

Australian statement to 39th Session of UN Commission on Population and Development, 3-7 April 2006

Australia appreciates this opportunity to contribute to the debate on international migration and development.

Australia has a long history of immigration, and it has been an integral part of the building of our nation - not only in terms of population, but also economic and cultural development. I will discuss Australia's experience not as a prescriptive model to be followed, but as an example of how managed migration can have benefits for a country.

At the end of World War II, Australia's population was just over 7 million, with around 90 per cent born in Australia. Since then, almost six million people have come to Australia as new settlers and our population is now just over 20 million, with slightly more than 75 per cent born in Australia. Over 40 per cent of Australia's population were either born overseas or have a parent born overseas.

We have benefitted economically and culturally from migration. By their very presence migrants contribute to the economy through spending – this in turn encourages businesses to expand. Working migrants also bring skills to Australia and help produce goods and deliver services. The diversity of Australia's population also brings economic benefits through language skills and international business and trade networks.

This diversity from migration has cultural benefits too. Our combination of cultures, talents and experiences for the benefit of all people, is, and will remain, a key characteristic of Australia's prosperous, democratic, diverse and humane society.

The contribution of migration to Australia's development has not come about by chance – it is the result of coherent and comprehensive migration policies. We firmly believe that if both migrants and states are to reap the potential benefits from migration then it is necessary for states to be very active in migration management. Managing migration is as much, if not more, about facilitating the lawful movement of people as it is about hindering illegal movement. In Australia, it includes the following practices:

- We plan the levels and different types of migration, both permanent and temporary entry. Wherever possible this is based on research about the impacts of different types.
 - Managing migration and understanding its impacts also allows governments to choose to assist people in humanitarian need who would not necessarily meet the criteria for other forms of migration;
- We place importance on consulting with the community and specific stakeholders such as industry and education providers;
 - Public support for migration is essential if it is to contribute to a country's development;

- We have transparent and accessible criteria, appropriate appeal rights and efficient application processing;
- We provide settlement assistance where necessary for those accepted for permanent stay, including assistance to enter the labour market and access to citizenship;
- We seek to facilitate the integration of migrants into society, while recognising that ultimately migrants are settled by their community; and
- At the same time as facilitating legal entry to Australia, we also seek to combat abuse which undermines the system, such as exploitation of workers and the illegal activities of people smugglers and traffickers.

We believe this particular model of managed migration has worked successfully to meet Australia's needs. However, the needs of countries will of course vary. Some may choose to place greater emphasis on temporary migration programs; others may find it beneficial to have bilateral agreements with certain countries. Such choices apply to both migrant receiving and migrant sending countries, as well as countries of transit. Regardless of a country's place on the migration spectrum, their policy goals, or socio-economic circumstances, we believe the key to migration's development benefits is a coherent, managed approach.

Countries can cooperate to maximise the development impacts of migration. There is persuasive evidence to support the role of migration in the Pacific as a key source of income generation. Pacific Island economies (ie Tonga and Samoa) have some of the highest remittance flows per capita in the world. Migrants in many parts of the world send remittances back to their families. Governments in sending and receiving countries have a role in ensuring these transfers can be made directly, safely and at reasonable cost. Remittances are not a panacea, but in concert with developing countries' efforts to achieve good governance, peace and stability, remittances can be an important source of development finance, to complement (not substitute) aid and foreign investment.

Diasporas can also contribute to development. Some migrants may choose to return to their country of origin with the experiences and ideas they have acquired overseas. Diasporas also act as a bridge between the two countries, facilitating links in areas such as trade, investment and education.

Within our region, Australia is looking to help our Pacific neighbours by establishing an Australia-Pacific Technical College. The objective of the college is to contribute to the development of a skilled and competitive Pacific workforce. With Australian qualifications, graduates will be more competitive in gaining employment in their region or in the global skilled labour market.

The basis of all these benefits is managing migration, and the key is for states to develop the capacity to do this. We believe the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the best international body to assist states in this. IOM's membership continues to grow and they are presently in over 280 field locations. No other international organization has the same breadth and depth of experience in

migration matters. IOM's broad charter gives it the flexibility to respond to the wishes of states at all levels, and in new and innovative ways.

By definition migration is an issue which crosses borders – no country can manage migration in isolation. We are strong supporters of regional processes such as the Asia Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC) and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (the Bali Process), which give states opportunities for supporting cooperation in the region and collective capacity building. The Bali Process in particular has been strongly endorsed for its emphasis on practical workshops. We believe that regional processes are the best way for states to make practical inroads on issues of common interest.

In summary, it is Australia's belief that migration can make a contribution to development, regardless of where a country is in the migration spectrum. However, the cornerstone of this is managing migration.

Thank you.