



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

STATEMENT

BY

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Mr. President,
Honorable Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen

I am very pleased to be here today on behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and to participate in this debate on rural development.

About 75 per cent of the world's poor people reside in rural areas and some 97 per cent of the world's rural population live in developing countries¹. The new economic view of development considers reduction or elimination of poverty as an important index and these efforts clearly must engage rural populations. However, income inequality is widening between rural and urban areas of the developing world, and between developing and developed nations. This economic disparity not only deprives rural households of basic livelihoods but fuels migration, as a coping strategy, which has often led to a loss of labour and financial resources for rural areas.

Factors linked to rural development include the current food crisis which the World Bank forecasts will continue beyond 2015. It is projected that the world's rural poor will spend as much as 80% of their disposable income on food as the crisis continues, ultimately resulting in an significant increase of poverty.

It is also predicted that the occurrence of drought, desertification and land degradation will become more frequent in the future for many developing countries due to climate change. Drought and land degradation has an impact on the availability of water and directly inhibits the development of rural areas. In his report for this Session, the Secretary General has pointed out that the issues of environmental degradation and climate change have the potential to and indeed are already starting to undermine the achievements of the MDGs. IOM has repeatedly underlined that, while migration did not feature prominently in the original framework of the MDGs, migration phenomena could significantly impact on the successful accomplishment of the MDGs, both positively and negatively.

Mr. President,

For rural development to be successful, the important role of women has to be acknowledged. Women are responsible for half of the world's food production, a figure which rises to between 60 percent and 80 percent in many developing countries. However, women's fundamental contribution is continually under-appreciated and under-supported, and is often adversely affected by prevailing economic policies and other development conditions.

Women in rural settings lack viable sources of income and their already limited access to productive resources, such as land, capital, credit and technology as well as their participation in decision-making processes at the household and community levels are further restricted. These circumstances must be reversed, for sustainable rural development cannot be achieved without the full participation of women. In this area, IOM strives to foster economic opportunities through such activities as

¹ Ilo report on promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, 2008

establishment of micro-enterprises, capacity-building, employment and livelihood enhancement programmes. Women who choose to migrate abroad need to be informed of regular migration channels as well as of the risks and possible consequences of irregular migration including trafficking and smuggling.

Governments and international agencies must encourage and facilitate migrants' contributions and investments in small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) with a special focus on rural areas. They must also recognize the critical role of SMEs in generating employment, earning foreign exchange and stimulating growth and development particularly in the rural areas. Assisting SMEs in penetrating non-traditional markets for sustained growth and competitiveness could be a good way to begin the process.

Young people constitute a large proportion of populations leaving rural communities in order to seek better economic opportunities. It is important that governments consider their potential to contribute towards rural development. This can be done through the provision of training and enhancement of opportunities in the agricultural sector and in the start-up of small enterprises.

Skills development is important in combating poverty and exclusion as it allows rural workers to maintain competitiveness and employability. Education, training and lifelong learning foster a virtuous circle of higher productivity, more employment of better quality, income growth and development.

Furthermore, the transfer of technical expertise from the diaspora can be critical for providing the knowledge, technology and financial resources needed to eradicate poverty and promote rural development. Recent research has shown that migrants can contribute to the development of their home countries through remittances, technical transfers and knowledge-sharing. Thus IOM is committed to making migration work for development and is supportive of the Council's efforts towards eradicating poverty in rural areas through sustained, coordinated and directed efforts.

Mr. President,

Developing countries require assistance to build capacity to participate in the development of international frameworks, to establish national policies reflecting domestic priorities and international requirements, and to implement these policies and meet international obligations. All together, these capacities must enable developing countries to sustainably manage their rural economies and the natural resource endowments on which they are based.

Moreover, developing countries should consider the relevance of migration in their national poverty reduction strategy papers and its impact on the achievement of the first of the MDGs.

In closing I would like to reiterate IOM's readiness to work in collaboration with governments and all partners to help mainstream migration into their national development process.

Thank you for your attention.