

Speaking Notes

UN Symposium in Turin, Wednesday, June 28, 11:00-11:30 am

1. Introduction

- a. My thanks, first, to Jose Antonio Ocampo and Hania Zlotnik for their invitation to deliver the keynote address at the Symposium, and to our Italian hosts—especially the Fondazione Rosselli and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs—for their generous support of the UN's work.
- b. I'm especially delighted to be speaking here to an audience of cognoscenti—to use a word familiar to our hosts—to people who have long dedicated themselves to the issues of migration and development, in one capacity or another.
- c. You, more than most others, understand the potential benefits of making migration work for the development—economic, social, political—of countries in both the developing *and* the developed world.
- d. In fact, it is your work—as economists, sociologists, policymakers, diplomats, and leaders—that is the reason we are holding a High-Level Dialogue in September at all:
 - i. Your work is the grist of the excellent report that Jose Antonio and Hania's team produced earlier this month;
 - ii. It is also the basis for what I hope will be an ongoing international dialogue on migration and development—one that will be based on the solid evidence you are producing, rather than on the anecdotes and hunches that too often dominate the debate.
 - iii. You are pointing the way forward on how governments can proactively shape international migration and the distribution of its costs and benefits, thereby making it work better for everyone.
 - From promoting entrepreneurship among migrants, to facilitating access to financial institutions, to stimulating return migration, to establishing partnerships to train health personnel—there is no dearth of possibilities.
- e. So, I am looking forward to learning from you about the latest thinking on all these issues;
 - i. It is the very richness of the discussions that will take place over the coming days that gives me the confidence that September's High-Level Dialogue will be remembered as the beginning of a new era of improved international cooperation on migration and development.

2. The Road to the Dialogue: A Changing Mood

- a. When Kofi Annan asked me to serve as his Special Representative last winter, I heard from some quarters that the job would be a perilous one—that migration was too hot to handle, too politically sensitive to be discussed at an international level.
 - i. Bringing migration to the UN General Assembly, they said, would lead to a fractious shouting match between north and south.
 - ii. Some even expected the High-Level Dialogue to be the end of the UN's involvement in international migration issues, not the beginning.

- b. And it is certainly true that there is much contention surrounding migration.
 - i. There are far too many desperate, courageous people losing their lives, a fact made tragically vivid in the Mediterranean in recent weeks.
 - ii. There is too much manipulation by those who gain by fostering fear;
 - iii. And there are the honest challenges of how to manage our economies and our societies in a world that is changing fast and that we often find difficult to understand.
- c. But all the expectations of gloom and doom I heard when I first undertook my responsibilities as Special Representative have not come to pass—and I trust that they will not.
- d. Since January, I have talked one-on-one with representatives of several dozen governments:
 - i. I have been truly heartened by how nearly every head of state, minister, and ambassador showed a keen interest in learning what other governments are doing.
 - ii. There was also a maturity to their thinking that belied the predictions of intransigence. They understood that:
 - The nature of migration is changing; that it is not a passing phenomenon, but a permanent part of the 21st century landscape; and that this is due in large part to the effects of globalization and to the extraordinary advances in technology and communications.
 - That countries do not have to be antagonists in facing the challenges of migration, that it is not a zero-sum game; our fates are tied together—and so it makes sense to work together.
 - They understood that this new era of mobility has profound consequences for how we coordinate migration and development policies—not only within governments, but between governments.
 - o The intense new focus on cooperation between the European Union and the African Union is just one sign of this, with the upcoming joint EU-AU ministerial in Rabat next month being further proof of a common approach.
 - Like me, most of these leaders believe migration and development is also a test of UN's relevance in today's world.
 - iii. I am encouraged by this changing mood.

3. The Next Steps: Making a Success of September's Dialogue

- a. So far, then, I would venture to say that the process leading to the High-Level Dialogue has been a positive one:
 - i. An excellent report was produced by the Secretary General
 - ii. The Dialogue has been a catalyst in getting governments to focus on how to improve their coordination on migration and development issues.
 - Just last week, in Geneva, I met with representatives of 56 countries with a keen interest in the issues; today, here in Turin, we have a similarly impressive turnout; I'm no Bono—so it must be the appeal of the issues that keep turning out such impressive audiences.
 - iii. The UN and its various divisions, agencies, and affiliates are starting to coordinate their work more effectively—this is embodied by the Global Migration Group, newly created this spring by the Secretary General.

- b. Now, the next step is to ensure that for two days in September, we participate in a Dialogue built on collegiality and sharing experience.
- i. The primary goals of September's Dialogue must be:
 - to raise awareness of the development dimension in debates about migration worldwide;
 - to examine the relationship between migration and development, especially poverty reduction; and
 - to identify examples of best practices, where migration has been made to work for development.
 - ii. I have been encouraging Governments not only to participate in the Dialogue at a high level, but also to contribute substantively to it.
 - Specifically, I have asked them to share their own experiences in managing migration for the purposes of development—and to highlight ideas that were successful for them and that might be of interest to other Governments. There is certainly no shortage of such examples:
 - I have, for instance, been impressed by how countries such as the Philippines, Morocco, and Mexico work with their emigrants both to protect their rights and also to leverage their experience and assets for the benefit of their home economies, educational systems, and communities.
 - Likewise, the blossoming of bilateral and regional cooperation offers many ideas for smarter visa regimes, data gathering, and co-development initiatives.
 - Also, governments have been working closely with the private sector, be it with financial institutions to reduce remittance transfer fees, with universities to develop innovative training programs in the developing world, and with foundations to improve the evidence base on migration and development.

4. Beyond the Dialogue

- a. September should be the start of a new period of improved international cooperation on migration and development; we must seize this moment of heightened concern and interest in immigration and use the High-Level Dialogue to begin defining what better cooperation actually means in practice.
 - i. We must frame the issues in ways that allow us move forward together, to discover areas on which we agree—on how migration can be beneficial to sending, receiving countries, and above all to migrants themselves.
- b. The Secretary General has already moved decisively to increase the UN's internal coordination on migration issues by creating the GMG.
- c. But I strongly believe—and so too does the Secretary-General—that Member States should have a place to explore international migration and development; this is why the Secretary-General has proposed a consultative forum on migration.
 - i. The UN is surely the obvious venue for this exchange of ideas, experience, and lessons learnt.
 - The Secretary-General's report is strong proof of this, filled as it is with dozens of examples of how—by working together—countries can achieve their development goals through migration.

- d. The Forum and what it would do:
- i. A consultative Forum would be led by, and open to, all the 191 Member States of the UN.
 - ii. I must stress—first and foremost—that such a Forum would not produce negotiated outcomes, make decisions, or produce policy.
 - iii. It would offer Governments a venue in which to discuss issues related to international migration and development in a systematic, comprehensive way—without being constrained by the formalized protocols and procedures of more official UN bodies.
 - iv. Governments would gain timely exposure to promising policy ideas, as analysed by the most relevant, qualified bodies from both inside and outside the United Nations system.
 - v. A Forum would also stimulate Governments to look at the issues of migration and development in a holistic manner, not merely through the separate lenses of different government departments.
 - vi. The Forum would thus complement, and add value to, the activities of regional consultative processes—especially since the latter do not usually address issues related to development, focusing instead on managing regional migration flows.
 - vii. Such a Forum would allow Governments to establish a common understanding—based on the best evidence—about the areas of migration policymaking that have the greatest potential to contribute to development.
 - viii. In addition, a Forum could provide—just as the High-Level Dialogue is already doing—the impetus to increase coherence in migration policies and actions at the national and international levels.
- e. The coming months: In the months to come, I will continue to work intensely in my role as Special Representative to further explore these ideas and to ensure that, come the evening of September 15 at the close of the High-Level Dialogue, we will have a compelling vision for how to move forward together on international migration and development.

5. Closing Words

- a. The passions migration stirs, and the perils it presents for politicians, has sent too many thoughtful people into defensive poses.
- b. Together, we need to change this.
- c. Migration is the mother of progress and invention. My own country is proof of this: Ireland, which has benefited from emigration through the centuries, is now thriving in large part thanks to immigration,
- d. I am wholly confident that the ideas you will discuss in coming days, and that you will pursue in the months and years ahead, will be the foundation on which we build a new era of international cooperation on migration and development.