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Statement by
H.E. Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations
at the 94th session of the Council of
the International Organization for Migration (IOM)
29 November 2007

Mr. Chairperson,

I congratulate you on your election and assure you of our full support.

Bangladesh warmly welcomes Burundi and Viet Nam as new IOM members.

We appreciate the statement made by Director General Brunson McKinley this morning. He has highlighted the expanding role of IOM in assisting developing countries. We support this trend and encourage IOM to further address the concerns of developing countries, in particular the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

In doing so, IOM should not remain preoccupied with its traditional concerns. The international migration landscape is evolving rapidly. IOM must remain ahead of the changes and position itself proactively in a way that enables it to respond to new challenges and opportunities.

The high level panel discussions held during the International Dialogue on Migration have identified gaps and loopholes that allow exploitation of migrants and denial of their human rights. Sending, transit and host countries must all come together to bridge these gaps and promote safe and legal migration. Only concerted efforts would prevent human misery faced by migrants in all parts of the world.

Mr. Chairperson,

If there is one area that calls for greater attention, it is short term and circular labour migration. The world needs an inclusive, transparent and structured framework to facilitate the orderly movement of temporary service providers. We urge the international community to undertake measures for liberalization of markets for the movement of all types of service providers. We urge the Council and the IOM to take this issue up.

It is well recognized that managed international migration and short-term labour movement bring benefits to both sending and receiving countries. We heard the excellent presentation of the World Migration Report 2008 on the opening day of the Council. The Report has recognized the positive implications of short-term labour migration on economic development.

We were happy to see the adoption of the IOM Strategy last June. It sets the Organization's focus for the coming years. We would like to highlight one particular strategy which states that IOM will focus on supporting the efforts of States in the area of labour migration, in particular short-term movements, and other types of circular movements.

The Director General, in his statement, has indicated that IOM has adjusted its programme and budgetary documents to show how its projects would fit in with

the strategy identified by the Council. We note that some ambiguity still remains in the relevant sections of the "Blue Book" that try to establish linkages between the various strategies and IOM programme areas. We call upon the IOM Secretariat to elaborate further on how the Organization plans to mainstream each of the strategies in its areas of work.

Let me briefly touch on a few additional issues that are important from our perspective.

First, the issue of facilitation of remittance flows. We encourage IOM to bring together Governments, the private sector and relevant stakeholders for facilitating flow of remittances. Host countries should ensure unhindered transfer of remittances through institutional channels to the sending countries. The sending countries and their service providers should help migrants use remittances wisely and invest in productive sectors.

Second, capacity building of sending countries and their private sectors would greatly enhance safe and legal migration. It will also increase the benefits of migration, resulting in better standards of living for the migrants and their families and bring overall economic development. International assistance for such capacity building would be a win-win outcome for all concerned.

Third, concerted efforts are needed to ensure fair treatment, decent work, minimum wage and recognition of the status of migrant workers. We must protect the human rights of all migrant workers and their family members as well as prevent exploitation and trafficking in persons. We call upon the receiving countries to abide by all international and national covenants, legislations and regulations.

Fourth, the vicious circle between environmental degradation and migration needs to be broken. Bangladesh has long experience and well-established procedures of successfully moving large populations in the wake of natural disasters, most recently during the cyclone that struck us two weeks back. We also suffer from other environmental challenges and many of them cause movements of populations. Since these movements are internal in nature, the concerned States will continue to play the most significant role in prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation. International support to their efforts should be expanded. Given the multiplicity of international actors involved in this vast, complex and interlinked issue, IOM needs to identify its niche, the areas where it has the capacity to assist. We would request the Director General to present a document at a future Council meeting identifying what the IOM can do in this area. This will add predictability to IOM's current practice of responding to requests by member States as and when received and allow IOM to build further its disaster mitigation capacity.

Finally, Bangladesh has put forth a specific proposal to the IOM. We continue to stress that time has come for establishing an IOM Contingency Fund to assist stranded migrants. Such a fund would enhance IOM's flexibility in assisting individuals who are being subjected to inhumane sufferings in emergency situations, primarily as a consequence of activities of human traffickers.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.