



PHILIPPINES

**Statement of H.E. Albert F. Del Rosario
Secretary (Minister) of Foreign Affairs
Republic of the Philippines**

**100th Session of the International Organization for Migration Council
60th Anniversary of the IOM Council
Geneva, Switzerland
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MIGRATION MUST PUT PEOPLE FIRST

Mr. President,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Movement defines our globalizing world. The free flow of ideas through information and communications technology and the open exchange of goods and services through economic integration are its staples.

Migration is an integral part of the fabric of globalization. Yet the movement of people across borders has been one of its least appreciated dimensions.

When we really think of it – people, in fact, are the best transmitters of knowledge and information. Migrants bring with them the skills and expertise which can help economies and societies grow and compete in this globalizing era.

How the international community cultivates migration and reaps its benefits, while reducing its possible negative effects, is the challenge the global community must boldly face, as we celebrate this historic 60th anniversary of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. President,

Allow me to warmly congratulate Director-General William Lacy Swing, the management and the whole staff of the IOM for the outstanding work they have achieved which provides a fitting backdrop to this anniversary.

We are particularly impressed with the vision and leadership of the Director-General and the quality of reports and projects which the Organization has been pursuing, particularly on the ground, through its assistance to migrants caught in crisis situations.

The ability to respond effectively to emergencies, to mobilize and deploy resources and to focus international attention is the hallmark of IOM operations. The Philippines highly appreciates the IOM's assistance in the evacuation of its citizens from troubled areas in recent years. We strongly support the establishment of a new IOM Emergency Funding Mechanism that would further enhance the Organization's capacity to assist governments and migrants affected by crises.

The Philippines has enjoyed a fruitful partnership with the IOM. In this regard, the Philippines hosts the Organization's Administrative Center for the Asia-Pacific, which is a key pillar of IOM's global presence. The Manila Administrative Centre (MAC) operates with 300 employees at a cost one-tenth of what it would be if it were operating in a developed country. The MAC serves as a model of efficiency in these difficult financial times. We shall continue strengthening this partnership of mutual benefit into the future.

Mr. President,

The Philippines fully shares the goal of the IOM to promote safe and humane migration. In this light, we recognize the Organization's efforts to curb human trafficking and provide assistance to its victims.

In the Philippines, the Government attaches the greatest importance to poverty alleviation, social welfare, education and employment generation as key national development objectives.

Nevertheless, with roughly 10 percent of our population working abroad, the Philippines is deeply concerned with the welfare and human rights of our citizens who respond to the worldwide demand for migrant labor and expertise.

~~Protecting our migrants is one of the three main pillars of Philippine foreign policy.~~

The Philippine Government places its people first in its migration management system. Our experience is what we can share with the Organization and with its members and observers. As the Philippines is ready to share its best practices, so we are prepared to learn from others.

The Philippines implements a migrant-centered approach to the entire migration cycle, from pre-departure preparation to integration after returning to the home country. At each stage of the cycle, we have bolstered efforts to extend migrant services and assistance.

We recently amended our Migrant Workers' Act, strengthening regulation of recruitment agencies and other measures to protect our migrants from abuse and maltreatment abroad. We are introducing minimum wages for domestic workers through standardized contracts wherever possible. We have empowered Filipino overseas to exercise their right to vote in national elections through our Philippine embassies and consulates.

Having said this, Mr. President, I must add that while the Philippines is doing all it can to protect its migrants, its efforts can come to naught if other countries, particularly destination countries, do not also do their part.

We believe that the IOM, working together with other international organizations within the Global Migration Group, can help encourage closer and more effective international consultation and cooperation to close loopholes and gaps in migrant protection. More regular and safe avenues for migration should be promoted. And effective mechanisms for adequate skills matching and recognition should be institutionalized.

It is absolutely necessary that greater respect for the basic human rights of all migrants, including irregular migrants, be secured. The Philippines, like other countries, is concerned over growing instances of discrimination and xenophobia against migrants. All states should acknowledge and respect the human dignity and contribution of migrants to their host and destination societies.

Lower skilled migrants and domestic workers especially deserve a fairer deal in terms of job security, adequate wages, work conditions and social benefits. The rights to family reunification and access to consular authorities should be upheld without exception.

We encourage states which have not yet done so to ratify, as a matter of priority, the *International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.

We also encourage states to consider ratifying the new *ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers*.

Mr. President,

Migration is an engine of growth that supports economic and social development and should be even more so in the current economic downtrend.

It is an opportunity, and not a threat, for the international community as a whole. Migrants help societies grow through skills and cultural diversity – which should be welcomed as an asset in this globalized world.

Open avenues and bridges, not walls and fences, are the only way to manage global migration justly, equitably and for the mutual advantage of all.

Migrant diaspora communities expand networks across borders and to raise standards of living in both home and destination countries. Migrants are sources of knowledge, capital, goods and services. They promote commerce and local business. They enrich societies through exchange of cultures and perspectives.

The remittances and savings of migrants are often channeled into grassroots community development and social projects, complementing government programs geared towards making local communities self-sufficient and less dependent on foreign assistance. More importantly, remittances send millions of children to school, and are thus also an important investment in the future.

We would like to see the IOM further enhance engagement with migrant diaspora communities for development, and would be keen to forge cooperation in this regard.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, on behalf of my government, I thank members of the international community that have given recognition to our experience in managing migration by looking at our policies for application in their own countries. For our country, this labor remains always a work in progress. Our policies and programs are always being refined, strengthened and improved to address changing realities on the ground and the emerging needs of migrants themselves.

Once again, we congratulate the Organization for a job well done over the past 60 years. Rest assured of cooperation and support to the IOM, by continuing to put people first in our efforts to promote more orderly and humane migration for the benefit of all.

Thank you and *Mabuhay!*