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Statement by

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Mr. Chairperson

Switzerland would like to thank the Secretary General for his informative and comprehensive reports on international migration and development. Indeed, international migration flows not only bring complex challenges, they also present us with opportunities to further the aims of development.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was the first global conference to embrace migration as a development force rather than a development failure. The ICPD Program of Action remains highly relevant and Switzerland reaffirms its commitment to achieve its goals.

Moreover Switzerland encourages all efforts by the UN secretariat, the World Bank, OECD and others to further improve the coverage and comparability of data on migration flows and stocks as well as on their development impact.

Various reports by the UN population division show that international migration is rising. This trend can also be seen in Switzerland.

Relative to its size, Switzerland is an important migration country. We owe much of our economic growth and welfare to the contribution of migrants. Almost a quarter of the Swiss Population are foreign born. About 11% of Swiss nationals are naturalized citizens and 9% have dual citizenship.

Since 1999, net migration has been the main driver of population growth, although most migration is not permanent and return migration to countries of origin is frequent. Inflows of young migrants and outflows of elderly migrants have had a rejuvenating effect on the rapidly ageing Swiss population.

Since the end of the 1990s, the implementation of the "free movement of persons"-policy between Switzerland and the European Union has brought a strong increase of highly skilled immigrants, while regular immigration from developing countries declined. Nevertheless the share of migrants from developing countries reached 17% in 2004. The number of asylum seekers has declined from a peak of over 40,000 per

year in the mid-1990s to approximately 10,000 per year today. The annual recognition rate of refugees is relatively stable at approximately 10%.

Moreover the skill level of immigrants to Switzerland has changed in the last years. Today, 50% of all newcomers are highly skilled migrants, mainly from developed countries but - to a lesser degree – also from developing countries. This shift is – inter alia – linked to the phasing out of the seasonal workers program which brought many low qualified migrants to Switzerland.

The integration of long term migrants in the Swiss society has proved to be successful. Many descendants of migrants are “over-performers” with high upward mobility. Spatial segregation of immigrants in the metropolitan areas of Switzerland remains low. However, major integration challenges exist, such as the better integration of certain migrant groups in the labour market. Switzerland has recently changed its legislative framework to strengthen integration policies.

Cultural differences, relating to the concept of the family, gender roles, religious practices, the knowledge and use of languages, remain a challenge. They call for adapted institutional and legal frameworks to prevent discrimination and racism, safeguard human rights and ensure respect for diversity. Switzerland has taken specific steps in the fields of education and health to support training of migrants. The federal state has a multi-year strategy on “migration and health” with a special focus on culturally sensitive health services, including sexual and reproductive health, the prevention of HIV/AIDS and support to victims of abuse and torture.

Special attention is also paid to female migrants. Women are crucial to the development of a country and migration can be an empowering experience, providing them with opportunities to become both socially and financially independent. However, migrant women also bear specific risks of discrimination and exploitation. Switzerland therefore actively combats the negative features of migration, particularly the trafficking and smuggling of women.

Besides its national activities, Switzerland has also shown a strong commitment at the multilateral level. Launched in 2001, the Berne Initiative led to the drafting of the International Agenda for Migration Management, an instrument listing common understandings and effective practices in the field of migration management. In

addition, Switzerland, together with Brazil, Morocco, the Philippines and Sweden, was one of the five countries to initiate the Global Commission on International Migration.

At the bilateral level, the search for more comprehensive migration management strategies led to the development of the concept of “migration partnerships”. Migration partnerships place migration management in the larger context of development and good governance. They also seek to balance conflicting interests between states and communities on both sides of the migration chain, including transit areas.

Switzerland has developed projects to help migrants returning to their home countries to find jobs and/or receive financial assistance. We have also sponsored job creation programs. More recently, we have been looking into ways to reduce the wire transfer costs of remittances and optimize the developmental impact that such remittances have on local communities and more generally on the reduction of poverty. Special attention is paid to financial services, micro-credit systems and linkages with macroeconomic policies. The role of migrant diasporas as a bridge to recipient regions is increasingly recognized by the Swiss authorities.

Mr. Chairperson

Dialogue, partnership and the balancing of interests are key to improved migration management at the international level. However, we also need a coordinated and coherent approach at all levels involving all relevant players within the UN System and other international organizations. In this sense, we reaffirm our commitment to the ICPD Program of Action, the Millennium Declaration as well as the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, all of which stress the importance of using migration to further the aims of development. In view of the upcoming High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, Switzerland believes that the Population and Development Commission has a particular responsibility in building consensus on how these challenges can be dealt with. We are therefore looking forward to the upcoming discussions

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson