

**Remarks by Assistant Foreign Minister Shen Guofang of
The People's Republic of China
At International Dialogue on Migration – High-Level Plenary**

Geneva, 30 November 2005

Mr. Chairman,

I am very pleased to attend this High-Level Plenary to exchange views with my colleagues from other countries on the issue of migration.

Our meeting today, with its theme being “Toward Policy Coherence on Migration”, is of great significance. Under the present situation, migration has become a unique phenomenon in modern society, and no country can find a proper solution by itself. Countries of origin, transit and destination should all strengthen coordination and cooperation so as to exercise effective management over the flow of migrants. Therefore, it is very important to actively conduct dialogue and cooperation and work toward policy coherence on migration in the international community.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration occurred in close association with the evolution of human society. If the trade caravans trekking on the Silk Road over two thousand years ago were small in number, then with the onset of the age of Great Voyage, more and more people chose to migrate to the New Continent along newly-discovered sea routes, and migration gradually became a common phenomenon. As the world today is moving rapidly toward globalization, and science and technology are advancing day by day, population movement has also picked up speed. Normal migration has expanded people's otherwise narrow vision, pushed the human society toward an age of globalization, and enabled human, technical and financial resources to be allocated in a wider and freer scope, thus greatly promoted economic and social development and cultural exchanges among countries. It is fair to say that migration is a natural outgrowth of the development of the human society at a certain stage, and it is also a significant driving force for the progress of mankind.

But at the same time, new circumstances and new problems also crop up in migration. Along with counter-terrorism efforts are the

inconveniences in normal migration channels, difficulties in integration into local societies, frequent occurrences of secondary movement, abuse of asylum policies, and illegal migration activities like people smuggling and trafficking in persons. New problems in migration have not only affected the normal movement of population, but have also brought harm to economic development and social stability, and even endangered state sovereignty and security. I wish to share the following views and suggestions on properly addressing the issues related to migration:

First, a proper management of global migration calls for efforts to identify the source of the problem and to treat both the root cause and the symptom. It is no more than a better life that migrants are seeking when they overcome various difficulties, leave their home, and move to a strange land. Therefore, the root cause of migration is, in the final analysis, the imbalance of economic and social development and the varying population mix among different countries. At present, the dividends of globalization are not distributed evenly, the gap between the North and the South continues to widen, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are far from being achieved, and many developing countries are further marginalized. Per capita wealth of the richest country in the world is over 330 times that of the poorest. Thus, narrowing the gap between rich and poor countries step by step to realize common economic development and comprehensive social justice is the fundamental way leading to a long-term solution of migration problems.

Second, a proper management of global migration calls for joint efforts, coordination and cooperation from the whole international community. It is the common responsibility for countries of origin, transit and destination to enforce effective management on migration and to fight illegal migration. The international community should step up international cooperation in the principle of international solidarity, shared responsibility, mutual respect, and equality and mutual benefit. It is important that developing countries build strength through unity, increase South-South cooperation, draw upon useful experience from other countries, and pursue development paths suited to their national realities. Developed countries should honor their commitment, and provide assistance to developing countries in financing, trade, technology and human resources, so as to help them achieve sustainable development and improve their capabilities of preventing and combating illegal migration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other relevant international and regional organizations should, on their part, vigorously push forward global cooperation to help developing countries with capacity building.

Third, a proper management of global migration calls for effective protection of the legitimate rights and interests of migrants. Over the years, with their hard work and talent, migrants have made, on a land that is far away from their home, great contribution to the economic growth and social progress of their host country as well as cultural exchanges of the world. Countries should adopt measures to protect their legitimate interests from infringement, grant them equal status and opportunity in all aspects of social life in the principle of non-discrimination, and help them integrate into the local community.

Fourth, a proper management of global migration calls for efforts to avoid politicizing the issue. International cooperation on migration should follow the principle of “opening legal channels and blocking illegal channels”, in order to facilitate law-based and orderly flow of migration and ensure that legal migrants are able to integrate into local economy and society, and at the same time, contain illegal migration to the maximum extent. It should be pointed out that irrational and restrictive migration policies by some countries, out of their counter-terrorism considerations, have hampered orderly flow of legal migrants, and may push a certain proportion of them into illegal channels. In addition, some countries have blurred the line between asylums and illegal migration, and even added political factors to migration. Such practices of politicizing migration are very harmful and must be avoided.

Fifth, a proper management of global migration calls for more thorough studies on the issue. We are delighted to note that after nearly two years of hard work, the Global Commission on International Migration submitted a report last month entitled *Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action* to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Report analyzed the current situation of global migration, reviewed the pros and cons of the policies around the world on global migration waves, and put forward a relevant global action framework. The international community should carry out more studies on migration, and take effective measures in light of the current world situation and features of different countries, so as to facilitate orderly flow of population in the context of globalization.

Mr. Chairman,

The Chinese Government places importance on the migration question, and works hard for normal global migration. At the same time, the Chinese Government stands firm in opposing illegal migration, and

fighting human smuggling and trafficking and other cross-border organized crimes. China values and takes an active part in international cooperation on migration. We have worked with over 40 countries on fighting illegal border entry and exit, and participated in a host of activities of regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related International Crimes (Bali Process), and the Asia-Pacific International Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants. As this year's APC coordinator, the Chinese Government successfully held the APC Annual Conference 2005 in Shanghai last October which produced positive results.

From March 14 to 16 this year, the Chinese Government co-hosted, with the IOM and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the Regional Conference on Migration and Development in Asia in Lanzhou, Gansu Province. The Conference was focused on the relationships between the question of migration and the MDGs, poverty reduction, health and social security, and gender, as well as the relationship between international and internal migrations. It attracted nearly 100 delegates from seven Asia-Pacific countries, relevant international organizations and academic institutions. Competent government agencies and provinces of China also sent their representatives. The following major issues were discussed at the Conference:

First, the need to have a correct view of migration and to strengthen studies on the issue. The Conference believes that migration is a natural outgrowth of social development, and is also an indicator of social progress. The number of migrants worldwide has risen rapidly along with economic globalization and advances in information and communications technology. Countries should step up their study of new issues of migration, and share the relevant information and data to support policy-making in this area. Delegates see a perception gap in the international community concerning the importance of internal migration and the lack of studies and policies on this question. Governments should assume a correct view of internal migration, and endeavor to bring out its advantages and minimize its impact, so that migration can contribute to the economic and social development of a country.

Second, the relationship between migration and economic development. It is the common view of the participants that poverty is one of the main causes of migration. Migration is conducive to poverty reduction, and should be considered as an effective means to eliminate

poverty. Countries should encourage the mobility of their poor population through providing them with training and financial assistance.

Third, the protection of the rights and interests of migrants. According to the Conference, migration should not be construed as only a question of economic development. Countries should adopt comprehensive measures, give full consideration to the factor of social development, and incorporate the protection of the rights and interests of migrants into their social development strategy and social security system. Governments should ensure that migrant workers enjoy safe working and living conditions, get their pay in time, and have access to basic health care services.

Fourth, strengthening cooperation. The Conference points out that there lacks effective communication and cooperation among local governments of areas of origin and destination, and that this has led to policy loopholes. Therefore, cooperation should be enhanced effectively. Many experts and representatives from international organizations emphasized that governments should encourage a positive role by NGOs, civil society and trade unions in this regard. In addition, policy-makers should pay careful attention to the views of migrants themselves.

China believes that the Conference proceeded in a pragmatic atmosphere, and triggered heated discussions and useful reflections on the interactive relationship between migration and development. The relevant documents, speeches and research results have been compiled into a collection of essays in Chinese and English by the Chinese Government and the IOM respectively. We trust that this will be helpful for countries in their effort to appropriately address the question of migration.

Mr. Chairman,

China attaches high importance to the positive role by the IOM in assisting countries on migration. Since China became an observer to the IOM in June 2001, we have conducted a series of multi-formed and effective cooperation. I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate that China will continue to step up cooperation with other countries and international organizations such as the IOM in the area of migration, and work closely together for normal migrant flows and lasting peace and development of the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.