

Statement
by
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to the United Nations
on
United Nations High Level Dialogue on
International Migration and Development

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Madame President, and Distinguished Delegates,

We appreciate the holding of a High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. We believe that this Dialogue will provide an excellent opportunity for the exchange of ideas and views on migration. Furthermore, it will allow the exploration of new horizons in terms of increasing the mutual benefits derived from migration.

We also appreciate the efforts of the Secretary General in the preparation of the report entitled: "International Migration and Development," and we consider it to be a good step forward.

Migration is a phenomenon concomitant to the modern history of human beings. It was the lure to overcome adversity and to improve one's standard of living that pushed many men and women to leave their homelands and migrate to wealthier and more developed countries. It is quite obvious that poverty, under-development, social exclusion, foreign occupation tied with the absence of peace, security and stability, the large income differential between high and low income countries, and economic crises are the main reasons for migration.

In 2005, the estimated number of international migrants reached 191 millions, out of which 115 million lived in developed countries and 75 million in developing countries. This factor means that the magnitude of South-to-South migration is comparable to that of South-to-North migration.

Madame President,

The positive economic and social impact of migration on the receiving and sending countries is certainly beyond doubt. According to World Bank estimates, the migrants' remittances at the world level amounted to an estimated \$232 billion in

2005. The share of global remittances going to developing countries is equal to \$167 billion. Those remittances increase family incomes in countries of origin and help them secure access to other services like education and health. They also improve the entrepreneurship atmosphere and increase the ability of the households to make productive investments, even though it was found that the remittances are more frequently used for consumption rather than investments.

The multiplier effect will help to spread the benefits derived from such investments to other families in the countries of origin that are not linked with special ties to the migrant worker. The remittances are derived not only from wages earned by the migrants, but also from the return of their private investments in the countries of destination. In Lebanon, the remittances of Lebanese emigrants were estimated to be equal to 12.4 % of the GDP.

In certain cases, the contribution of remittances to the overall economies of the countries of origin is more considerable than official development assistance. Therefore, there is a need to take more action aimed at reducing the transfer fees tied to migrant remittances in order to increase the benefits derived from them. The important contribution of remittances to the economies of the sending countries should not be used as a pretext to reduce the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to developing countries.

It is well known that migrants who return home bring with them expertise and savings. They use their expertise to transfer the know-how they acquired in countries of destination to their countries of origin. Moreover, they use their savings to start businesses that contribute to job creation in countries of origin and reduce unemployment rates.

In countries of destination, migrants are complementary to, rather than substitute for the larger majority of workers in the receiving countries. The inflows of low skilled migrants help to fill jobs that are no longer attractive to the local population. Migrant workers help also to maintain the existence of services that would have otherwise disappeared.

However, migrants are not only low-skilled workers; many are highly skilled. This phenomenon is known as the "brain drain." It negatively affects the economy of certain countries that suffer from the lack of skilled laborers in the health and education sectors. Unfortunately, in many countries skilled laborers are not allowed to work in fields commensurate with their qualifications because of the lack of mutual recognition of degrees, certificates, and qualifications obtained abroad. There is a need for international cooperation in order to improve the portability of qualifications.

The receiving states should respect the human rights of migrants. The receiving states, along with the countries of origin, should combat and incriminate the trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. Also, the receiving states should provide migrants with equal treatment and should prohibit all sorts of discrimination. The successful integration of migrants hinges upon their protection from racism, xenophobia and ethnocentrism.

In conclusion, it is important to mention that migrants contribute greatly to the dialogue between culture and civilizations. They actually represent one of the most initial encounters between different civilizations and cultures. The success of such a dialogue hinges upon the acceptance of the differences they represent in the hosting societies and upon the recognition of this difference as a source of enrichment rather than discord.