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**THE CHALLENGE OF POLICY COHERENCE ON MIGRATION:
THE DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE**

**Keynote Address by Mr. José Antonio Ocampo
to the IOM International Dialogue on Migration,
“Towards Policy Coherence on Migration”**

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I am pleased to participate in this International Dialogue on Migration, as it gives me the opportunity to reciprocate Brunson McKinley’s keynote address to the Commission on Population and Development in New York in April 2004. The theme of Brunson’s insightful address, “Towards more orderly management of the movement of people”, still resonates throughout discussions on international migration. Nitin Desai, my predecessor as Under-Secretary-General, expressed a similar concern before this Council two years ago, when he called for a set of predictable, understandable, and defensible rules to govern international migration.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has convened this year’s dialogue at an auspicious time, following last month’s important events in New York: the launching of the report of the Global Commission on International Migration; the convening of the United Nations’ Fourth Coordination Meeting on International Migration; and the beginning of deliberations on the high-level dialogue on international migration and development, to take place in the General Assembly in 2006.

Almost 190 million people now live outside their country of birth. And over the past five years, the number of international migrants worldwide has increased by 15 million. The total today surpasses the respective populations of all but five countries in the world.

A first responsibility of the international community is to improve conditions and opportunities for potential migrants in their home countries. The global development agenda is therefore an essential component of the overall effort to manage international migration. Improving human well-being by achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, would significantly reduce the “push” factors in international migration.

Migration policies do not yet fully reflect this development perspective. Indeed, they are often inconsistent with other dimensions of development policy. To take just one of many examples, developed countries have continued to attract numerous health workers away from poor countries, while simultaneously seeking to help the very same countries to improve the health status of their people. A development perspective can help facilitate policy coherence on migration. It can also help all stakeholders reap the benefits that can derive from larger migration flows.

All concerned – countries of destination, countries of origin, transit countries, the individuals who migrate and those left behind – need to recognize that well-managed international migration can be mutually advantageous. This recognition seems to be growing. For example, recent research by my Department finds that many developed countries are easing restrictions on the admission of migrants, precisely as a response to population ageing and labour shortages in certain sectors of the economy.

Let me turn briefly to two additional areas where cooperative action by countries of origin and countries of destination may offer routes towards both increased policy coherence and mutual benefit: remittances and temporary migration.

The World Bank's *Global Economic Prospects 2006* issued earlier this month cites experiences of reducing remittance transfer fees in India, the Philippines, and Mexico as examples to follow. These achievements involved such actions as opening the postal system to greater competition for remittance transfers; issuing consular identification cards to facilitate the opening of bank accounts by Mexican migrants in the United States; and allowing the use of cell-phone text messaging for remittance transfers. The report also notes that a steady stream of remittances can improve a country's credit-worthiness for external borrowing. Policies to facilitate the transfer of migrants' remittances should be part of broader policies, which aim also to support hometown associations and business and academic networks that link migrants to their countries of origin, to facilitate return migration, and, where appropriate, to enable dual citizenship.

In many settings, migrants would welcome the opportunity to work abroad for a fixed period provided they could save enough to accomplish some personal goal. Policies promoting temporary migration would assist migrants in saving and returning their savings home, making pension rights transferable, or providing migrants with training in basic entrepreneurial skills that they could use when they return. And these measures could benefit all. Policies on temporary migration across national frontiers could also enable additional gains from trade in services. We can see this already in Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

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The United Nations has played a key role in fostering intergovernmental dialogue on international migration issues at international conferences and meetings. These have created a platform for cooperative action at the regional and global levels. And they have generated norms and guidelines for policy development.

All of the intergovernmental conferences on population convened by the United Nations have dealt with international migration issues. In 1994, in Cairo, Egypt, the international community produced a blueprint for managing international migration. Chapter X of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development provided a comprehensive set of guidelines on international migration, adopted unanimously by the international community. In our search today for coherence, we would be well served by taking a close look at that document, especially in light of

the report of the Global Commission on International Migration, which in many ways validates and builds upon ICPD.

Since 1994, other international conferences organized by the United Nations system have also addressed international migration issues. The 1995 World Summit for Social Development, as well as its follow-up during the General Assembly's 24th special session in 2000, considered the challenges posed by the social integration of international migrants. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and its follow-up in 2000 focused attention on the particular needs of migrant women and children, especially those who are trafficked. The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in South Africa, reaffirmed the urgent need to prevent, combat, and eliminate all forms of discriminatory practices against migrants. The UN Millennium Assembly in 2000 called for the protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers, and their families. The 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, stressed the importance of reducing the transfer costs of remittances and creating development-oriented investments. Finally, the 2005 World Summit, held in New York this past September, reaffirmed the importance of respecting the human rights of migrants and reducing the costs of remittances. And it acknowledged the crucial nexus between international migration and development.

The UN itself must address the challenge of policy coherence on migration within its system of organizations. The Secretary-General has initiated a process aimed at ensuring better coordination and increased system-wide coherence on migration. The process began with the creation of the Geneva Migration Group, in which several UN organizations—namely, the ILO, UNHCR, the Office of the HCHR and UNODC—came together with the IOM to discuss coordination and collaboration.

More recently, the Secretary-General invited the establishment of the Global Commission on International Migration, which would aim to provide the framework for the formulation of a coherent, comprehensive and global response to migration. Last month the Commission presented its report to the Secretary-General. It focused on issues of current concern to the international community, especially related to the economic, social, human rights, and governance dimensions of international migration. This initiative is already bearing fruit. Based on a Commission proposal, the Secretary-General has taken action to establish a broader and more formal coordination mechanism.

The work of the Commission will continue to assist the Secretary-General in laying the foundation for next year's high-level dialogue on international migration and development.

Let us recall the purpose of the dialogue: to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize the development benefits and minimize the negative impacts of international migration.

As we approach the high-level dialogue, our task is to identify areas of emerging consensus in the international community and to gauge the depth of international support for substantial initiatives. I know that in this effort the IOM can play an indispensable role, by bringing to bear its expertise and, especially, the results of the ongoing dialogue within the regional processes it supports.

Clearly, a world closed to migration would be meaner, poorer, weaker and more dangerous. A world open to migration is a fairer, richer, stronger, safer world – provided we can find ways of shaping migration via well-thought and coherent policies.