

**STATEMENT BY THE UK MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
CITIZENSHIP, IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY**

**MR DES BROWNE, MP**

**AT THE 88<sup>TH</sup> IOM ANNUAL COUNCIL HIGH LEVEL PANEL :**

**VALUING MIGRATION**

**30 NOVEMBER 2004**

**GENEVA**

## IOM COUNCIL - SPEECH

### Speech to IOM Annual Council – 30 November 2004: 'Valuing Migration: The Costs, Benefits, Challenges & Opportunities of Migration'

#### Introduction

Delighted to be here and to have the opportunity to address the IOM's Annual Council and participate in this discussion. Public debate about migration is frequently polarised and characterised by misunderstanding and misrepresentation. In the face of this, it is very welcome that the IOM continues to promote constructive dialogue and to build on its International Dialogue on Migration launched in 2001.

#### UK Migration Policy

Let me start by saying a few words about the UK's approach to migration policy.

The UK aims to create a managed and flexible migration system designed to meet our economic needs and our international obligations. We seek to support cultural diversity and community cohesion, and promote both the rights and responsibilities of migrants. We also know we must maintain the integrity of the system, and public confidence in it, by vigorously tackling abuse and illegal activity. And we must make sure that our migration policies work for the developing world.

These objectives support a wide range of policy goals – from encouraging economic growth to promoting international development - all of which can benefit from well-managed migration. I would like to explore what I believe these benefits are, before going on to look at the challenges they entail and how the UK is seeking to address these.

## **Benefits of Migration**

We know that migration brings benefits to both sending and receiving countries and to the individuals who migrate, as well as to their families in their countries of origin.

In the UK, the benefits of migration are both social and economic. Migrants can help to support an ageing population, stimulate productivity and bring added flexibility to our labour market by offering scarce skills and easing recruitment difficulties. According to HM Treasury assessments, approximately 15% of trend economic growth depends on inward migration. Our public services rely on migrant labour: in 2000, over a quarter of health professionals and 9% of teaching professionals had been born abroad. And migrants bring new innovations and enterprises to the UK. Research has shown that migrants are nearly 20% more likely to be self-employed than the UK born population.

We should not ignore the non-economic benefits. There are countless examples of migrants who have contributed to the arts, literature, science, sport and public life of the UK, not to mention the thousands of foreign students who add to the academic vigour and reputation of our world-class universities.

## **Individual Migrant**

The benefits do not just cut one-way. Families separated by nationality have been reunited in the UK. And many migrants who come to the UK enjoy increased earning power, improved quality of life, and the opportunity to experience a new culture and language in a liberal democracy.

## **Source countries**

This in turn can have positive effects for source countries. At its most effective, migration generates significant benefits, especially when skilled

workers return with new expertise, enhanced economic capacity and stronger social, political and business networks. Return migrants can help to promote human rights and democracy in developing countries, and complement the work of expatriate groups and international programmes in promoting free speech and intellectual expression.

Migrants also benefit source countries in other ways. In 2003 an estimated \$93 billion was remitted through formal channels alone, to the developing world. Networks of expatriates can help to transfer knowledge and ideas, stimulate education and business, and develop trade partnerships in a low-cost way. For example, Indian IT specialists in the US and the UK are investing in large numbers in information technology start-ups back home. And there is some evidence that the possibility of working abroad increases the level of higher education amongst the source population.

### **Challenges**

Of course, these benefits also carry risks. We are operating in a world of modern communications, cheap international travel, the free movement of goods and services, combined with political and economic instability in certain regions of the world, and exacerbated by natural disasters. These have all contributed to an increase in global migration flows in recent years. According to the UN the number of people living outside their country of birth rose by an estimated 55 million during the 1990s.

This increase in migration entails risks to both the sending and receiving countries, as well as to individual migrants. For example, sending countries risk losing valuable human capital, if mechanisms and incentives are not in place to encourage their return. Receiving countries can experience social unease if migrant communities are not well-integrated into the host society. And vulnerable migrants may themselves be put at risk through exploitation at the hands of criminals and unscrupulous employers.

## What do we need to do?

So what do we need to do to ensure that we are maximising the benefits of migration, but minimising the risks, and how can we work together to manage migration more effectively in the global interest?

### Control and Protection

Firstly, we need to ensure the protection of individuals and the integrity of our migration systems by working together to tackle abuse, combat organised crime and illegal working, and reduce the opportunity for irregular migration.

We must take the opportunity to educate people about the risks of irregular migration, alongside wider measures to address the causes of mass migration, including poverty and conflict. We are developing a communications initiative in Romania with the IOM as one example of this.

In addition, it is imperative that we continue to develop more sophisticated ways of disrupting criminal activity and the use of illegal labour through shared intelligence and joint working. The UK has had significant success in this approach with Operation Reflex, a multi-agency team set up to combat organised immigration crime. We are pleased this approach is being taken up at European level under the Hague Programme. And we are pursuing co-operative measures on a bilateral basis; for example we have just signed a new co-operation agreement with Nigeria to enhance our ability to tackle human trafficking, protect the victims, and to prosecute the perpetrators.

### Returns Arrangements

A crucial element in the management of migration is the provision of suitable returns arrangements for those with no right to remain in the UK. Voluntary returns are an important part of this, and we have just launched a pilot programme for the assisted voluntary return of irregular migrants.

But we also need to ensure we have an effective process for enforced returns to protect the integrity of our migration systems. We are increasingly working in co-operation with our international partners to achieve this, and other joint objectives on migration. My recent visit to China, for example, represented an important step in our co-operation with the Chinese Government to facilitate legitimate travel, disrupt criminal gangs responsible for illegal migration, and improve the process for swift returns to China.

### **Temporary Migration Schemes**

An expectation of return should be built into the migration policies of receiving countries too. Temporary migration promotes 'brain circulation' and global networks, without the potentially negative effects of permanent emigration. The UK has a number of temporary migration schemes which facilitate the use of migrant labour in particular sectors of our economy. Our Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme, created in 2002 as a means of guaranteeing student labour from abroad for farmers and growers in the UK, is a good example of the way in which temporary migration schemes can benefit employers, consumers, and the participants themselves.

Combined with ethical recruitment practices - such as the Code of Practice in health recruitment pioneered by the UK - this approach to migration helps make sure that developing countries are not stripped of valuable human capital. And it encourages migrants to maintain links with their home countries whilst abroad. These ties can precipitate wider benefits, such as continued investment through remittances and business interests and the sharing of skills and knowledge.

### **Supporting Development**

In the UK we are pursuing a range of initiatives, aimed at maximising the benefits of diaspora communities to their source countries. For instance, the UK Government is developing remittance country partnerships in Nigeria and

Bangladesh and we are looking for ways to reduce the transfer costs of sending money back home.

### **Social Cohesion**

High levels of mobility amongst migrant communities mean it is essential that we continue to promote a set of shared values and identity to help maintain community cohesion and social stability in host countries. Key to this is communicating clearly the rights, responsibilities and obligations of migrants in the UK. We have been working very successfully with the IOM this year to promote the terms on which citizens of the new European Member States can come to the UK to live and work. And as part of a new integration strategy we are publishing a handbook on migrants' rights and responsibilities, alongside other programmes to help new migrants to establish themselves successfully in the UK.

### **The future**

Going forward, we need to take the opportunity to use modern technology, systems and research to improve our understanding both of the costs and benefits of migration and its contributing factors. We are following with interest the work of the Global Commission on International Migration and look forward to their report in mid 2005.

The case for a multi-lateral approach to migration based on shared responsibilities is incontrovertible. Migration is a feature of twenty-first century society. It is incumbent upon us to make a success of it by working in partnership and forming new alliances - even where there do not appear to be mutually shared objectives. By learning from experience and being prepared to test out new, creative solutions, I believe that together we can make the most of migration as a means to social and economic development at all levels.

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