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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (ICPD)

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Mr. President,

Madam Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Organization for Migration is pleased to address the International Conference on Population and Development Egypt, a country serving as an example of both staggering challenges and important achievements in the population field, is well placed to host this important gathering.

Mr. President,

Hardly a day passes without news confirming that migration has moved to the top of the international agenda. No longer can migration consequences be ignored when considering national and international actions to address conflict or conflict prone situations around the world. The growing significance of migration in international affairs is, in our view, well reflected in chapters IX and X of the draft Conference document.

The ICPD offers an excellent opportunity to examine the important links between population, development and migration and to affirm that progress is indeed possible, and necessary, on these intertwined issues. We must seize this unique opportunity to move these issues higher up on the global political agenda.

Distinguished delegates,

Unprecedented numbers of people are on the move. UN estimates speak of 750 million to 1 billion people who migrated between 1975 and

1985. Chapter X of the Conference Report regarding "International Migration" estimates that there are currently about 125 million international migrants in the world, including refugees. Furthermore, recent reports about current and expected massive rural-urban movements in the most populous countries of our planet suggest serious new challenges ahead.

Increasing recognition of the global relevance of the movements of people is understandable in view of recent trends: in the 20 years since Bucharest, world population has grown by 45%, the number of international migrants has doubled and the number of refugees has increased ten-fold. The upward trend has been even steeper since the world community discussed population matters in Mexico: a 55% increase in the number of international migrants over the past ten years. Governmental concerns about imbalances in the large numbers of migrants on the move and their ability to absorb additional immigration, also have changed drastically over the past two decades, with a growing number of responsible government officials expressing dissatisfaction with current immigration rates.

At the same time, in a world of escalating conflicts, migration is being chosen by an increasing number of the world's disadvantaged as a way to overcome failures of their governments and societies: failure to provide adequate education, work, shelter and health care, failure to safeguard the environment, failure on the part of too many governments to protect, defend and support the rights and legitimate needs of their citizens - in short: failure to achieve sustainable development.

This lack of security and opportunity at home, combined with few legal migration options, creates an upsurge in irregular migration. The individuals involved in contemporary irregular migration might therefore

be thought as the visible messengers of the societal failures which are driving migration dynamics .

But these messengers too often also become the scapegoats of an international community unwilling or unable to focus on the underlying causes. Instead, we have become too prone to blame the messengers: if we can only get them out-of-sight and out-of-mind, the problem will be solved. And the vicious circle continues to spiral out of control.

The positive elements in the migration process, therefore, tend to become overshadowed by the human drama and concerns about security often associated with uncontrolled migration. It becomes too easy to forget that migration is not always a zero-sum game resulting in winners and losers. Advantages for countries of immigration, of emigration, the individual migrant and his or her family have historically exceeded the Perceived or real disadvantages.

Professional transient migration - the movement of skilled and professional workers - provides one example of the positive effects of international migration. The return of qualified nationals to developing countries is another. Traditional immigration countries frequently testify to the valuable contributions made by immigrants bringing in skills and cultural diversity. The constructive role of remittances, recognized in the draft final document, deserves our attention. It is interesting to note that the current monetary value of remittances far exceeds all development aid provided to developing countries. Constructive immigration often results in job creation through higher consumption, business formation and other stimuli of the economy.

Given these conflicting trends and developments, how can the

international community respond, then, to the challenge to simultaneously prevent, channel and utilize migration? And assure its beneficial consequences?

The Conference document gives useful guidance in this regard when it says that governments of countries of origin and destination should seek to make the option of remaining in one's country viable for all people. No one should be forced to migrate in order to survive. If greater progress toward sustainable development could then be made, it would be possible to promote legal migration, temporary and permanent, as a rational and orderly choice to meet logical ambitions, business opportunities, educational preparations or a host of other legitimate needs. In such a world "survival migration could and should become obsolete.

In the view of the organization I represent, a comprehensive global approach is required to move toward these goals. A comprehensive global approach would include the following:

- International trade, investment and aid policies would have to focus more on countries that produce refugees and migrants. Creating jobs and stability could foster development and stem outflows. Rural areas should be especially targeted to discourage moves to overcrowded urban centers.

- Migration policies and programmes would have to be revised to ensure that they appropriately respond to external pressures and domestic needs.

- The role of women in migration should command particular consideration. Women frequently bear a major burden in migration

scenarios, either as particularly vulnerable migrants in need of protection or as the ones in charge of the family unit left behind when male members leave as migrant workers, Within overall protection of migrants their rights need to be especially safeguarded.

- Appropriate governmental migration structures in sending, transit and receiving countries would have to be strengthened or, in some cases, developed. As we have seen, absence of migration regimes is an invitation to irregular flows.

- Legal migration possibilities temporary - would need to be increased.

- Programmes supporting migrants who return voluntarily to their home countries would require greater attention. They should focus on ways to encourage speedy reintegration, in particular through job and income generation.

And finally, information should be gathered and analyzed at every relevant stage of the migration process. Potential migrants should be recipients as well as sources of credible data.

National, regional and global migratory flows and trends should be examined methodically and over time. In-depth surveys are important tools to establish greater knowledge about causes, dynamics and consequences of migration. Such information will be critical as we move toward solutions. Research currently undertaken collaboratively by IOM and UNFPA, in three particularly high population regions, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, is already beginning to provide such information. We hope that a similar approach on migration in the Arab

World will soon complement this important analysis.

Mr. President,

The International Organization for Migration has recently intensified its cooperation with other agencies involved in the various aspects of the migration phenomena. A joint publication on Migrants, Refugees and International Cooperation produced for this conference gives testimony to the teamwork by the International Labor Organization, the High Commissioner for Refugees and IOM. This publication describes in some detail, Proposed solutions mentioned in my statement.

The immense challenges facing the international community are these: to manage refugee and migratory movements in a way which upholds basic human rights and humanitarian principles, to respond to the concerns of the States and communities which receive migrants and refugees, to seek durable solutions in some regions while taking strong preventive measures in others. The answers lie not in building walls but in seizing the opportunities presented by the end of the Cold War - the opportunities of international cooperation and collective action.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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