



IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations  
OIM **Organización** Internacional **para las** Migraciones

**TWENTY FIRST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR  
THE OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**STATEMENT BY**

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**IOM Statement to the 21<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly:**  
*Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD*

Mr. President distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its Director General, Mr. Brunson McKinley, I would like to convey our appreciation for the opportunity to address this Special Session of the General Assembly.

For the work of our organization, the ICPD Programme of Action - in particular Chapter X dealing with international migration - is a key instrument for planning and policy guidance. My remarks today will focus on that topic.

A central objective of Chapter X is "to encourage more co-operation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination." In the five years since Cairo, regional and sub-regional intergovernmental dialogue on migration issues has greatly expanded around the globe. Here are a few examples:

Since 1996, governments in Central and North America, with substantive and logistical support from IOM, have been holding regular regional consultations in what has become known as the "Puebla Process". This multilateral forum on migration, which includes annual meetings at the vice-ministerial level alongside more frequent working-level sessions, has strengthened communication and cooperation among the participating states and helped foster more orderly migration processes.

In East and South East Asia too, regional migration consultations have been set in motion. The "Manila Process" brings together seventeen countries for exchange of information on irregular migration and trafficking. Another series of meetings, known as the Asia-Pacific Consultations, focuses on refugees, displacement and migration in a somewhat larger region encompassing South Asia, South-East Asia, East Asia and Oceania. These regular exchanges at the working level have received new impetus and substance from a ministerial meeting on regional cooperation on irregular migration which took place in Bangkok last April, hosted by the Royal Thai Government and generously supported by donor governments and UNFPA. The Bangkok Declaration adopted on that occasion now serves as the confirmation of the political will of the region to deal with the complex matters of migration in a constructive and collaborative fashion.

In the Commonwealth of Independent States and neighbouring countries, a UN Conference convened in Geneva in 1996 to address the problems of refugees, displaced persons, other forms of involuntary displacement and returnees in the CIS region, has led to a comprehensive technical cooperation programme aimed at establishing, improving and harmonizing national migration legislation, policies and administrative structures.

Similar consultation mechanisms are under preparation in other regions, including South America, the Western Mediterranean and Southern Africa, and IOM has offered its support for them as well. In fact, the desire to deal with migration issues in a constructive multilateral dialogue has been a major factor contributing to IOM's rapid growth in recent years, bringing the number of IOM member and observer States currently to 117.

Mr. President,

Despite such encouraging developments, advancing understanding of the complexities of migration remains a major challenge. To this end, the United Nations convened a Technical Symposium on International Migration and Development, in The Hague one year ago as part of the ICPD preparatory process. IOM was pleased to play a major substantive and logistical role in that Symposium, which provided new insights into the nature and magnitude of current international migration. According to the findings of the Symposium, poverty, environmental degradation, use of migrant remittances, the development potential of return migration, **trafficking** in migrants and irregular migration, as well as fair treatment of asylum applications, remain key issues which need to be dealt with in constructive cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination.

Indeed, around the globe, effective management of regular and irregular migration is a priority issue. Individual and collective responses by states are often hampered, however, by insufficient migration management capacity at national levels. In these circumstances, UNITAR, IOM and UNFPA decided in 1998 to launch a joint migration training and capacity building programme in **different** world regions. The first two courses have already taken place in Eastern Europe - hosted by Hungary - and in Southern Africa - hosted by South Africa. Current plans foresee the next courses in South East Asia, Central Asia, East Africa and the Mediterranean region. The long-standing IOM-OAS-sponsored migration training courses for officials in the Americas, held annually in Argentina, have provided important lessons and inputs for this new global initiative.

Mr. President,

Growing numbers of women participate - both as family members and, increasingly, independently - in international migration. They comprise almost 50% of the overall migrant population. Many of them have specific risks and needs. Women in conflict situations in particular are under threat of becoming victims of gender-specific violence. Their needs, including their overall and reproductive health needs, are deserving of **far** more attention than they currently receive.

For the potential migrant, an important element in the decision making process as to whether to remain at home or leave is the availability of credible information about conditions in the target country. Misleading information and fraudulent promises often skew the decision to leave. Women and children in particular are preyed upon by traffickers, who deliver them into prostitution and other forms of exploitation. New international legal instruments currently under negotiation in the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice are important tools in combating

trafficking, as are programmes for the protection of victims, programmes for their return and reintegration as well as mass information campaigns developed to reach the individuals at risk before they migrate.

Unfortunately, in these and too many other instances, migrants' rights continue to be violated. Fortunately, though, such violations are receiving growing attention and publicity. In this context, the slow but steady growth since Cairo in the number of ratifications of the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families testifies to an increasing awareness of the problem, spurring political will to heed the relevant recommendation in the ICPD Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

IOM is committed to the principle that orderly migration can benefit both individuals and society. This is an ICPD message, too. Admittedly, there is no shortage of challenge in dealing with today's complex migration scene, even if the public does sometimes seem to focus only on the problem side of international migration. Yet one cannot lose sight of the fact that, throughout history, migrants have made – and continue to make - incontestable contributions to countries of origin and destination. Working together **from** the blueprint sketched out at Cairo, States can continue to make progress – as indeed they have to a significant degree since 1994 - toward better managing migration and harnessing it as a positive force for social and economic development.

Thank you, Mr. President