



Check against Delivery

**United Nations Commission on
Population and Development**

International Migration and Development

Statement

by

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the opening of this thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Let me begin, Mr. Chairman, by commending you and the members of your Bureau on your work to prepare this session of the CPD. And let me say that we at UNFPA look forward to working closely with Member States on the issues before the Commission. We also look forward to strengthening our collaboration with the Population Division. The Population Division is a leader in demographic analysis and we at UNFPA make good use of this when we review the status of countries and when we meet with governments to discuss policies and programmes. This is a very concrete example of the normative work that is undertaken by the Department of Economic and Social Analysis informing the operational work of UNFPA.

All of us in this room understand that demography is important for development. It is important because behind each demographic figure are *real* figures—individual men and women going about their everyday lives. And it is this human element—with a focus on human rights and human dignity—that lies at the heart of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Mr. Chairman,

It continues to be a privilege for me and my colleagues to work closely with Member States through the Commission on Population and Development to review the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Today I would like to focus on two issues, for which reports have been submitted to the Commission, international migration and development; and the flow of financial resources for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Let me begin by focusing on international migration.

International migration brings to the surface the need for greater understanding and dialogue, for vision and leadership that rises above fear and focuses on our common humanity.

Perhaps more than any other issue, migration puts into stark relief the enormous social, political, economic and cultural transformations now occurring in a world divided between excess and need. The international migration landscape has changed dramatically over the last decade. Growing gaps between rich and poor, an expanded global economy, geopolitical transformations, wars, ecological disasters and other occurrences have had a profound impact on people and their desire to leave their homeland.

The issue of international migration is of critical importance to the United Nations system and to multilateralism as a whole. It represents a test of the world's response to globalization—a world where borders are increasingly *open* for the flow of capital, goods and information and *closed* to the free flow of people.

Yet, despite the obstacles, people continue to move. Most of the time their motivation is simple—they want a better life for themselves and their families. Whether they are fleeing poverty, a degraded environment, conflict or human rights violations, they see migration as a hopeful way to change their lives to the better.

During the last 50 years, the number of international migrants has more than doubled to 200 million. Today more people live outside their home country than at any other time in history. And this mass movement of people is changing not only *how* we live but also *who* we perceive ourselves and “The Other” to be.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration is a development issue and there is a need to build and strengthen capacity to meet the many challenges it poses. Migration can contribute to the important global agenda of reducing poverty and bringing people closer together. Policy options are available to maximize the benefits of immigration and minimize the risks. Today I would like to mention a few including facilitating the fair transfer of remittances, protecting the human rights of migrants, more forcefully addressing trafficking, and addressing the brain drain.

For industrialized countries, immigration offers a source of labour to ease the pressure brought by a declining population and a dwindling tax base. For developing nations, migration relieves unemployment and population pressure. And it is becoming increasingly clear that the remittances sent back home play a big role in reducing poverty—in funding the start of small businesses and keeping children in school. But transaction costs are still too high and remitters are at the mercy of predatory institutions and individuals. There is much that can be done by governments to maximize the proportion of remittances that get through and ensure the speed and security of the process.

Mr. Chairman,

Today women comprise almost half of the world's international migrants. And while some find increased autonomy and freedom, others are found in gender-segregated and unregulated sectors of the economy, at risk of gender discrimination, violence and abuse. In the worst cases, they become the victims of ruthless traffickers.

There is an urgent need to integrate gender and human rights into migration policies and for nations to work together to curb trafficking and bring traffickers to justice.

Another area of migration, which deserves greater attention and is tied to human rights, including the right to health, is the brain drain of health workers to industrialized nations. Today we see that many countries, particularly in Africa, are suffering from a severe shortage of doctors, nurses and other health workers who have migrated. This is particularly devastating for countries most affected by HIV/AIDS. This brain drain increases the likelihood that they will not meet development goals to improve maternal health, reduce child mortality and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The brain drain of health workers is an urgent issue that deserves an urgent response. It is also important to note that some countries that have become sending countries of health sector workers also become host countries for health workers from less prosperous countries. Botswana is such an example and I had the benefit of discussing this with the Minister of Health during a recent visit.

Among the policy suggestions that are raised include the responsibility of receiving countries to direct parts of their development assistance towards education and training in general and health sector workers in particular in countries from which they draw migrants. Other suggestions include dual nationality and the portability of social benefits.

Mr. Chairman,

International migration was one of the more important issues to emerge from the International Conference on Population and Development. In Cairo, leaders called for a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of migration, especially those related to poverty, for more cooperation and dialogue between countries, for the protection of the human rights of migrants, and for the active facilitation of the reintegration of returning migrants.

These recommendations remain valid, and UNFPA is committed to working with governments and other partners to make greater progress in these areas. We are working with partners to facilitate dialogue, cooperation and collaboration through regional consultations; to advocate the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants, including the right to sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality; and to strengthen the knowledge base and data on migration so that policies respond to realities on the ground.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to turn now to the issue of financial flows for the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. The good news is that the flow of resources for population assistance is on the rise. Donor assistance has doubled in the past five years and domestic expenditures have also risen.

However, I would like to caution that current funding levels are not sufficient to meet current needs. It is also worth noting that the majority of resources are mobilized by a few major donors, and there has been a pronounced shift towards funding for HIV/AIDS at the expense of other vital population activities. During the past decade, funding for

international family planning has dropped from more than half of all spending on population assistance to less than 10 per cent. This has real implications for women and their ability to exercise their human rights and plan their families. It is a serious problem that needs to be urgently addressed because today there are 200 million women in the developing world with unmet need for contraception. Without these vital services, the numbers of unwanted pregnancies and abortions will continue to climb, putting the lives of women and children at risk.

Today the highest unmet need for family planning is in sub-Saharan Africa, where one in four married women want to use family planning but have no access to these services. I would also like to point out that these are the same countries with the highest rates of poverty and population growth, factors that often lead people to migrate. The point I want to make is that there is a connection between financial flows for population and migration flows. And the connection comes in part from the lack of choice that women face because of unmet need and their lack of ability to exercise their human rights, including the right to determine the number and spacing of their children.

Mr. Chairman,

It is vitally important that adequate resources are allocated to *all* areas of the ICPD costed population package because they are all interlinked and they reinforce each other. The challenge before the international community is to continue to mobilize the resources required to implement the ICPD agenda to meet current human needs and promote human rights. This is particularly important to achieve the Cairo goal of universal access to reproductive health by 2015. As you know, this goal was reaffirmed by Heads of State and Government at September's World Summit, where they committed themselves to, and I quote, "achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as set out at the International Conference on Population and Development, integrating this goal in strategies to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, aimed at reducing maternal mortality, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, promoting gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS and reducing poverty." End quote. Given this commitment by world leaders and the importance of reproductive health to the achievement of the MDGs, the issue of financial flows to implement the ICPD Programme of Action is extremely important and should figure prominently on the agenda of the Commission on Population and Development.

In closing, I would like to inform the members that UNFPA is proud to be a new member, along with the World Bank, UNDP and DESA, of the Global Migration Group. We are working within the Group to carry forward ICPD perspectives and recommendations. And we very much look forward to our discussions this week in the Commission on Population and Development and also to the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration this coming September. I would also like to note that our 2006 UNFPA State of World Population report, to be launched in September, focuses on women and migration. I thank you.