

Statement of the Honorable Esteban B. Conejos, Jr.  
Chair, Philippine GFMD 2008  
Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs  
Department of Foreign Affairs, Philippines

96<sup>th</sup> session of the IOM Council  
4 December 2008

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

I am pleased to deliver a statement of the Chair of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Forum on Migration and Development, Undersecretary Esteban B. Conejos, Jr., who unfortunately could not join us today.

"I wish to begin by thanking the IOM for inviting me to address the Distinguished Council. I had looked forward to briefing the Council on the highlights of the Manila meeting of the GFMD, but due to pressing concerns, I was not able to leave Manila.

I wish to thank all delegations for the support you have given to the Philippine hosting of the GFMD and to the GFMD process as a whole. I am glad to hear of the positive reviews of the meeting. The success of the GFMD is due to the collective efforts of all partners – governments, international organizations, civil society, and all Friends of the Forum who worked very closely together.

A special tribute is due to the IOM for its unstinting support to the Chair-in-Office throughout the entire process.

Based on the three benchmarks which I put forward to gauge progress of the Manila GFMD; namely, extensive participation, substantive debates, and interactive and comprehensive process, I am happy to report to you the highlights of the Manila meeting.

The Manila GFMD enjoyed **extensive participation**: a total of 1130 participants from 163 member states and observers of the United Nations, 33 international organizations, and 220 participants from civil society attended the meeting.

The Manila GFMD held **substantive debates**. By choosing the theme "Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development," the Philippines aimed to spark broad recognition of the enormous benefits of migration. Throughout the meeting, governments offered good practices and learnt from each other. The application of a comprehensive approach to protecting migrants' rights, managing migration, empowering migrants and diasporas for

development, and promoting policy and institutional coherence were the main topics of debates.

The roundtables in Manila sought to incorporate the outcomes of the Brussels GFMD, providing continuation and a thematic thread connecting the meetings. I wish to summarize the key points discussed in the three roundtables and special session.

In roundtable 1 on “Migration, Development and Human Rights,” there was recognition of the link between protection and development. A protected migrant is able to contribute better to development in origin and destination countries and to live fuller lives for themselves and their families. Protecting the rights of migrants is thus imperative and is a shared obligation and responsibility of countries of origin, transit, and destination. There was recognition as well that the GFMD plays an important role in fostering an enabling international environment and cooperation between all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, in promoting a comprehensive approach to protection of migrants’ rights, through both normative and practical measures.

Roundtable 2 on “Secure, Regular Migration can achieve strong development impact,” explored ways of promoting migration programs that ensure that migration benefits the migrants and both countries of origin and destination. Irregular migration was also touched upon, as it puts migrants at risk and reduces potential for development gains. International cooperation in this regard could focus on capacity-building in promoting a comprehensive approach to managing migration.

Roundtable 3 on “Policy and Institutional Coherence and Partnerships” looked at how more coherent and coordinated policies, institutional arrangements and partnerships can optimize the beneficial impact of migration on development. It was noted that more can be done to strengthen these mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels among diverse stakeholders.

The special session on the Future of the Forum agreed to proceed with the establishment of a Light Support Unit that will be housed in the IOM, under the direct supervision of the Chair-in-Office. The Light Support Structure shall be responsible for basic administrative matters.

The Manila GFMD continued the **interactive and comprehensive process** started in Brussels. The lead up to the Manila meeting entailed 6 meetings of the Steering Group and 3 meetings of the Friends of the Forum. The GFMD remains a highly participatory and government-led process.

At the same time, the added-value of the process remains its informality and interactive approach to issues, in which governments can interact with each other in an open and constructive manner that paves the way for enhancing partnerships. Being an inclusive process, the need for a wider donor base was pointed out.

Engagement with civil society was broadened in Manila. The meeting of civil society was expanded to 2 days and there was an interface between government representatives and civil society. The inputs of migrants, NGOs, trade unions and faith-based organizations; as well as their regional perspectives, were taken into consideration.

The Manila GFMD resulted in 17 proposed concrete outcomes, including follow-up working groups, studies, compendia of good practices, pilot projects and assessments. These proposals built upon the key outcomes of the Brussels meeting and take the discussions of Manila forward to the third GFMD meeting in Athens. The idea of creating ad hoc follow-up working groups aims to continue focus on central issues of the GFMD and encourage governments to take the lead in the implementation of these outcomes.

The report of the proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> GFMD is being finalized. We hope that the full report shall be ready for dissemination in the first quarter of 2009, before Greece convenes the first Steering Group and Friends of the Forum Meetings. The Philippines shall hand-over the Chairmanship to Greece on 16 December in a ceremony in Athens.

Mr. President,

Through the GFMD, governments are beginning to attain a certain consensus of understanding on the important connections between migration and development. Proposals take us closer to developing means to address shared challenges and opportunities. Eventually, consensus on action can be envisioned through continued exchange of best practices and policies, and promoting synergy among all actors involved in migration and development.

We believe the GFMD should be able to address important emerging issues, such as the current global financial crisis. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon expressed the view at the Manila meeting that migration can and should be a tool to help lift countries out of the economic crisis.

The GFMD is a work in progress. The Philippines, as outgoing Chair, counts on all stakeholders, including the IOM, to remain as partners in consolidating the gains of the first two GFMD meetings and in strengthening the overall GFMD process.

Again, on behalf of the Philippine Government, I wish to thank you all for your personal and institutional support to the Philippine hosting of the GFMD. It was an enriching experience for us.

I also wish you a successful Council Meeting.”