

**STATEMENT TO THE COMMISSION ON
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By

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates,

We estimate that there are at least 190 million migrants in the world and about half of them are women. Each one is a unique individual. There is no “typical” migrant. But their stories have much in common. For instance, a domestic worker in Hong Kong describes her migrant life as follows:

“At home, I had a good job as an administrator in a hospital. But I felt I needed to see more of the world. So, when the opportunity arose, I went to work in Kuwait in domestic service. I stayed there three years, went back home for a year and left again to work in Jordan as a caregiver. After returning home again, I found a job in Hong Kong. I have been here for ten years. I have a build a house and own a piece of land at home. But I do not want to return there yet. I have a role to play here, helping other young women working in domestic service. I am a community leader and I am proud of it.”

Or consider yet another migrant’s story:

“My father mortgaged his property to pay for my passage and tuition at a US university. While studying, I worked nights at a restaurant to pay rent and help with tuition. After graduation, I went back home to get married and returned to work in a chemical company. I had a good job, but I did not feel secure in it, so I looked for something else. With my savings, borrowing on my home and a loan from relatives, I bought a motel. My wife, brother and I worked very hard and doubled its profitability in two years. I could then buy a better property. Today, I own several hotels and have started a plastics company. My businesses employ 135 people. My net worth is in the millions. I intend to leave my son a one-hundred-million dollar industry.”

Mr. Chairman, these stories show what migrants bring to the global economy: hard work, courage, a willingness to take risks in order to succeed. And the benefits migrants may reap can be large. And as both cases illustrate, these benefits may go far beyond the migrants themselves. Migrants can and do engage in activities that help their compatriots and that can result in positive spinoffs for the economy.

Clearly, international migration today is one of the additives that makes the global economic machine perform better. And, as an “additive”, it generally improves human well-being. In fact, the World Bank has just shown that increasing the labour force of high-income countries by 3 per cent over 10 years via the addition of 14 million migrants would raise incomes for all, the natives of high-income countries, those of developing countries and the migrants themselves.

But migration not only improves economic outcomes, it is also part of the glue that ties societies together and that exposes the “us” to the “them” and, in the process, makes us all aware of the similarities that unite us, migrants and natives, and of all that we have in common. Although the process of mutual adaptation between host societies

and migrants may not always proceed smoothly, in the end, there is no doubt that migration enriches the social and cultural fabric of receiving societies.

Mr. Chairman,

We all know that most of today's migration arises because of disparities: economic, social, demographic. Average incomes in high-income countries are 15 times as high as those of middle-income countries and 60 times higher than those of low-income countries. So the potential gains from migration are very large. In addition, because developed countries are farther along the path to population ageing than the rest of the world, they are poised to see their working-age populations decline. Today, developed countries still have 14 persons ready to enter the labour force for every 10 persons likely to leave it, but in just ten years, there will only be 9 young persons aged 20-24 for every 10 persons aged 60-64. And without migration, the expected deficit of young people in developed countries would be even greater.

At the same time, developing countries have today 34 persons aged 20-24 for every 10 aged 60-64 and an excess of young people relative to the old will persist well into the century. Faced with a growing labour force, most developing countries are having trouble creating sufficient decent jobs for the large number of young people entering the labour market every year.

Although demography is not destiny, it certainly shapes it. For at least a decade now, high-income countries have been experiencing labour shortages in certain sectors of their economies, particularly in those where jobs cannot be exported. Consequently, as overall employment rose during the boom years of the 1990s, so did migration. Whether authorized or not, workers from developing countries have been taking the jobs that do not find takers in developed countries at going wages. In a number of developed countries, sectors such as agriculture, construction or the hotel and restaurant business depend on migrant labour.

Furthermore, as more women in developed countries join the work force, they can no longer fulfill the unpaid occupations that they used to take charge of. There is therefore growing demand for migrant women to assist with domestic work or child and elderly care. Shortages in the nursing and teaching professions are also related to the improving work status of younger generations of women. Today young women in developed countries often choose to become doctors, lawyers, business managers or university professors in their own right, instead of opting for the traditional female occupations of their mother's and grandmother's time.

In fact, owing to globalization, part of the "international division of labour" is playing itself out within national boundaries. As the populations of developed countries become more and more educated, they are unlikely to find fulfilling those physically demanding jobs that do not require much creativity or initiative. Today, 56 per cent of persons aged 20-24 in developed countries are enrolled in tertiary education. So, not only will the workforce of the future in those countries be smaller, it will also be far more

highly trained than their parents were. Therefore, developed economies need to promote the continued expansion of the knowledge economy that is to provide the high-quality jobs for this qualified labour force.

Developing countries are also realizing the importance that tertiary education has for maintaining and enhancing the long-term viability of their economies. Over the past two decades, there has been an upsurge in the number of students from developing countries getting an education abroad. Furthermore, realizing that it is better to train students at home, developing countries are encouraging or even underwriting the establishment of “branch campuses” of developed-country universities in their territories. China, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Qatar, Singapore, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates are among the countries hosting these international campuses. The trend towards the internationalization of education is accelerating because Governments, universities and corporations recognize that there is a global shortage of highly trained workers and are taking steps to expand their numbers.

The growing demand for skilled personnel leads to yet another facet of international migration today: its role in redistributing skills worldwide. Between 1990 and 2000, the developed OECD countries gained nearly 8 million migrants with tertiary education, a group that accounted for 46 per cent of the increment in the number of migrants aged 25 years or over in those countries. Although a high proportion of these highly-skilled migrants originate in other developed countries or received their tertiary training in the developed world, many of them both originate and were trained in developing countries.

Economists point out that the countries where skilled migrants originate not only lose their investment in the education of those migrants but are also more likely to see their development prospects compromised by the scarcity of the professional and technical personnel needed to spur productivity and generate economic growth. Although the evidence on the long-term effects of the emigration of skilled persons is mixed, there is no doubt that some low-income countries, particularly small island States and countries in Africa, are experiencing difficulties in delivering basic services, such as health and education, because of the high emigration of their skilled workers. International cooperation is clearly needed to address this problem. Initiatives to be considered include the cessation of the active recruitment of skilled workers from poor countries, the development of strategies to train skilled workers in the countries or regions that need them, and the provision of training and tools appropriate to the environments in which skilled personnel will work. In the health sector, for instance, there is a need to improve the availability of basic equipment and supplies in the clinics of poor countries and to ameliorate the working conditions of health personnel.

Mr. Chairman,

Humankind is entering an important phase in its history. For the first time, the populations of major areas of the world will decline as a result of low fertility, rather than because of epidemics or war. It is expected that, eventually, all populations in the globe

will move along the same path. But over the next few decades, developed countries will experience rapid population ageing that, together with increased education, will produce unprecedented social and economic change. The articulation of this change with the opportunities opening up as development accelerates in a growing number of developing countries will be an important determinant of future migration. The international community has wisely acknowledged the key role that international migration can play in facilitating development and improving economic outcomes. This session of the Commission on Population and Development presents the first opportunity for Governments to consider the various aspects of the migration and development nexus with a view to setting the stage for the High-Level Dialogue that the General Assembly will conduct next September. This is likely to be a very interesting and useful session. I look forward to your debates over the coming days.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.