

**IOM Statement by Mrs. Anke Strauss, Liaison Officer,  
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Mr. Chairman, Your excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your election. It is an honour for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to address this 48<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development.

The priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle of the Commission could not have been more aptly selected. The current global financial crisis has been leading to a downturn in the global economy and its impact on "social integration" has proven to be significant. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to briefly reflect on the Secretary-General's report on "Promoting social integration" and support his findings that *"Migrant individuals and families, whether temporary or permanent, may be at a greater risk of exclusion, as they may lose traditional support networks and might face discrimination in access to employment and services"*.

Few subjects elicit stronger reaction than does the subject of migration --- on the floors of Parliaments to the streets of cities --- in heated debates about the pros and cons of migration's impact on national identities, security, employment, social benefits, culture, and the very fabric of our societies. A sampling of newspaper headlines on a given day shows documented migrants fleeing mob violence in Europe; migrants threatened with registration or expulsion in Asia; the construction of a barrier wall along a state border in the Middle East to thwart irregular migration; and the deportation of thousands of irregular migrants in the Americas.

The plight of migrants, especially the undocumented, has never been met with much compassion. But today, this plight would appear to attract even less sympathy as the economic crisis bites deeper into industrialized societies, hardening public opinion against migrants and migration. At a time when the positive contributions of migrants to society are increasingly being called into question -- and when some Governments are adopting short-sighted attitudes towards migrants, including criminalizing migrants, it is important to support the Secretary-General's findings that *"Policies aimed at promoting the inclusion of migrants in the institutions and social networks of the host society and at expanding their opportunities for economic and civic engagement are investments in building a more cohesive society"*.

Mr. Chairman,

While the primary intended beneficiaries of most integration policies are newly arrived migrants who will reside legally in the host country for a long period of time, policy

makers may wish to target migrants of the second and third generation i.e., the children and grandchildren of authorized migrants, who were born and brought up in the host countries. Many countries have immigrant communities that consist in large part of second and third generation immigrants who have never actually had contact with their country of origin. Nonetheless, most have preserved some ties to their country of origin through customs, traditions, religion, or language.

Integration measures are intended to achieve or maintain a State's vision of a cohesive society and to assist people in society who need assistance to become active participants in economic, social, and cultural life. Since the composition and values of society differ from country to country, the people who are the subject of integration measures may vary.

It is exactly for that reason that IOM and the UN Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) are collaborating on a Online Community on Migration Integration, which aims at reinforcing efforts to harmonize the coexistence between newcomers and host communities is critical in improving social cohesion and intercultural relations, and in shifting popular perceptions of migration – from threat to opportunity. As a unique global platform in the UN system, this website will be a source of information, a virtual space for exchange and learning and will support coordination and cooperation between integration practitioners.

The Migration/Integration Online Community is meant to acknowledge migration as a fact of global relevance and growing importance. It will concentrate therefore on collecting analyses, experiences and recommendations on how to make the best of this phenomenon in order to create a win-win situation (for migrant communities and for host societies). The Online Community will not address policies and mechanisms for the regulation of migrant flows but will advocate for active involvement of governments in implementing socio-economic, political-legal and cultural integration practices and in protecting migrants' human rights. It will promote participative mechanisms and cooperation between all stakeholders (regional organizations, national and local governments, civil society, academic and private sectors) in the elaboration and implementation of integration practices.

The website will adopt a practical, innovative and positive perspective and illustrate how good practices of integration can lead to full participation of migrants in host societies and mutual contributions to development. As a virtual platform for learning and exchange, it will showcase good practices collected, initiated and implemented by a variety of actors, from the private sector and academic institutes to national and local governments, including civil society, international organizations and UN agencies.

The foreseen impact of this project is to make a positive contribution in improving the integration of migrants and in building coexistence within culturally diverse societies, thus improving intercultural relations and shifting popular perceptions of migration – from threat to opportunity.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.