



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

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STATEMENT

BY

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**AT THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE
SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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Mr. President,

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to address the High Level Segment of ECOSOC and take part in this timely and relevant debate on the implementation of the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regards to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This marks a timely debate, as it takes place 15 years after the adoption by 189 States of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and 5 years away from reaching the targets set in 2000 for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The international community is about to discuss the progress made in 8 areas of development, progress largely hindered in the last few years by food, climate and financial crisis, as highlighted by the recently published MDG report of 2010.

This debate is also relevant in light of the discussions held last March in the context of the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which called for renewed efforts to meet the objectives of the MDGs.

Commitments toward gender equality and the empowerment of women at the international level form a host of fundamental texts and targets mutually reinforcing each other. Of course I want to refer to the three main policy and legal frameworks for the promotion of gender equality: the Beijing Platform of Action, the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals and the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women. All three agreed texts provide a sound basis for concerted action towards women's empowerment and the promotion of equality between men and women in all areas of society.

Mr. President,

I would like to emphasize today that migration can be an important variable for the implementation of this international framework for gender equality and development.

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The Beijing Declaration did consider migration as a phenomenon with potentially important ramifications for women's empowerment. In particular, it mentions the situation of women forced to migrate by poverty and to provide for their family. The Declaration also takes stock of the impact international migration has on women, as in many cases poverty or gender-based violence could leave them no choice but to migrate. It also calls for action to prevent and address the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation purposes.

Turning to CEDAW, although the Convention does not contain specific dispositions on migration, the recent adoption of recommendations dedicated to migration, such as General Recommendation 26 on Women Migrant Workers, is a strong indication of the attention the Committee is paying to the dual discrimination migrant women face. It is also a recognition that the full respect of migrant women's human rights is an important factor enabling their contribution to development.

In regards to the third pillar of this international framework for gender equality, although the Millennium Declaration only contains two goals specifically dealing with gender, the reference to the Beijing Platform for Action and to CEDAW has shaped a gender-sensitive interpretation of the Millennium Development Goals. This interpretation is supported by the acknowledgment that beyond being a goal in itself, gender equality is a cross-cutting requirement to achieve the other goals.

Although migration was not formally included in the Millennium Declaration in 2000, it is now acknowledged that migration can have important ramifications for the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals, either by its catalytic effects on development or by adding further challenges. Let me cite a few examples.

The migration of health professionals is often pointed out as having very detrimental consequences on women and girls' access to health care, especially reproductive health, thus undermining efforts toward the achievement of MDG 4, 5 and 6 on maternal health and HIV/AIDS respectively. However, the global picture needs to be qualified as despite the global economic crisis and according to the latest figures communicated by the World Bank, the flow of remittances to developing countries in 2009 has amounted \$316 billion. This money helps millions of families cover their daily needs such as food, health and education, providing an invaluable help in terms of poverty alleviation, promotion of education for all and reduction in child mortality.

In addition, research in different parts of the world has showed that remittances sent by migrants can substantially improve girls' opportunities for schooling, thus moving the agenda of MDG 2 forward.

In regards to MDG 3 on the empowerment of women, it is important to remind that, for some of the 105 million migrant women, the migratory experience can, when occurring in a legal and safe fashion, provide women with employment opportunities unavailable at home thus helping them achieve financial autonomy and decision-making power. The change of status often associated with women's migration, as migrant women are often taking the role of main or sole bread-winner supporting entire families, can help promote women's position in society. Furthermore, even though data on remittances is still rarely disaggregated by sex, we do know that migrant women globally send approximately the same amount of money in remittances as male migrants, which often implies them remitting a larger part of their salary. Equally, for the millions of women placed as heads of household as a result of migration, this change of status can constitute an opportunity for women to take on non-traditional roles.

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Lastly, it is important to underline the growing recognition of the role migrants play as agents of development, through their transnational philanthropic activities but also by their involvement in the definition of host countries development policies, thus indicating that a form of global partnership for development that involves migrants and countries of origin and destination is emerging in the spirit of MDG 8. Within this global partnership, the participation of women is still hampered by different obstacles, requiring the international community to better invest in women's leadership either locally or within diaspora groups.

Those elements are only a few examples of the opportunities but also the challenges that human mobility poses to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. It is my hope that those elements will be at the heart of your discussions when reviewing the progress made in achieving the MDGs during the next Millennium Summit in September, thus calling for a systematic inclusion of gender and migration elements in the global development agenda.

I thank you Mr. President.