

“EMIGRATION FROM GHANA: A MOTOR OR BRAKE FOR DEVELOPMENT”

BY

MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR  
AT THE  
39<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly honoured and privileged to have been invited to participate and present a keynote address to the Commission on Population and Development on the topic

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It is estimated that there are some three million Ghanaians living outside the country with about a third of them in Europe and North America. These are made up of skilled and unskilled persons. Actual data on them is, however, not available. However, practically all of them are motivated by the prospects of a better life in whichever country they find themselves.

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Ghanaian migrants maintain dense ties with their home communities. Such ties are often expressed in both economic and non-economic terms. Regular remittances are used by families and friends to meet daily consumption needs and in times of major crises, including illness and death in the family. This point was echoed by the President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor, during the 2001 *Home Coming Summit in Ghana*, when he noted that: “on the national level, this is a crucial component of our revenue, and, on the individual level, there are many Ghanaian homes today that rely to some extent for their upkeep on these remittances.....for many this makes the difference between a reasonable standard of living and a life of deprivation”.

The importance of migrants' remittances in Ghana is demonstrated by their rapid increase and the proliferation of money transfer institutions in Ghana. Data from the Bank of Ghana indicate that remittances have become significant for the national economy; remittances to Ghana in 2005 amounted to over \$4.5 billion, making it the largest source of foreign exchange. One-third of this amount, almost \$1.5 billion, came from individuals, while the rest were from religious

groups and NGOs. These remittances reflect a substantial increase over the years. In 1990 these private remittances were about \$400 million rising to \$680 in 2002.

What is significant about these remittances is not only their volume but that the level of remittances is much more than the foreign aid the country received in 2005 as well as Ghana's export earnings from cocoa and gold or total foreign direct investment. They are also about 15 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and more than 40 percent of total exports. Thus, Ghana has become highly

1. Unskilled manpower;
2. Students; and
3. Skilled manpower.

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As with the number of Ghanaians living outside the country, statistics are not available to determine the numbers of persons in each of these categories. However, most of the Ghanaians living outside the country may be considered as being unskilled. They are either engaged in small scale trading activities or undertake menial jobs in the countries th

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So far, about Two thousand four hundred (2400) Ghanaian emigrants have taken advantage of this legislation since it became operational in 2003.

*Political participation in national affairs*

On 24 February 2006, the Representation of the Peoples Act was passed by Parliament to allow Ghanaians abroad to register to vote in elections and other national referenda. This has received the President's assent. The Electoral Commission is now to work out the modali

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For Ghana to be able to make migration a motor rather than a brake to its development programme, a number of actions need to be done to support the various initiatives that have been and need to be undertaken. These call for the assistance of the international community in a number of areas, including:

- Collection of up-to-date information on migration;
- Building of the capacity of specific institutions involved in programmes relating to migration;
- Exchange of information on migration issues;
- Exchange of personnel engaged in migration activities;
- Development of arrangements with various countries for managed migration of both skilled and unskilled Ghanaians.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the relationship between migration and development is complex and needs to be properly managed. As I have indicated, if properly managed, migration could be considered as a motor for development not only with respect to the remittances from emigrants but also from the proper management of skilled persons who for one reason or the other decide to migrate. The challenge as I see it is the development of comprehensive policies which will help in managing all the diverse elements associated with migration.

I thank you.