



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

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**STATEMENT BY MR. LUCA DALL'OGGIO, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF
THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM) TO THE 54th
SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

General Debate agenda no. 3 "Follow up to the 4th World Conference on Women
and to the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly entitled 'Women 2000:
Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st century'"

New York, 5 March 2010

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) appreciates the opportunity to take part in this debate and would like to briefly touch on two points from the Secretary General's report "Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contributions to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals".

Mr. Chairman,

Migration cuts across all or most of the Millennium Development Goals as does gender. There are two major links between migration and gender equality: on the one hand, migration can contribute to the empowerment of women, thereby helping promote gender equality; on the other hand, particular migration situations can pose challenges to gender equality.

An analysis of the MDGs reveals that migration did not occupy a dominating place in the Millennium Declaration adopted in September 2000. Until relatively recently the link between migration and development was touched upon only from the point of view of the solutions to the problems raised by the migratory phenomena. Migration was often contextualized as a "development failure" and therefore it was mainly a question of promoting sustainable development in areas subject to strong migratory pressures. However, the interdependence between migration and the MDGs is more complex than this limited approach and the impact of migration on development can be both positive and negative.

The achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in developing countries are some of the most significant measures in the process of reducing poverty because women constitute a critical mass in generating development. Respect for women's rights and the prevention of violence against them are essential to allow women to play this pivotal role.

Migration can contribute to the promotion of gender equality in several ways – be it for the benefit of migrant women or, in a broader context, for all women in the countries of origin. Women migrant make a significant economic contribution through their labor, both to their countries of destination and, through remittances, to their countries of origin. In societies where women's

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power to move autonomously is limited, the act of migration is in itself empowering. It stimulates change in women migrants themselves, and in the societies which send and receive them. Beyond their economic contribution, women migrants are a main source of physical and emotional support for older and younger family members. Women's voluntary migration is a powerful force for positive change and that is why no effort must be spared in optimizing its positive effects.

Mr. Chairman,

The second aspect we would like to emphasize is the Secretary General's call for "*stronger measures [...] to protect the rights of, and ensure decent work conditions for domestic workers, including migrant women, in relation to working hours, conditions and wages, access to health-care services, and other social and economic benefits, as well as to eliminate sexual exploitation and violence*".

Almost half of the total number of migrant workers in the world today is women. Over the past decades, ageing societies, increased labour market participation of women in many parts of the world and a decline in the state provision of services have generated a high demand for care services globally. Domestic work plays a significant role in migratory movements, particularly, but not only, for women. It is now one of the largest sectors in international female labour migration. The lack of regulation of this sector, including legal regulation, the secluded nature of domestic work and the great gender, "class" and race inequalities characterizing this activity hold a variety of risks for this specific group.

Legislation in countries of destination and recruitment mechanisms often leave female migrant domestic workers heavily dependent on their employers. These workers are often under considerable pressure to earn money in order to support their families and/or repay debts in their countries of origin, which may discourage them from reporting abuses. In countries where domestic employment is not adequately covered by labour law, employers are more or less free to impose arbitrary rules and working conditions. Due to the solitary, "behind closed doors" nature of the work, migrant domestic workers who live in their employers' households and work long hours have little or no opportunities to interact with people outside the workplace. Besides the psychological burden of this social isolation, this situation also makes it extremely difficult for women, children and men to escape exploitation and abuse, to seek qualified help and try to find legal redress.

Although migration of domestic workers is acknowledged as an important phenomenon, research on domestic migrant workers and their rights is rare. IOM is trying to begin to fill this information gap with an exploratory study of the profile, legal standing, recruitment and migration trends, working and living conditions and services available to migrant domestic workers in a number of countries around the world. Such studies are designed to be a starting point to improve the situation of migrant domestic workers, in particular women and children.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.