



Check against Delivery

Statement by

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on the

**Report of the Secretary-General on
Monitoring of Population Programmes, Focusing
on International Migration and Development
(E/CN.9/2006/4)**

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Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the Report of the Secretary-General on *Monitoring of Population Programmes, Focusing on International Migration and Development* (E/CN.9/2006/4). The document has been prepared in response to the decision 2004/1 of the Commission on Population and Development that international migration and development should be the special theme for the thirty-ninth session of the Commission.

The Report looks at international migration in the broader context of development and poverty eradication. It seeks to ascertain the extent to which migration can facilitate or otherwise impede development processes in both sending and receiving countries as well as the drive behind cross-border movements and their impact on the individual migrants themselves including female and young migrants. It puts forward policy considerations to facilitate mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties concerned including countries of origin, transit countries and countries of destination as well as the migrants and the host communities.

Mr. Chairman,

International migration has become a global issue and must be a central part of the global development agenda. It was one of the more important issues to emerge from the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and it has been on the agenda of every major international conference ever since. Today, migration affects almost every country in the world, either as point of origin, transit or destination, and often, all three at once. With the decline in fertility in some parts of the world, the sustained ageing process, and the significant change of population structure, migration has taken on increased significance, becoming an important component of population growth, in many countries. In addition, increasing migrant flows have resulted in growing international attention to such complex issues as xenophobia, discrimination, racism, human trafficking, human rights of migrants, and most recently, terrorism and national security.

Of particular significance is the increased number of female migrants. Women are no longer passive players accompanying husbands or other family members; they are playing an increasing role in international migration, accounting for about half of all migrants. Many women migrants, however, still tend to be concentrated in gender-segregated and unregulated sectors of the economy and can therefore be at greater risk of discrimination, violence and abuse.

Mr. Chairman,

The Report focuses in particular on the impact of a range of migration issues on development such as the brain drain, remittances, the diaspora, and return migration.

Brain drain

Much migration dialogue centers on the flight of highly educated and highly skilled segments of the population which drains developing nations of much-needed talent and hinders development efforts. The increasing demand for skilled migrants in receiving countries together with push factors in countries of origin, particularly the limited scope of economic investments and the lack of job opportunities, have driven increasing numbers of highly skilled workers abroad: first on a temporary basis, yet gradually turning into medium to long term migration projects. For instance, a number of developing countries are experiencing serious deficits in the health-care system because of the emigration of doctors, nurses and other health personnel.

By contrast, attention is being paid more recently to the positive impacts that skilled migration can have on areas of origin. Skilled migrant workers and students can potentially contribute to development in their home countries in a number of ways – when they return home, when they circulate between the home and host country, when they send back remittances, and when they are part of the diaspora networks that are vehicles for social, cultural and information exchange.

Remittances

Remittances represent a significant amount of capital sent from developed to developing countries on a regular basis. In many recipient countries, migrant remittances increasingly play an important role in sustaining national and local economies. If transfers that go through informal channels are added to the official statistics, remittances could be as high as \$300 billion. They are larger than official development assistance (ODA) and more than foreign direct investment (FDI) in some countries.

Financial remittances can help lift families and communities out of poverty, enable family members to receive more education and training, and provide a source of capital for the establishment of small businesses. Indeed, in some countries, remittances have reached over 10 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). In addition to financial remittances, migration has also been a critical vehicle for transmitting “social remittances” including new ideas, products, technology, information, and life style often bridging cultural and ethnic gaps and facilitating dialogue among peoples and civilizations.

Diasporas

Diasporas are important instruments for promoting development, economic opportunities, and social and political change in countries of origin. The social networks that link sending and receiving countries are significant vehicles for the transmission of resources, information, goods, and ideas. Diasporas have potential to re-shape individual and social preferences, behaviours and expectations.

Return migration

It is interesting to note that, contrary to popular belief, many migrants wish to return to their homeland. The reason many of them do not return is that the potential for circular migration has not been fully tapped and return is often constrained by policies in destination countries that make frequent returns difficult. Many expatriates are interested in eventually returning home and many low-skilled workers would prefer to maintain a regular pattern of circular migration.

Policies to address the challenges of international migration

Mr. Chairman,

The Report highlights many policies and programmes that can contribute positively to the development of countries of origin, maximize the benefits and minimize the negative consequences of migration: for instance, facilitating and removing obstacles to return, facilitating the establishment of diaspora organizations and encouraging ties with home communities, encouraging the maintenance of cultural traditions and native language, facilitating the sending of remittances, and making pensions and other entitlements more portable.

The gender dimension and gender equality, however, should be an integral part of any policy formulation, planning, programme delivery and monitoring. Since women migrants are more at risk of discrimination and abuse, it is important to ensure that the relevant institutions, legal provisions and mechanisms are in place to protect their human rights and ensure that they have equal access to legal, social and health services.

Sound migration policies and effective programmes require adequate and reliable migration data and country capacity to respond to the challenges of migration. They also require cooperation, coordination and dialogue between countries of origin and destination.

Mr. Chairman,

In summary, notwithstanding its complexities, international migration is a manageable human phenomenon and is a drive that has considerable potential to enhance human dignity, contribute to social and economic development and promote dialogue among nations.

Thank you