

PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and
Cooperation of Portugal

His Excellency Dr. João Gomes Cravinho

on the occasion of the

High-Level Dialogue of the General Assembly on
International Migration and Development

New York, 14 September 2006

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Mme. President of the General Assembly,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me at the outset, Madam President, to congratulate you on your recent election, and to wish you the very best success in carrying out your distinguished responsibilities.

I would like to align this statement with the one made earlier by Finland, in its capacity as President of the European Union. This is, for Portugal, a uniquely important moment for us to contribute some additional views that are of particular relevance to us.

This year has been witness to a number of international gatherings dedicated to the theme of migration, in cities such as Brussels, Turin, and most importantly Rabat in July. Today and tomorrow we take another step in this international dialogue, and before the year is out we shall have further opportunities to take the discussion forward.

It has become clear, that despite controversies and divergences of opinion, we can identify important lines of consensus.

The first concerns the urgent need to address migration in a shared and responsible way, since the issue will not simply disappear if unattended.

Secondly, stable and effective responses cannot be merely national, but must be based upon international approaches, at the regional and global levels, focusing both on south-north migration and on south-south migration flows.

And the third line of consensus is that sustainable responses must be multidimensional and coherent, involving management of migration flows, integration of migrant communities and development promotion.

We believe that these lines of convergence constitute a valuable starting point for discussions. The Secretary General's Report for this High Level Dialogue states that "Governments understand that their citizens working abroad can be development assets and are strengthening ties with them... ". In this regard, we should recognize the importance of the great potential of diaspora organizations as an instrument of development for countries of origin. In addition to this, and, benefiting from our own historical experience, the positive impact that remittances can have upon developing countries should also be included in this consensus.

Madam President,

Portugal recognizes that the linkages between international migration and development are complex. Globalisation poses great challenges for the management of migration flows. But it is clear, that migration, when managed effectively, can make enormous contributions, both for the host country and for the country of origin. It is important to bear this in mind as we develop our policy responses. Indeed, migratory flows are a widespread and very positive experience in human history, and we must not fall into the trap of promoting policies that focus on a single aspect of migration, whatever the pressures from unbalanced media portrayals may be.

Migration flows must be managed in such a way that the awarding of entry clearance for a migrant should always be synchronised with integration measures that prevent social exclusion, while reinforcing fair treatment before the law for migrants and their families, for example in terms of access to education, health care and employment under national systems.

From the development perspective, it is important to focus our attention on the poorest countries, namely in Africa. In this context, we attach great importance to supporting capacity in the fields of institutional building, peace and conflict prevention, human rights, democracy and the rule of law and poverty eradication as these factors, which are lacking in many countries, are among the root causes of migration.

Again according to the Secretary General's Report, and civil society hearings for this High Level Dialogue, the integration of immigrants must play a key role within national and regional policies. Effective integration of migrant workers in globalised labour markets is critical. The relation with migrant communities should enable them to feel at home, and enjoy their rights as well as enforce their duties, but also give them space to preserve their identities and keep their roots alive.

In my country, we have been experiencing a substantial growth in migration flows and its diversification in quality terms, and that constitutes a very interesting challenge to our society, and a valuable opportunity. Being a host country, after many decades of being a country of origin of migration, has led us to engage in efforts of coordination within different sectors of public policies that have an impact on migration.

Madam President, distinguished delegates,

We are currently in the process of adopting a global and integrated migration policy that highlights the social, economic and cultural advantages of the phenomenon without ignoring the challenges involved. We are working towards promoting various forms of legal immigration, with a view to further discouraging illicit entry.

In this new legislation being promoted by the Portuguese Government, special consideration is given to the issues of flexibility related to circular migration flows and temporary migration visas.

In this legislation, attention is also given to repressing the violence deriving from all forms of trafficking in human beings, which affects in particular women and children. The new migration law intensifies prevention efforts by focusing on illegal recruitment networks and traffic in human beings, while at the same time implement measures to support the victims. As we all know, development cannot be achieved at the expenses of human rights.

It is essential to have appropriate statistical mechanisms to assess numbers, and also possess the capacity to analyse, interpret and use such data. We recently created an observatory of migration movements between the Portuguese Speaking Countries

Our interest in these issues will continue to be discussed in Portugal through out 2006 and 2007. Migrant flows are still very significantly coming from CPLP countries (Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries), which, for historical reasons, are simultaneously the main recipients of Portuguese development assistance. In recognition of this link, we organised with the IOM office in Lisbon, a Seminar in June, on the role of the CPLP diaspora in promoting development in their countries of origin. In October, Lisbon will also be hosting the important Metropolis Conference between 2-October, under the special theme "Path and Crossroads: Moving People, Changing Places".

Another new step, is that Portugal and Cape Verde are in the process of institutionalising a joint working group, designed to define common strategies that are appropriate for the specificity of Cape-verdian immigration in Portugal (which is also a transit country for cape-verdian immigration to other countries), including second generation migrants. In short, to address the issues pertaining to migration in their multiple components.

On the issue of remittances, which are of course private flows, we believe that more can be learnt and done about their contribution to the development of countries of origin. Portugal has promoted a research study on remittances with the Interamerican Development Bank, and we have further work in the pipeline, on this important issue, with other partners.

Madam President, allow me to end with a reference to two pivotal arenas of dialogue on migrations in which we shall invest strongly over the coming year:

The dialogue between Europe and Africa is an extremely appropriate framework for placing migration issues within a broader context of a strengthened EU- Africa