

Statement by Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, at the 96th session IOM Council, Geneva, 2 December 2008

Mr. President

Bangladesh congratulates the newly elected Bureau under your leadership and assures it of our full support.

Let me express my appreciation to the Director General and the Deputy Director General for their important addresses to the Council.

If the first 100 days' in office is a sign of things to come, then we are reassured that we would be having a Director General who would engage Member States more and effectively address the growing demands placed by all stakeholders on the Organization.

Mr. Director General, we see in you a leader who is keen to respond to the changing times. And surely, the times are changing. We see more and more temporary migrations in search of livelihoods. We see that benefits of such migration accrue to sending and receiving states alike. We see how the increasing flow of remittances is changing the lives of individuals and communities for the better. Yet, we also encounter emerging challenges as the global economy slows down, the price of oil falls, overseas jobs dry up, discrimination against migrants go on the rise and their rights are not respected.

Therefore, we have to talk about IOM's future evolution in the context of the challenges of contemporary mobility. The Secretariat and the membership now must think together to ensure that the future evolution of IOM would be done in a way that would preserve, and indeed strengthen, the Organization's activities related to contemporary human mobility.

Mr. President,

In our view, three broad factors would shape the future of human mobility and therefore should relate to an evolving IOM.

First, IOM must take a lead role in identifying how the global economic downturn would impact the world of migration, with a particular focus on labour mobility. It must seek the views of Member States and examine trends in various labour markets to come up with a set of policy recommendations for promoting orderly, secure and beneficial migration in the current context. The development impact of migration cannot be over-emphasized and a stronger pro-migration role of IOM would benefit sending and receiving States alike. In taking up this task, IOM needs to work closely with other UN agencies. A greater synergy with the UN

system, while keeping intact IOM's comparative advantage, would increase the Organization's effectiveness in dealing with the emerging migration issues.

Second, the world economy may be cooling down, but the world is heating up. Climate change is threatening to create millions of environmental migrants. IOM cannot be indifferent to the needs of such unwilling migrants. It is worrying to note in particular that there are very few IOM programmes addressing the effects of climate change. We would urge the Director General to highlight this deficit and encourage donors to step up their contributions in this area. After all, climate change does not spare anyone and it is only prudent to be prepared and stay ahead of the upward curve of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change.

Finally, gone are the days of the north-south nature of migration. As developing countries experienced rapid growth and infrastructure boom over the last few decades, south-south migratory flows became significant. This shift is likely to continue despite the global economic slowdown. Labour mobility, in particular, may actually take a markedly south-south orientation as expanding and diversifying labour markets in developing countries may generate the need for more foreign workers in various skills categories. IOM must pay due attention to this longer-term trend and position itself to be able to provide services that would be required in the context of increasing south-south migration. One way to do that would be to strengthen its support to the various regional consultative processes, like the Colombo Process in Asia, to inter-regional dialogues on migration issues and to the global migration and development discourse undertaken by the GFMD.

Mr. President,

In a world of shifting trends and pitfalls, the IOM administration must chart a course based on the Strategy collectively prescribed by its membership. We are encouraged to hear that the Director General would guide the organization towards expanding its cutting-edge programmes in migration and development and labour mobility as well as widen its involvement in such expanding fields as migration and the environment.

Bangladesh has remained a steadfast supporter of IOM activities. We have hosted the regional office in Dhaka for nearly a decade and a half, and it has helped promote migration-related activities across the region. Its workload is expected to increase now that all South Asian countries are members of IOM. Let me therefore conclude by expressing our continued commitment to provide support to that office as well as to IOM here in Geneva.

I thank you Mr. President.