

Opening Remarks
by
Hon. Peter Letlhogonolo Siele
Minister of Labour and Home Affairs, Botswana
at the
Global Meeting of Chairs and Secretariats of
Regional Consultative Processes on Migration
“Enhancing Cooperation on Migration through Dialogue
and Capacity Building”
Gaborone, Republic of Botswana
25-26 October 2011

Director of Ceremony;

Your Excellency, Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Director
General of the International Organization for Migration;

Heads of Delegation;

Distinguished Permanent and Principal Secretaries;

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to
the Republic of Botswana;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen of Media.

Allow me to start by personally thanking Ambassador Swing and his sterling team for their hard work and untiring efforts in organizing this meeting. A big thank you to all the delegates for kindly accepting our invitation and actually being here today. I do hope you will enjoy your stay in Gaborone and I would encourage you to find time from your busy schedules to take in the wonderful Batswana hospitality and the diversity of what our country has to offer.

Distinguished guests, in our increasingly globalizing world, where people, goods and services are always on the move, the significance of migration trends and dynamics in policy planning and decision-making can no longer be overlooked. Over the past 40 odd years, the number of international migrants has more than doubled, with current estimates of approximately 214 million people globally, and roughly 2.2 million international regular migrants and an undefined number of irregular migrants residing in Southern Africa. Between 2005 and 2010, the region experienced an estimated annual increase in migration of 7.3%. Push-pull factors as well as the socio-economic implications of such a high influx of people, especially in a developing region that is characterised by a young and growing population confronted by numerous challenges, are indeed far-reaching.

It was in recognition of the need to collectively manage this phenomenon, and also a belief in the importance of dialogue, regional consensus building and cooperation in the harmonization of migration policies, that countries in our region in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) considered it important to establish the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) in 2000. Eleven years later, as a regional mechanism for dialogue, MIDSA remains as relevant as ever, particularly as the *SADC Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons* is yet to enter into force, and also considering that no other operational regional migration mechanism has been constituted to coordinate migration management.

Over the years MIDSA has helped the Region's Governments in fostering an understanding of various migration phenomena and strengthening regional institutional capacities to address migration, largely through workshops, training and other capacity-building initiatives. I should add with appreciation that Botswana has indeed benefitted from these activities even before becoming a member of the IOM.

In our experience, Regional Consultative Processes have proven to be an invaluable platform that allows for migration-

related issues to be discussed in an informal setting, increasing awareness of both the challenges and best practices in migration management including in both the mainstream and the less traditional areas of migration and health, human trafficking, border management, and the facilitated movement of persons. A prominent example being when the SADC Protocol on Facilitation of the Movement of Persons was presented and discussed in the 2003 MIDSA in Lesotho, in preparation for the submission of national recommendations on the protocol, due later the same year.

With the adoption of the Protocol being hampered by the slow progress since the initial discussions on facilitated movement in 1997, information sharing and dialogue have contributed to the speeding up of such process. This culminated in the adoption of the Protocol by the SADC Heads of State and Government in 2005, and the subsequent securing of nine signatories and four ratifications to date. It is my hope that continuous dialogue through MIDSA and other fora will encourage the additional ratification needed for the protocol to enter into force.

Director of Ceremony,

Regional Consultative Processes do not only represent a platform for governments to identify potential gaps in capacity,

legislation and practice, but also allow for partners in the international community, including IOM and others, to better align their activities to the needs of countries in the different regions. According to its Constitution, one of the key functions of IOM is to “provide a forum to States as well as international and other organizations for the exchange of views and experiences, and the promotion of cooperation and coordination of efforts on international migration issues, including studies on such issues in order to develop practical solutions”.

This function is further confirmed in the IOM Strategy Document, which states that one of IOM’s core activities is “to promote, facilitate and support regional and global debate and dialogue on migration, including through the International Dialogue on Migration, so as to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges it presents, the identification and development of effective policies for addressing those challenges and to identify comprehensive approaches and measures for advancing international cooperation”.

The role played by IOM and other partners in facilitating dialogue is a crucial one and cannot be overstated. But as governments, we too have a leading role to play in what is

after all, essentially our process. Whilst government ownership and leadership of RCPs remains an ideal that is often hampered by the resource requirements and implications on states, commitment to successful migration dialogues can, for instance be demonstrated through our will to participate in the agenda setting, and our attendance of meetings such as this one.

Ladies and Gentlemen, commitment to the consultative process by all stakeholders is important as the quality of discussions and outcomes is often largely dependent on the participants represented around the table. I must however, point out that in pursuit of optimal participation, the added value of informality in RCPs cannot be disregarded as it often allows for participating states to raise concerns and share ideas without any binding consequences. The culture of cooperation in this regard remains instrumental to ensuring a middle way between informality and formality, which allows for open discussions as well as an action-oriented agenda that goes beyond policy recommendations.

Your Excellency Ambassador Swing, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by reaffirming that we as a Government understand the value of regional consultative processes. We remain firm in our determination to partner with

regional and other partners as we endeavor to maximize the developmental value of migration and to mitigate its associated risks in a manner that is both beneficial and sustainable. Ultimately we wish to see a government-led and owned process that is informed by regional development objectives and priorities, where the role of IOM and other partners is a supportive one. At the end of your discussions here tomorrow, I hope that we shall emerge with a clear roadmap that sets out exactly how, together, we shall strive towards this ideal. I wish you all the very best for what I know will be fruitful deliberations with sound outcomes.

I thank you.