

Statement by H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hannan
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
at the Ninety-ninth Session of the IOM Council
Geneva, 30 November 2010

Allow me felicitate you, Mr. Chairman, and members of your bureau, most warmly on your well deserved election. I am confident that with your wealth of knowledge and experience you will surely guide our deliberations to fruition. In the same vein, I would like to register our deep appreciation to Ambassador Shinichi Kitajima for successfully leading us with his characteristic hard work and humour over the past year.

Bangladesh warmly welcomes the newly admitted Members States and organizations to the fold of IOM family. We believe their contributions will further enrich our work.

Mr. Chairman,
Director General Swing
Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking Director General Swing for his informative and incisive report.

We meet at a time when the world is witnessing the highest number of migrants ever. In the changing demographic landscape the trend is likely to continue. This makes our work all the more important and IOM all the more relevant. We would, therefore, encourage IOM to continue to play a leading role in policy area through collaborative partnerships and contributions to policy debates.

We fully concur with the DG that there is a clearly recognized need to improve the perception about migrants. An adverse public perception tends to distort national policy debates against the interests of the migrants in the destination countries. This becomes even more pronounced during times of economic stress, as we have witnessed during the recent financial crisis. There have been xenophobic and racial backlash against migrants and their families in a number of countries. In many cases, migrants were the first ones to have lost their jobs and were repatriated without adequate compensation and irrespective of their past records and contributions. Again, in some cases, there were cancellations of recruitment contracts for migrant workers in the face of opposition from internal pressure groups. A closer look would reveal a common element running through all these situations: Migrants are often

misperceived as the "other" or the "outsiders" posing potential threats or competition in various forms. In some cases, they turn into easy targets for maligned campaigns or racially motivated attacks. Public perception may not be changed overnight. It would require a sustained multi-pronged effort involving various actors to develop a balanced and well-informed public opinion about migrants. We would therefore encourage IOM to continue to work on dispelling the misperceptions about migrants.

While it is true that even during the crisis there has been an increase in remittance flow, from our national experience, we attribute this to two factors: first, there has been a sustained effort on part of the government to encourage migrants to send their remittances through official channels and secondly, due to crisis, the need for funds for the family at home increased, hence the migrant workers sent more money back home, sacrificing their own comfort and well being.

We believe that RCPs (Regional Consultative Processes) have important complementary role to play in the migration discourse. As the current chair, Bangladesh intends to host Colombo Process Ministerial Meeting in first half of 2011 in Dhaka. We laud the support received from IOM and the DG's personal commitment in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

Providing migration services is one of the founding purposes of IOM. The Organization is already doing commendable work on border management. We would expect IOM to provide greater assistance in other areas of migration services which would help in building migration management capacities for change as envisaged by the Director General.

We also greatly appreciate IOM's response to natural disaster hit regions. Alongside the erratic climatic events, we must also be mindful of the adverse impacts of climate change which are silent but sure. In the recently held GFMD, participants indicated huge interest and viewed that much work deserved to be done in this area. As a climate change frontline state, Bangladesh believes that IOM has a greater and important role in addressing climate change induced migration and will have to mainstream the issue in its future work. In this regard, we are thankful to the DG for commissioning the study, "Assessing the Evidence: Environment, Climate Change and Migration in Bangladesh" and also leading the event on Climate Change, Environment and Migration Alliance at the sidelines of COP-16 in Cancun next week.

Mr. Chairman,

Responding to the migration mega-trend, IOM will have to scale up its activities in future. This will not be possible unless we provide the Organization with necessary wherewithal. We therefore support the idea of broadening its resource base to be able to service the growing requirements of the Member States.

I thank you.