

**STATEMENT TO THE COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
(Thirty-ninth session)**

By

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates,

It is a pleasure to open this thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development, which will focus on international migration and development, one of the most crucial and challenging issues of our times.

Before I embark on that theme, let me note that this Commission has in its purview several key issues underscored by the 2005 World Summit. In fact, the Commission itself proved instrumental in highlighting the importance of combating HIV/AIDS to mitigate its detrimental effects on development. And in line with the Commission's view, the Summit stressed the importance of ensuring universal access to reproductive health for all. This goal was recognized as crucial not only to control the spread of HIV/AIDS but also to achieve gender equality and advance the status of women.

Over the years, the Commission on Population and Development has built a strong record of addressing difficult issues on the basis of solid factual analysis. Given the development challenges that we continue to face, it is perhaps more important than ever to ensure that policies and programmes to address them are firmly rooted in reliable evidence and objective analysis.

You meet at a time of wide-ranging UN reform, with the efforts on ECOSOC reform and UN system coherence having a direct bearing on your work. A reinvigorated ECOSOC could enable an effective integration of the work of its subsidiary bodies so as to guide and monitor the implementation of strategies to attain the development goals set by the United Nations Conferences and Summits. I hope, in particular, that the Council's Ministerial Reviews of implementation of the development goals will serve as a vehicle for promoting coherent development strategies based on the substantive work of the functional commissions. This intergovernmental process would complement the coordination efforts at the Secretariat level by the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA), which I chair. I am pleased to note that, through the activities of EC-ESA, the critical work of the regional commissions on specific areas of interest to this Commission will receive more attention in this session than in the past.

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Let me turn now to this session's special theme. With it, the Commission is excellently placed to make a major contribution to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which the General Assembly will conduct this September. Your deliberations during this session and its outcome will be key inputs for the Dialogue. Those deliberations can build not only on the documents prepared for this session, but also on the report of the Global Commission on International Migration released last October, as well as on the full set of recommendations on international migration and development made by the UN Conferences and Summits. A Compendium of Recommendations on International Migration and Development is available at the back of this room.

It is up to this Commission to set out the substantive foundation for the Dialogue, to ensure that the analysis presented makes the best possible use of the evidence available and to

continue to dispel the many commonly held myths about international migration. The Commission also has a special capacity to raise awareness about the existing—and significant—information gaps. Overcoming these gaps needs to be a top priority, for we all know that, without sound information, policy responses will most likely remain inadequate.

In considering the migration-development nexus, we must recall that migration is an integral part of the ongoing development of both sending and receiving countries, irrespective of their current development level. So our real subject here is international migration and *global* development, not only of economies but of *societies*, bearing in mind that the implications of international migration play out differently, depending on a country's stage of development and also other factors, such as size and location relative to the more dynamic economies.

From a global perspective, international migration has an overall positive impact on development. In theory, efficiencies flowing from a less restricted global exchange of labour should contribute to higher rates of world economic growth. Other positive, and not exclusively economic, consequences can be observed. Look, for example, at the enormous contribution of enterprising migrants to countries of destination, the growing importance of workers' remittances to countries of origin, and the social and cultural enrichment of both sending and receiving countries.

The economic, social and cultural benefits of migration depend crucially on safeguarding and ensuring the respect for the rights of migrants and their families. Indeed, to the extent that migrants can be exploited or abused with impunity, everyone loses: the migrants, the native workers that cannot compete with those who are paid exploitative wages, and the society that is tarnished by such exploitation and must confront the problems of marginalized populations. The success of migration hinges on respect by States and by migrants of their respective obligations and of the rule of law. It relies on the mutual adaptation of migrants and the receiving society. And it requires the unequivocal commitment of Governments to defend every person from the scourges of racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia.

There is much to gain from collaboration of countries of origin and destination to forge partnerships that foster the positive effects of migration and that promote migration through legal channels. This collaboration is all the more urgent because migration takes place today in a context of enormous demographic and economic disparities. Our best estimates indicate that migration from developing to high-income countries has been growing fast, and we expect this trend to continue over the medium-term.

One strategy that is widely recognized today for ensuring that migration contributes to the development of communities of origin is to leverage the impact of remittances by, for instance, providing access to financial services so that the families of migrants can secure credit to invest. Another is reducing the costs of remittance transfers, which is fortunately underway in a growing number of remittance corridors.

We should also continue experimenting with ways to promote the engagement of migrants abroad in the development of their home communities and countries. A variety of strategies are being tried: direct and financial investment by migrants in their countries of origin;

support by migrant associations to their communities of origin; the transfer of knowledge and know-how to countries of origin through networks of highly trained professionals, including through the internet; the growth of trade in ethnic goods that are consumed by communities of migrants living abroad; and the capacity-building that takes place in terms of human resources through return and circular migration flows.

Indeed, one of the major challenges related to migration today is the high mobility of the highly educated or skilled. The more that countries develop, the more they are in need of skilled workers. Yet developing countries also need persons with skills, particularly those involved in providing basic services, such as health and education, as well as in new dynamic activities associated with the spread of information and communications technology. To address the needs of developing countries in this respect will probably require a global approach to the formation of human capital, based on the principle of solidarity. Collaborative arrangements and partnerships to train required skilled personnel and to improve working conditions in home countries are urgently needed. Otherwise, the brain drain may continue to have an adverse effect on development in several developing countries in the coming decade.

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In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, migration is an integral part of development. The need for migrant workers will continue, if not increase, in the coming years, particularly in high-income countries. The world needs to understand what all of us here know to be true: that, in general, international migrants are enterprising individuals with much to contribute both to their host countries and to their countries of origin. If managed properly, international migration has been, is and will continue to be advantageous for both sending and receiving countries.

Clearly the time is ripe for a sober, frank and constructive discussion on international migration and its contribution to development for all, taking into account the interests of all stakeholders and seeking to promote greater collaboration among the parties involved. In fostering and guiding the direction of such collaboration, the Commission on Population and Development has an important and indispensable role to play. I wish you every success in your deliberations and look forward to a most productive outcome.