

**Statement by Mr. Juan Somavia
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Dear friends,

I am delighted to be with you today at your Council meeting, at the invitation of my very good friend Brunson, and I am thanking him again for bringing us all together on this occasion. No doubt about it, migration is one of the key issues of our times. Given the current direction and character of globalization, its importance will only grow, so will its complexity and the political problems that it brings with it: human problems, development problems, all of the issues that you have been discussing. Indeed, as you know only too well, migration is increasingly affecting more people and more countries. From the ILO perspective, which is the world of work, it is estimated that today some 86 million persons are economically active in a country other than their own, with or without authorization, and many dependants accompany them haphazardly. This pattern has occurred despite a tightening of immigration controls in the industrialized countries but also in many developing countries. In contrast to the growing cross-border movement of capital, goods and services, it is interesting to note that, if you take a look at the nineteenth and a good part of the twentieth century, it was the other way round. For example, free movement of people in Latin America received an enormous amount of European immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth century, looking for a better life. Control of capital, goods and services were, you know, rather strong. We now have it the other way around. Much more freedom of capital goods and services, much more control of the movement of people. As we all know, beyond political persecution, civil strife and many forms of involuntary movement, migration is basically triggered by differences. And inequality in the world is growing and it is not only growing but it is out there for the entire world to see. Indeed, there is a sea of change in global interconnectivity. Global TV networks, satellite technology, cellular phones, all of this is reaching even the remotest villages and, as a result, there is a growing awareness of widening differences in living standards and opportunities elsewhere. We also have seen the decline in transportation costs, lowering an important barrier to migration.

Future Challenges

As we look ahead, let me mention three challenges in the context of this very wide issue, as the pillars that have been developed by you so indicate. The first one: In a globalizing world, the fundamental question is whether we can have open economies but closed societies. I am sure all of us would agree that there could no longer be any closed societies. But it is also clear that, as migration grows and more countries become multiethnic and multicultural, the challenge of promoting social integration and developing the identity of a society will become ever more complex. Today migrants comprise over 15% of the population of over fifty states. Secondly: Addressing worldwide demographic imbalances. On the one hand you have the rich countries whose populations are decreasing, stagnating or sometimes growing but only because of migration. On the other hand most developing countries have young and growing populations. We need to create about 80 million new jobs annually to absorb the world's new entrants to the labour market. Thirdly: Here is in fact the biggest failure of the present model of globalization. It has not delivered opportunities for decent work where people live. And this is the key foundation of migration. Poverty and the inability to find a job at home pushes the majority of migrants to move within their own countries to the next village, to the regional capital, to the capital, and eventually to take a chance abroad, away from their community and often from their families. If people have opportunities to obtain decent and productive work at home, it is certain

most of them would remain in the community where they were born. What can be done to manage these migration pressures and seize the many opportunities that they may offer? You, more than anybody else, know that there are no easy answers. The issues are fraught with controversy, an easy magnet for the politics of emotion; inward-looking, defensive attitudes are clearly emerging in many countries. We all know that sealing the border is not an option nor are completely open borders for all. So the key to migration of day-to-day is finding the middle ground to reasonable and necessary immigration. In other words it is about how to manage the flows. What is missing, let me insist on this, first of all is jobs where you are born. Jobs where you are born may not exist. We need rules of the game internationally that permit you to take advantage of opening markets. Because they do not exist consequently better development dimensions of migration are not fully taken care. This is an issue that inevitably will continue to grow.

Need for Multilateral Framework

Jobs from our point of view are the key element in ensuring that you have much more equilibrated migration flows. But what is missing essentially is an overall multilateral framework for governing migrations that is in the interest of all parties sending and receiving countries, as well as migrants themselves and their families. I think that we can probably all agree that this is long overdue. Much could be gained from a multilateral framework for migration. We know that in industrialized countries many of the challenges of an aging population, such as the declining labour force and the difficulties of financing social security and pension systems for example, could be eased by increased migration. More generally, global labour productivity could increase since migration would be from low productivity surplus labour countries to higher productivity ones. This would benefit the individual migrants involved but also their home countries through remittances. I keep seeing different figures for remittances; the last one given to me was around eighty billion dollars last year - as you know also, 1.5 times the value of official development assistance. And not to speak of all the positive contributions possible when migrants go back home. But the lack of an orderly multilateral framework has allowed a number of serious problems to emerge. The brain drain in which we have so much experience and knowledge of takes away potential for development. At the same time, people that emigrate give potential for development. How do you find the right balance? How do you balance the investments that were made by one country that were then utilized as a basis for development by other countries? These are real issues. Obviously the question is not to tell people that you cannot go anywhere because there are advantages. We have to discuss this issue; we have to see how you balance again the interest of sending countries, receiving countries and the migrants themselves. At the same time, restrictions on unskilled worker migration have led to a sharp increase in illegal migration and the international trafficking of people, women and children in particular. It is estimated there are between fifteen to thirty million illegal irregular immigrants worldwide and that the number is growing. As labour markets globalize, there is a need to revitalize multilateral action on the basic rights and protection of migrant workers and their families, trafficking, discrimination and exploitation. The coming general discussion on migrant workers at the International Labour Conference in June 2004 could be a first step in that direction. This will provide, among others, an opportunity to discuss in an integrated way the ILO's existing instruments on migrant workers, the Migration for Employment Convention -N°97, and the Migrant Workers Convention -N°143.

Role of Geneva Migration Group

It is clear today that we need enhanced coherence and cooperation among international actors to confront the many challenges posed by migration and that is why, as Brunson mentioned, we have established the Geneva Migration Group, the GMG. I see this group as a practical vehicle to facilitate the exchange of key information at the highest level, giving us the opportunity to identify critical interrelated issues requiring a multidimensional approach. This is,

I think, the way to a more effective and efficient system of international governance for the future.

It is a flexible and operational instrument in which policy coherence initiatives on specific issues among organizations whose mandates intersect and whose policies interact can be developed. Because we have intersecting mandates and interactive policies, the policy advice coming from one institution affects the policy advice given by another. This is today one of the central problems of the multilateral system. We call for coherence but unless we do something about it, you know the problem is not going to be solved. So the GMG represents a group of observers who have decided to do something about it and to say, "Look, we all have mandates on this issue, we all have policies on these issues, why don't we sit together and try to respond." This corresponds to an increasing demand coming from governments who say, "Look, couldn't you work a little closer on issues you are all dealing with" and this is what the GMG is about. But it requires one thing: it has to have a leadership of the heads of agencies, and that's why we are all present here, because we all believe this is a key contribution that we can make. Together, we can show that it is possible to take initiatives from the Agencies involved in order to move forward, and I am certain that what we do here will be useful to the other instances that exist today, the emerging Global Commission on International Migration, the Berne Initiative and others. For me, the important feature of the Group should be the opportunity for all of us to contribute to major initiatives of the respective team members, providing different perspectives. In this regard we feel privileged, in the ILO, to benefit from the active collaboration of other members of the Group in the preparation of our conference's discussion next year. But this enhanced inter-agency would only be effective if countries themselves get together and better cooperate at regional and international levels. In this regard, we as members of the team have a very important stake in the success of your dialogue. Your deliberations will surely be a great source of insight into how states could more effectively manage migration and your conclusions will, no doubt, help us identify where we might find consensus on the many complex issues that migration gives rise to. You, and this Council of course, are the historical experts on these issues and consequently the way you look at it and the manner in which you feel we have to move forward is of course absolutely essential. You deal with a fundamental aspect and a fundamental perspective of the issues of migration. I am extremely happy to be here today with you and I look forward very much to whatever directions you want to give us in the work that we, trying to work together, have for the future.

Thank you so much