and shared. However, certain migrant populations form part of those populations for whom the MDGs have not implied enough progress. Migrant women and girls, especially those who are forced to migrate or are in an irregular situation, are disproportionately affected by the risks associated with migration because of their

vulnerability to exploitation and violence. Their vulnerability is exacerbated to unacceptable levels by the lack of access to appropriate maternal and child health services in particular, which can have a long term public and social cost.

Studies show that lack of legal status, while increasing irregular migrant women's risk to violence and sexual assault also reduces their access to prenatal care. This is particularly worrying given that irregular migrant women may be at a higher risk of experiencing unwanted pregnancies due to lack of access to family planning services and education as well as the result of sexual violence. Even if reproductive health services are available, many may not access them out of fear for deportation or because they are not available in culturally or linguistically appropriate ways.

For women displaced by force, their high vulnerability to violence, the lack of shelter, food and sanitation, and the often absence of basic health services can pose an enormous burden and risk on their health and the health of their children.

Progress in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity and other health components of the MDGs, depends on stronger health systems and implies better access to and use of reproductive health services for all groups in society. The values of primary health care, such as promoting universal access in support of equity, offer a framework for making more rapid progress towards the MDGs.

Migration hosting communities the world over need to provide accessible, acceptable and affordable maternal and child health services, as a cornerstone of primary health care, to all migrant women, irrespective of their legal status. Health systems need to take into account the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural characteristics of today's countries and communities. Effectively achieving health-related MDGs will require equal access to health services to marginalized populations such as certain migrant groups. Addressing health needs of migrant women and girls does not only benefit their individual health but also the general public's health and public good. At this time the current global financial crisis has the potential to undermine the social protection of vulnerable groups, including migrants. Paramount in this context is the careful monitoring of the impact of the financial crisis on migrants, to ensure that the rights of migrants are effectively upheld, and that migrants are protected from discrimination in the employment and social spheres.

Madam Chair,

A strong degree of solidarity between countries of origin and destination is called for to safeguard and continue to harness the benefits flowing from the migration and development relationship as well as to migrants and their families. By facilitating technical cooperation and exchange of good practices on integration, IOM participates in the wider effort to ensure that the economic crisis does not translate into even harsher living conditions for migrants, with limited access to social and health services, and helps reducing tensions and facilitating social inclusiveness.

Thank you.