

STATEMENT BY MS. ELIZABETH ADJEI, DIRECTOR
OF GHANA IMMIGRATION SERVICE AT THE 94TH SESSION
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
FOR MIGRATION

Mr. Chairman,

Ghana has followed keenly the international debate on migration and development. Like many other countries, migration was analysed in negative terms with Brain Drain and migration of skilled personnel, particularly in health and education as the central focus. Over the last few years, Ghana has closely monitored and welcomed a shift in the paradigm in the discourse that attempts to link migration to development.

It is important to address the root causes of migration, which are mainly inequality, marginalization and globalization. These drivers have made life difficult for many thereby compelling them to risk their lives in an effort to improve conditions for themselves and their families. The unprecedented large movements of people to explore new horizons that we are witnessing are therefore likely to continue for some years to come.

But beyond this, we need to take cognisance of the significant contributions that migrants make to development through remittances, investment and transfer of knowledge and skill, which is now largely viewed as a tool for development. Ghana recognizes that migrants enjoy significant economic gains and these gains must be harnessed for development. Indeed, in Ghana, as in many developing countries, remittances provide macro stability, and also provide sustenance for some

households. But the positive benefits of migration will not come about without responsible, concerted government actions. There is the need for a comprehensive approach to the management of this phenomenon in order to maximise the benefits and reduce the risk of death and illegality associated with migration.

Ghana has taken up the challenge. In the last two years, since Ghana became a member of the IOM, Ghana has pursued several policies to move migration to a priority position of the political and development agenda. Ghana has actively participated in various international forums to update her knowledge and improve national capacity in the area of Migration and Development. Ghana participated in the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) at the Ministerial level, contributing two panellists to the latter. Ghana was represented at the Euro-Africa Conference on Migration and development in Rabat and Tripoli, as well as the Follow-up action in Madrid.

In 2007, Ghana hosted and had discussions with a high-level EU delegation on strategies to enhance the migration/development nexus. Ghana was also venue for a UNDP-sponsored Regional Conference on Remittances. Further, at the beginning of November 2007, a Centre for Migration Research was opened at the University of Ghana, which Center is the first in West Africa dedicated to data collection and analysis, as well as research on Migration in Ghana and West Africa to support policy development. In addition, Ghana has set up a Migration Unit to enhance

institutional and Policy coherence and is currently working on a national policy on Migration to better coordinate programmes with partners.

Mr. Chair, Irregular migration has become a serious problem in the West African sub-region. The proximity of Europe and the vast difference in relative economies has sparked off a dangerous phenomenon of movements, often resulting in thousands of deaths and unprecedented increase in the stock of migrants in the Mediterranean countries. Political and diplomatic level initiatives are required to tackle this. Ghana has already taken steps to address this phenomenon through the mechanism of information campaigns. With assistance from the IOM, ILO and UNDP, Ghana has set up a robust system of communication to assist would-be migrants make informed decisions with credible information. The campaign targets schools and other potential migrants through radio, television, billboards and a hotline at the Ghana Immigration Service to reach out to migrants.

Ghana will however, like to highlight certain areas of concern which this august assembly may consider in this debate for the way forward for a comprehensive approach to manage migration. Migration is seen as good for poverty reduction and for bridging the income divide to accelerate the convergence of society. If this is the case, then migration must be facilitated rather than discouraged with extreme visa restrictions, investment in twenty-four (24) hour surveillance etc. Even though national security argument is important, it is a fact that in most developed

countries, migration is linked to illegality and criminality and there is a campaign of fear among populations. For most of Europe for example, managed migration means more control, 24 hour surveillance and emphasis on returns. And why must developing countries cooperate to reduce the outflow when, what is desired is more migration? We wish to call for more equal bilateral partnerships to create a more integrated approach through understanding and negotiation.

Labour Migration is a historical and current reality in Africa. Establishing, regular, orderly channels and policies for labour migration at the national and regional levels can result in significant benefits for origin and destination countries. This is a very sensitive subject where knowledge is still scant. However, the management of this sensitive segment is left to sovereign national governments, and there is no coordinated international approach or legal framework to manage this. We wish to recommend that some framework should be developed to assist in the development of concerted policies to ensure consistent implementation.

Ghana supports a broader approach to labour migration to include mobility partnerships and establishment of functional quota systems to facilitate legal and orderly migration of labour. In this regard, Ghana would like to call for international standards and instruments to regulate labour migration, as well adequate capacity for stakeholders in labour migration issues. In addition, investment of developed countries should be targeted

to benefit potential migrants to improve competitiveness as well as their ability to find appropriate employment in the receiving country.

Institutional frameworks are required at the national level to manage migration flows to redound benefits. Capacity development in migration management is required for robust data collection and analysis, management of Diaspora resources and remittances for development, as well as helping manage brain drain.

Finally, it is an acceptable fact that there is interdependence between migration, economic growth and development. In addressing the root causes of migration opportunities and circumstances in the countries of origin need to improve in order to encourage citizens to stay. This requires increased investment in health, governance, education, infrastructure etc in developing countries. Is there a political will for developed countries to increase their percentage of development budget to poor countries? It is reported in the literature, that at the moment, more money is spent on migration control than on development. Experts argue that if more money is channelled into poverty alleviation, infrastructure development and micro credits, this could make the standard of living in developing countries more desirable and thereby reduce the push factors for migration.

Thank you.