

TOWARDS MORE ORDERLY MANAGEMENT OF THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE

MR. BRUNSON McKINLEY

DIRECTOR GENERAL of the INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

Statement to the 37th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

NEW YORK, 23 MARCH 2004

It is hard to pick up a newspaper or to switch on the TV or radio these days without finding a reference to issues surrounding the movement of people or the impact of migration on societies. This is hardly surprising, as roughly one in every 35 persons is a migrant. The current estimate of the number of international migrants is 175 million, that is, some 3 percent of the world's population, nearly fifty percent of whom are women. International migration is increasing year by year. When we consider the family members and communities affected by migration from or to their midst, it is clear that the overall impact of international migration is extremely broad. The phenomena of internal migration and displacement add additional dimensions.

In 1994 in Cairo the international community sought for the first time to develop a comprehensive blueprint for managing migration. Chapter X of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development mapped out a series of policy orientations covering, *inter alia*, the rights of migrants, the development of orderly migration programs, the prevention of trafficking in migrants, the reduction of unwanted migration, the promotion of the development potential of migration and the need for cooperation between countries in successfully managing migration.

Today, ten years after Cairo, migration has become the concern of all, and I mean *concern* and not just simple *interest*. Unfortunately, balanced understanding of migration -- how to live with it, manage it and take advantage of it -- has not always kept pace with the growth of the phenomenon and the complexity of its linkages with other issues. The result is too often anxiety and uninformed debate.

It is one thing to acknowledge that the movement of people now has a firmly established place in the consciousness of national and international society. It is quite another to address migration with the purpose, determination and

coherence that have been achieved in other economic and social development fields. There is, in fact, an appreciable discrepancy between the realities of migration and the available means and strategies to address them.

Increasing global and regional economic integration has a direct impact on prospects for the movement of people. The majority of people who migrate today do so not because they are fleeing persecution but because they are looking for a better life -- education, training, employment and temporary or permanent opportunities in a different place. Modern communication and transportation ensure that more people know about and can aspire to see for themselves once distant and inaccessible lands. Aging and shrinking populations in much of the developed world stand in sharp contrast to growing populations in much of the developing world. This fact creates its own pushes and pulls. Personal aspirations are increasingly linked to employment or other opportunities abroad. Migrant remittances, skills and investments are the mainstay of many national economies. All these factors and more indicate that migration is here to stay and is indeed an integral feature of modern life.

Let us therefore stop the sterile debate over whether or not to have migration. We have migration. We will continue to have migration. Our choice is in the policies we develop and pursue to channel that migration into safe, orderly, humane and productive avenues which benefit the individuals and societies.

I am here today to speak to you about a voyage on which we must embark together – a voyage towards an international understanding on the movement of people. The voyage will not be short or easy, but the goal is worth our common effort and is one we can attain. All will benefit, the migrants themselves, their families, their societies and the community of nations. We must have the courage to start on this voyage today.

My remarks today will focus on seven principal areas of future work in migration management.

First we need to **get the facts right**, to understand the nature of migration, its causes and consequences, its benefits and its challenges.

In the economic realm, migration is a prime driver of the international economy. Over 100 billion dollars were sent home in remittances last year by migrants, helping to sustain the economies of many developing countries. Migrants make a crucial contribution to the economies of the societies in which they work. At the same time, brain drain deprives many developing countries of the potentially critical contributions of their best and brightest to their long-term development.

In the social realm, migration holds great potential for nation-building, as evidenced by the experiences of some of the most stable yet dynamic and culturally rich societies globally. On the other hand, migration can bring

challenges in the form of social tension, conflicted identity, and the alienation caused by inadequate integration. The forthcoming UNDP *Human Development Report*, which focuses on cultural diversity, well illustrates the benefits and challenges of social change through migration.

The UN Population Division has made a great contribution to the understanding of key migration facts and statistics. The Division's *International Migration Report* provides the latest and most detailed figures relating to the stock of international migrants. The Division has also prepared recommendations on the collection and analysis of statistics, recommendations that states have not yet fully applied. Much more needs to be done to promote these recommendations, by both governments and international organizations, and to improve our understanding of the economic and social dynamics of migration.

Second, we need to **identify, define and address the fundamental policy issues.** (sicyh).

Current structures are inadequate to the task of rapid recruitment and movement of workers and professionals. Businesses and communities suffer.

While legal opportunities for migration for work are limited, demand for migrant workers is high and supply is even higher. How can we align these factors in safer, more flexible and more equitable ways? How can we ensure that it is not smuggling networks that do the matching?

Issues of national identity:

Once relatively homogenous and cohesive societies are giving way to multiethnic, multicultural societies, whether by design or default. How can core values be identified and adhered to in the midst of growing diversity?

How can social structures established on the basis of national identity

For societies and for individuals -- how do we balance and reconcile universal rights with citizenship rights? In an era of increasing temporary migration for work, are we faced with the necessity of creating multi-tiered systems of rights and responsibilities?

Third, we need to **pursue comprehensive approaches**.

Governments over the past decades have tended to focus on isolated elements of migration. For some, labour migration needs have predominated, with a focus on maximizing the flow of remittances home. For others, asylum has been the main concern. Irregular migration and efforts to staunch it have occupied the attention of many governments.

Almost universally, the linkages between law enforcement and public administration disciplines such as trade, health and labour have been weak. The tendency has been to treat these as discrete and unrelated fields of policy concern.

In recent years there has been significant reflection on how to shift from an isolated, uni-sectoral and largely ineffective focus to more meaningful, constructive and comprehensive approaches. 'Comprehensive' means in content, in participation and in perspective.

On **content**, it is essential to address each of the **main challenges** of managing migration:

migration and development;
facilitated migration;
migration control; and
forced migration.

Cross-cutting issues such as the protection of rights, gender, health, public information, research and dialogue are inherent to every area of migration management.

On **participation**, there is a need to include all significant players.

At the national level, all relevant governmental ministries - such as labour, trade, development, justice and home affairs - need to be involved. The business community, trade unions and civil society are key voices which need to be heard down to grassroots level.

At the international level, organisations dealing with issues such as development, labour, human rights, trade, health, and crime prevention have valuable contributions to make.

On **perspective**, the full migration life-cycle needs to be considered, from pre-departure preparation, to en route facilitation, to integration options, to eventual return.

Fourth, we need to **focus on capacity-building**. This point is easily overlooked, yet it is a crucial one.

For many countries, migration is a new administrative field. In the past, the movement of people has often been either prevented or ignored. Systems to track, process and facilitate inward and outward movements of people do not exist in many countries. Weak capacity affects both developing and developed countries and poses significant challenges for effective policy formulation and implementation both at the national level and at the inter-state level. At the national level, many governments lack the basic legislation, institutions and infrastructure needed to manage the movement of people today -- safely, humanely, and in an orderly manner.

Fifth, we need to take stock of **existing international norms** and promote their implementation.

While there is no comprehensive international legal instrument governing migration, many norms do exist -- in the fields of human rights, refugees, humanitarian action, migrant work and crime control. Many of these are not well-known and most are even less well implemented. Ten years after states were requested in Cairo to consider ratifying the Migrant Workers Convention, the first meeting of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and members of their Families was held in Geneva earlier this month.

There is a need to consolidate and disseminate existing international norms on migration. IOM is gearing up to do its part.

Sixth, we need to promote **dialogue and consultation**, especially at the regional level.

Since the 1994 Cairo Conference, we have seen the development and deepening of regional dialogue on migration on every continent. From the Puebla Process in the Americas, to the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa, to the Colombo Group of Asian labor-sending countries, governments are increasingly coming together at the regional level to share their migration interests and experiences and to search for common approaches to address them. Today some 142 States around the globe participate in various regional consultative processes on migration. Whether in the field of labour migration, irregular migration, counter-trafficking or data sharing, this new spirit of regional cooperation must be encouraged.

Similarly, new strides have been made in the development of global dialogue on migration. IOM's International Dialogue on Migration brings together in IOM's Council more than 130 states and additional partner organizations to share experiences and perspectives and create better understanding and cooperation in the management of migration. The Berne Initiative, a consultative, inter-governmental process meant to develop a non-binding policy framework for the management of migration, shows promise.

Seventh, we need to **engage and manage the public debate**.

Discussion of migration today is too often fed by misperceptions, ignorance and fear. We all need to work hard to ensure that the debate is better informed, more rational and less prone to superficial analysis. More effective efforts are needed to combat xenophobia and racism. Migrants must not become the scapegoats of global social change in the 21st century. The time has come to change the public discourse on migration and rid it of some of its enduring but unsubstantiated stereotypes.

Fortunately, public attention of a more positive nature is now increasingly common. The Secretary General's interest in migration and the recent creation of a Global Commission on International Migration should serve to raise awareness of migration and of its positive potential. The newly published report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization has a useful chapter on migration.

Collaborative efforts among international agencies are also important. The Geneva Migration Group, which consists of the heads of ILO, IOM, UNCTAD, UNHCHR, UNHCR and UNODC, is a helpful tool of coordination and dissemination. Inter-agency collaboration on specific issues is increasingly common, such as among the OECD, the World Bank and IOM on trade and migration.

Conclusion

I have quickly reviewed the major challenges facing attempts to construct a more rational, effective and humane international order for migration management. Much more needs to be said about each of the seven points. The heart of the matter, for me, is this – the realization that opportunities for win-win approaches to migration will only open up once we recognize migration as a natural and potentially beneficial phenomenon -- both for migrants and societies. Once we have seized on the idea that migration is here to stay, we can move ahead with the long, difficult but rewarding job of **managing migration for the benefit of all**.