



The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations

Statement by
Ambassador Hjálmar NV. Hannesson
Permanent Representative of Iceland
to the United Nations

General Assembly

High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

New York, 15 September 2006

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations
800 Third Ave. 36th fl. - Tel 212-593-2700. - Fax 212-593-6269

Madame President

At the outset I congratulate you on your election as the President of the General Assembly and I wish you well in the important work ahead.

We thank the Secretary General for his comprehensive and enlightening report and the emphasis he has placed on this important and highly relevant matter for the United Nations. We also welcome the organization of this High-level dialogue and the efforts of the Secretary General to put the issue of migration on the global agenda.

The report highlights the fact that a new era of mass international migration has recently begun. Iceland is acutely aware of this. Only ten years ago, Iceland was one of the most homogenous societies in the world. Today, a higher portion of our labour market is occupied by immigrants than most of our neighbours.

International migration can contribute in a positive manner to development and economic growth, if appropriately regulated and controlled. But if we are to reduce the negative effects on the migrants themselves we must recognize the need to promote and to protect their human rights.

The gender equality perspectives are highly important in migration because gender inequality can both be the cause and the consequence of international migration. Promotion of gender equality will, therefore, contribute to the reduction of the negative impact of migration.

I would like to highlight the fact, mentioned in the report, that the cross-border movements of persons has become the main vehicle for greater participation by women in exports of services in developing countries, which is a positive side of increased international trade in services. The downside of it is that the flexibility of labour can lead to the loss of formal contracts, social security and other social benefits.

It is worrying that the current trends in women's employment are heading in the wrong direction, with lower wages and deterioration in the terms and conditions of employment. One of the reasons is that women are more likely to find employment in the informal economy than men.

Another challenge that is closely linked to migration is the rapid growth of human trafficking and smuggling. Attempts have been made to use Iceland as a country of transit on the route over the Atlantic and the Icelandic authorities have taken steps accordingly.

Trafficking in human beings is a global problem and as such needs to be dealt with by the international community as well as at the national level. Iceland has signed the UN convention against transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and has emphasised the role of regional institutions in combating trafficking in human beings and has contributed actively to the anti-trafficking work of the OSCE.

The fight against trafficking in human beings should be a priority for all, as most states are affected either as countries of origin, countries of transit or countries of destination. It remains one of Iceland's priorities and we have put considerable efforts into raising public awareness on what such trafficking involves.

To conclude Madame President

I would like to state that I am certain that this high-level dialogue will provide us with a better understanding of all aspects of migration and development.