

Statement by Ambassador Masood Khan,
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations,
at the 90TH Session of the IOM Council
Geneva, 29 November 2005

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished colleagues,

I welcome you to the 90th session of the IOM Council. I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Luis Alfonso De Alba, Permanent Representative of Mexico, for his able leadership of the Council last year. His focused attention to the core issues of migration and his country's association with matters relating to migration made a rich contribution to the deliberations and decisions of the Council.

I would also take this opportunity to thank Mr. Brunson McKinley, the able and amiable Director General of the IOM. The leadership provided by him is firm and enlightened. The constant guidance by his very competent and I must say talented team, has created a new environment for interaction and result-oriented decisions in the Council. Under Mr. McKinley's direction, the IOM is reaching out to all stakeholders – governments, relevant international organizations, international financial institutions, businesses and civil society.

IOM has provided critical help in handling relief and rescue operations following the devastating earthquake in Pakistan. As part of a UN led effort, IOM handled the cluster of shelter. Mr. McKinley was recently in Pakistan to attend the donors' conference on November 19. Thank you so much for your support and standing by us in this hour of trial.

For global economy, migration is a factor of production and an agent for development. Today, globalization of trade and capital cannot be separated from the movement of people across the borders in search of livelihoods. The information revolution is further spurring migration.

The economic logic for migration is compelling. The challenge for us is to sort our political, cultural, religious dimensions of large movements of migrants across national frontiers and continents. We have to develop policies so that one can change brain drain to brain-gain.

Most importantly, we have to protect rights of migrants and immigrants, fight the vicious human trafficking in the guise of migration and root out terrorism in a manner that innocent, law abiding immigrants are not persecuted by societies and law enforcement agencies.

We have to further examine the long term validity and utility of the proposals to create temporary and circular migration. What we require to do is to compute the economic value of intending migrants, make temporary work programmes more hospitable and target flows of migrants' remittances to development activities. However, migration cannot and should not be viewed as a substitute for economic development in the origin countries, as pointed out by the World Bank.

We are moving past the stage of weighing the pros and cons of migration. Migration's benefits are proven. Both developed and developing countries need migration now and in future. We are at a stage where we are looking at strategies to manage migration flows in an effective, efficient and productive manner, through capacity building, system wide coherence, and enhanced cooperation.

World demographers estimate that some 200 million people or roughly 3% of the world population are migrants. Other things remaining the same, in an ideal world, free migration can help equalize wages and increase the global income manifold. In the real world, if we ease restrictions even by a small margin, we can dramatically improve living conditions and life styles in the developing countries.

According to World Bank, migrants are expected to send more than \$ 167 billion back to their developing countries this year. This amount equals foreign direct investment flows in developing countries and constitutes twice the value of foreign assistance. South-South remittances are also substantial and are on the rise. My country Pakistan alone received \$ 4.1 billion in remittances last year.

Recent studies have dismantled some persistent myths about migrants. They do not pilfer jobs. Their jobs do not have an adverse impact on the wages in the destination countries. They are not a net burden on taxpayers by using social security benefits. In several countries migrants contribute more in taxes than they receive in benefits in health and education services.

This year we have witnessed an unprecedented focus on migration, and rightly so. Three seminal reports – World Migration 2005; the GCIM Report; and World Bank's Global Economic Prospect 2006 – set out the agenda for our discussions in the current session. The content of these reports is rich and action oriented. In our programme for the next two days, we will look at the cross cutting issue of coherence. Review migration developments in 2005 and examine correlation between migration and development. The new IOM Business Advisory Board will share its perspectives with us. Our general debate that follows will be timely and

opportune as we would be able to transmit our conclusions to the high level dialogue on migration and development scheduled to be held in New York in September 2006.

As we go along, I look forward to an intense and fruitful interaction amongst all members and stakeholders.

As I was preparing for the chairmanship of the Council, I came across a recurrent theme in all the literature on migration produced recently. Migration suffers from neglect at the national, regional and international level. Within governments, the issue competes with other pressing issues. At the international level, it is still treated as a soft issue. My appeal to the governments will be to accord high priority to migration in decision making, resource allocation and economic planning. Internationally, decision making is diffuse and incoherent. We should reinforce the efforts of IOM to create a new international synergy to develop and implement policies on migration.

In the conduct of the proceedings, I would pay special attention to time management. In this regard, I will need your support all the way. Once agreed, we shall observe time limits without exception.

I thank you.