



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

STATEMENT

BY
MR. LUCA DALL'OGLIO
PERMANENT OBSERVER

AT THE
FORTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

**Agenda Item 4: General debate on national experience in
population matters: population distribution, urbanization,
internal migration and development**

New York, 8 April 2008

Check against delivery

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

The topic of this 41st session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) offers an opportunity to take collective stock and review the progress made in achieving the goals and objectives on population and development set in the outcomes of major United Nations summits and conferences, especially as laid out in Chapter IX, Population Distribution, Urbanization and Internal Migration of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) welcomes the opportunity to make a brief intervention under this agenda item, noting the rapidly growing acknowledgment of the importance of migration in any discussion of population and development as the relevance of the UNGA High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development of 2006 and its on-going follow up has amply demonstrated.

Since the Cairo Conference, the social and demographic trends already in motion 14 years ago have further accelerated, and as predicted, in 2008 and for the first time in history, half of the world population is estimated to live in urban areas, with internal rural-urban migration accounting for a varying but important proportion of this urban growth. Thus, the identification of this year's topics could have not been more appropriate and we congratulate the Secretariat for the insightful and stimulating reports prepared for this meeting.

An analysis of the Cairo Programme of Action (PoA) related to internal migration points up both progress and elements of discontinuity. Concerning internal population movements stemming from environmental degradation, complex emergencies, natural disasters and conflict, the objective of the PoA was to offer adequate protection and assistance to persons displaced within their own countries, particularly women, children and the elderly, and to find solutions to the root causes of their displacement, with a view to preventing it in the future, and to facilitate their return or resettlement. Since 1994, and while in certain situations the national and international responses have unfortunately remained painfully inadequate, the international normative framework has been considerably improved by such steps as the publication of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in 1998. These constitute a comprehensive attempt to deal with every aspect and phase of internal displacement and – significantly – in 2005, the UN World Summit recognized the “Guiding Principles” as an important international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons.

In parallel to this process, modalities to address operational challenges have also evolved significantly, with the proposition of a “cluster approach” as a way of strengthening the effectiveness of humanitarian response to internal displacement through building partnerships between national and international actors; an approach in which IOM is deeply involved and committed.

Beyond the response to these crises however, and while international focus on the social consequences of climate change and environmental degradation has increased over the past few years, the impact of gradual environmental degradation on human mobility is

still largely under-researched and continues to require far more attention from policy-makers and other stakeholders. As early as 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had noted that “the greatest single impact of climate change could be on human migration – with millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption”.

Climate processes may induce both large internal and international migration flows. Though occurring over a long period of time, land degradation, desertification, deforestation and rising sea levels, to name just a few, may become irreversible and inhabitants at risk may be pushed to migrate, adding further stress on urban infrastructures and creating additional vulnerabilities. Mass environmental migration can also fuel new or reignite existing conflicts, creating tensions and competition between the host and displaced communities for already scarce resources. In order to advance this debate, IOM, jointly with UN organizations such as the United Nations University’s Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and UNEP is launching a multi-disciplinary program “Towards a Global agenda for research on migration and the environment” to define the research agenda on environmental migration. In addition, as part of the Migration and Development Policy Seminar series, IOM along with UNITAR, UNFPA and the MacArthur Foundation will hold a seminar on “climate change, environmental degradation and migration” on May 9th, at United Nations headquarters, open to all Permanent Missions.

Mr. Chairman,

In recent years internal migration has also been recognized as important as international migration in terms of its impact on both social and economic development. Though the term migration has become synonymous with international migration, in many countries, internal migration actually has far more impact both in terms of the numbers of people involved and the resulting flow of remittances: China for example, has well over 125 million internal rural-to-urban migrants, a majority of whom are circular rural-urban migrants who retain strong links with their rural family. Due to phenomena such as the above, the negative perception about internal migration has increasingly been altered over the past decade and the contribution of rural migrants to rural income growth, rural poverty reduction as well as urban social and economic development is becoming more widely recognized. Further, internal and international migration share many similarities and challenges, such as those that have been termed social and financial remittances. Some of these may have significant impact on development, while others may be neutral or even detrimental in their effects. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman IOM continues to provide technical cooperation to ensure that the expertise gained in the governance of international migration can be applied when applicable to internal flows and to ensure that such flows are recognized as an important factor in development and taken into account in the design of national development and poverty reduction strategies.

Thank you for your attention.