

**INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE
ON MIGRATION**

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER
FOR THE INTERIOR (GHANA)
HON. PAPA OWUSU-ANKOMAH, MP**

ON THE TOPIC:

**PROMOTING POLICY COHERENCE –
THE IMPORTANCE OF MIGRATION TO
THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MDGs**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon:

I feel highly honoured for the opportunity granted to my country to participate in the 90th session of the Council of International Organization for Migration and for me to address this august assembly. The presence of Ghana at this forum is even more significant because it is at this session that Ghana has been formally admitted as a member state of the IOM.

Mr. Chairman,

Globally, the understanding is deepening of the link between migration and development because countries and political organizations perceive migration as a phenomenon whose impacts of development can be substantial provided that appropriate policies are in place.

Recent World Bank reports and others support the conclusion that population movements can significantly help to lower poverty and indeed, some experts say that a marginal increase in migration could deliver significant global gains which would be more substantial than any debt relief programme. Within this argument, there is a case for increasing legal mobility of labour from developing countries as a tool for development.

On the International scene, there have been various events which have culminated in making this International Dialogue on Migration especially relevant today. To mention a few, ECOWAS countries at a recent regional workshop on Migration Management in Abuja, underscored the value of sustained regional dialogue on migration as a means of enhancing migration management in the region, to maximize the benefits of migration for development and enhance

policy coherence on a national and regional level. The Africa Union has produced a draft Strategic Framework for Migration Policy in Africa and this document will provide the conceptual framework for policy coherence in Africa.

The UN Global Commission for International Migration (GCIM), charged with the mandate to put migration on the international agenda has recently presented its report, which is being analysed. The “High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development”, planned for 2006, in the framework of the General Assembly of the UN is further evidence of the importance of this debate in which developing countries have an interest. The EU Parliament has also addressed the issue of migration and Development in a hearing in 2005.

The current thinking among development experts is that development should aim to address the root causes of poverty and promote human development as a key to sustaining economic progress. As the economist J. G. Galbrack notes, migration is the oldest action against poverty. It is therefore unsurprising that integrating migration into the development agenda is taking on a new importance in many countries, and developing countries with significant emigration flows are establishing policies to link movements to their agenda and this is very encouraging.

However, it is a fact that the debate about migration in most developed countries is negatively cast in stereotypes of racism and myths about floods of migrants and asylum seekers, and little rational or well-informed public and political discussion. And economic migrants whose intention is to contribute to their host countries and their own families are portrayed as social misfits. Refugees and asylum seekers, fleeing violence and persecution are similarly demonized. Decisions about the desirable levels of migration are usually made on the basis of its economic

benefits alone, but there are important social, political and cultural mutual benefits and costs too to consider.

Determining what would be development-friendly outcomes from migration is far from easy because migration can be both a challenge and an opportunity. On the plus side, migration offers an opportunity for developing countries by reducing unemployment, generating capital and resources through remittances, and promoting stronger trade links, but it can also cause brain drain. Understanding this complex interplay between migration and development is important for policy makers, particularly in the ongoing efforts to promote development through poverty reduction, because the actual impact of migration will depend on the policy environment. Ultimately, it must be ensured that when people choose to migrate, the costs and benefits are shared equitably between home and host countries. From a development perspective, the challenge is for developing countries to respond to the flows and resources, which migrants remit, by establishing policies to strengthen the development impact. Policy choices made now will help to determine whether migration will maximize benefits or whether it would continue to remain a source of concern and cost.

Chairman,

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have become a major strategic framework of reference for international development agencies and are wide in scope and commitment to development. The Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (GPRS), which promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty, cannot fully attain the MDGs without mainstreaming migration concerns.

However, despite its growing significance and magnitude, international migration is not directly factored into the millennium development goals, nor is it in the country strategy papers in developing countries. Both migration and development experts do agree on the close relationship between the two concepts and many official documents and reports have started to reflect this. The increasing recognition makes it inevitable to link the MDGs to migration and governments and donors are working effectively in pursuit of this. References to migration have however been expanded since then with more knowledge and analysis of the subject, focusing on goals covering poverty reduction.

The most notable areas in which migrants are seen to engage in development in their countries of origin are through remittances and knowledge transfer. But there are significant costs too for developing countries, including the outflow of professionals, with the resultant shortage of skills, which is an issue of growing concern in many countries. In those areas where migration is a challenge, strategies must be developed to address the negative impacts, and where there are opportunities, the impacts must be enhanced and the relationship further explored.

Mr. Chairman,

Ghana is a country of significant out-migration. With about 15% of its population living outside its borders, Ghana ranks fifth in Africa on the migration table and second on the brain drain scale. Push and pull factors combine with a range of other issues to make emigration an attractive option for Ghanaians. Emigration from Ghana has become an integral component of the survival and mobility strategies of some individuals and families.

The Government of Ghana has decided that the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for 2006-2010 will be the country's road map for policy direction. The GPRS II will provide the conduit through which government's three-pronged strategy of Human Resource Development, Private Sector led growth and good governance will be achieved. A significant challenge for Ghana is to identify how an economic growth rate of 7.1% needed to attain the MDGs can be achieved, through our GPRS.

Ghana needs to find outlets for its surplus skills and labour, but she also suffers significantly from brain drain, particularly the exodus of health workers which has contributed to declining growth in the health sector, and already, there are fears that the health goals of the MDGs may not be met. A recent paper by the Institute of Policy Research notes that more than a third of Ghana's health and tertiary educated have migrated to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and the impact on these sectors is very dramatic. Another source suggests that about 69% of college graduates have expressed the desire to migrate.

The exodus of our health professionals is seriously undermining our fight against HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases and the health system. An analysis on the flight of highly skilled labour from Ghana indicated that the total ratio in all fields, of student/staff ratio was 82 to 1, while the ideal figure should be 5 to 1. This has a debilitating effect on the educational sector.

According to a DFID report, one of the biggest factors hampering progress on poverty reduction in Ghana is the extremely weak capacity of the public administration at all levels. This weakness, it is acknowledged, would exert a major negative effect on poverty reduction and growth. The

relevance of the negative impact of brain drain can be deduced from this assertion.

The Government of Ghana is working vigorously in this area to improve the conditions of doctors and nurses and provide a suitable environment for these health workers as a first line of defence against brain drain. But these are only modest interventions, and more needs to be done. Here, I wish to note that developed countries also retain significant responsibility in this area because the means and resources at the level of developing countries are limited.

Mr. Chairman,

The importance of migrant remittance in Ghana is demonstrated by the proliferation of money transfer institutions and the rapid increases in migrant remittances to Ghana. According to the Bank of Ghana records, private transfers increased from \$680m in 2002 to \$1.4bn in 2004, a third of the GDP.

But despite their volume, the impact of remittances on development is still suspect and the cost of sending these remittances and the conditions under which they are sent remain unsatisfactory. There is opportunity for policy intervention here to increase the impact on remittances and government, financial institutions, the private sector and donors must work together to review the transaction costs and make the remittances more transparent and liberalise the industry to increase the benefits.

It is my view that greater awareness on the part of governments and development partners is welcome. More needs to be done to understand the flows and use to make it work better for poverty reduction by providing incentives and

the propensity to remit. Best practices in this area must be disseminated widely to developing countries and develop their capacity to manage such remittances.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Diasporas are increasingly recognized as important actors in the development of the countries of origin. In addition to the financial engagement, they can help to foster innovation and socio political change in their country of origin.

In this regard, it gives me pleasure to inform this gathering that Ghana has made bold efforts to engage its three million strong diaspora citizens. A Homecoming Summit was organized and sponsored by the Government in 2001, as a first step in acknowledging the contributions of the citizens abroad. This was a very successful event and we are satisfied with the follow up activities.

Ghana has also adjusted its citizenship laws to grant dual citizenship to Ghanaians living abroad, who have lost their Ghanaian citizenship by reason of their acquisition of citizenship of another country, which has helped remove major hurdles in investment opportunities for citizens abroad in Ghana. Currently, there is a debate under way to introduce the People's Representation Bill, which will make it possible for Ghanaians abroad to vote in elections. Ghana has also benefited from programmes of temporary return through IOM's MIDA programme. About three hundred Ghanaians have taken advantage of this programme. Here, it gives me pride to mention the assisted return of a leading Ghanaian cardiologist, who has spearheaded the establishment of the Cardio Center in Ghana which now serves the entire sub-region.

Despite the evident linkages between migration and development and poverty reduction, migration issues have not been fully and coherently integrated into Ghana's strategic development framework. This apparent gap is not deliberate, it stems from the lack of expertise and adequate capacity in labour and migration issues.

It is in the light of the above, Mr. Chairman that I believe that this workshop could not have come at a more opportune time. Ghana is in the process of reviewing the GPRS I, and adopting GPRS II from 2006. We will therefore welcome any proposals on steps that can be taken to mainstream migration into the GPRS II.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having said this, it is my view, that there are ways in which policy can shape and respond to migration to make it better for development and poverty reduction. Policy must utilize and shape these links, and policies of home countries must cohere with those of host countries at the bilateral and multilateral level. There is a case of burden sharing directed at governments of developed and developing countries as well as international organizations. A few of these have been outlined for your consideration.

- It is the view of my country that in order to maximize the development benefits of migration, it is important for developed countries to reframe their migration policies to create a legal route of entry and broaden the base of migration. The policy of preventing migration can only lead to more illegal and irregular migration. Further, any attempt to link development aid to migration prevention policies are insidious and must be rejected.

- Ghana supports the recommendation regarding policy coherence between the activities of different government agencies involved in migration management, and between migration and development policies to avoid inconsistencies and duplication. Policy areas on trade, development, migration, foreign and security must be systematically adjusted and integrated to take account of the linkages between migration and other policy domains. Cooperation is also necessary among development partners as well as NGOs.
- On remittances, two main areas for policy may be considered. Remittances must be cheaper, faster and safer and enhance their development component through better financial market development and better regulatory framework. It is also a fact that data on remittance does not reflect alternative remittance channels. The focus must be on improved collection in order to understand the size of the flows.
- Donors can assist in this regard by reporting on remittance data from their end. They may also, in collaboration with developing countries promote household surveys in order to capture informal channels
- On brain drain, we commend the EU Code of Conduct to limit active recruitment in cases where recruitment has significant negative repercussions. Even though the impact of this initiative is yet to be assessed, we believe it is a very practical step. But we wish to urge that the possibility of a global approach to ethical recruitment must be explored and raised at the appropriate forum. We also recommend the fostering of institutional partnerships between scientific, hospital

and university institutions with countries on bilateral basis to address the causes of brain drain

- We support policies and initiatives for a stronger involvement of diasporas in the development of countries of origin. Countries must be supported at the national level to set up databases where members from the diaspora can register on voluntary basis and maintain links with home countries. Further, countries must identify areas where diaspora organizations could be suitable representatives in the area of development policy and set up mechanisms to ensure appropriate interface with host countries and partners.
- Very few countries are unaffected by International Migration and therefore national migration strategies should not be in isolation but should take cognizance of International cooperation.
- Partnerships with developed countries and regional organizations must be enhanced in the framework of existing institutional mechanisms. Sub-Saharan Africa as a sending continent and Europe and North America as receiving continents must have an interface at whatever level to discuss migration matters. This ought to take place. Developing countries must be supported to assess their migratory situations and help them identify responses. This should reflect in the respective strategy papers of the developing countries.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My paper has looked at some of the practical aspects of migration and the way they can benefit the development

process and reduce poverty in development countries. The potential benefits cannot be ignored, but I daresay that they can only be realized if developed countries perceive it to be beneficial and willing to cooperate. Migration policies made by developed countries have implications for the MDGs. The degree of success of migrants would impinge on the success of the MDGs.

Developed countries must engage with developing countries, on bilateral and multilateral basis to design development-friendly migration programmes for their benefit. Country assistance programmes must aim to address the root causes of migration and support sending countries to provide policy and administrative environment which maximises the development benefits of migration.

It is my hope that the discussions that follow will enable this workshop come up with the appropriate strategies.

Thank you.