



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

STATEMENT BY

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REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA

AT

THE 39TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

ON

AGENDA ITEM 4: GENERAL DEBATE ON
NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN POPULATION MATTERS:
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation joins others in congratulating you on your election as the Chairman of the 39th Session. We are confident that under your able leadership you and the other members of the Bureau will be able to steer this session to a fruitful outcome in preparation for the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development due to be held in September this year.

2. We thank the Secretary General for his reports. We fully agree with the Secretary General on the importance of building and strengthening the capacities of governments and other stakeholders to meet the challenges posed by international migration. We also fully support the important elements mentioned in the report that have the potential for policy interventions which can enhance positive development impacts and can bring mutually beneficial solutions for both countries of origin and destinations as well as for the migrants themselves.

3. Malaysia believes that it is most timely that the issue of international migration and development is being given due prominence at this session. The scale, complexity and breadth of the issue demands that the international community come together in order to deliberate and formulate appropriate responses. The UN, as the only intergovernmental universal body, is certainly well placed to provide the forum not only in the field of normative, analytical and operational activities, but also in terms of advocacy.

4. Many events in the recent past have highlighted the acute problems and the environments attributable to irregular migration. The international community, working within the multilateral framework, needs to tackle these problems including addressing the root causes of this phenomenon where necessary, which include poverty, deprivation of market access, war, armed conflict as well as gross and systematic violations of human rights. In this regard, we believe that the forthcoming High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development can be used to promote the positive elements of migration and also address the whole spectrum of challenges related to it, including irregular migration.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The Government of Malaysia acknowledges the positive elements of international migration in economic development. International migration, inter-alia, helps to ensure labour market flexibility and reduce labour market rigidity. At the same time, it must also be acknowledged that the impact of international migration, particularly low skilled foreign workers, on the receiving country's economy and society can be both positive and negative. While the receiving country can benefit in terms of economic development and the sending country in terms of remittances received, there are also the risks of being exposed to the negative social, economic and political impacts of international migration for both countries. One of the key solutions in ensuring that the benefits are maximised and the negative impacts minimised is the establishment of appropriate national mechanisms to manage and regulate the flow of international migration. The establishment of these crucial mechanisms certainly calls for constructive dialogue and closer bilateral cooperation between receiving and sending countries.

6. Malaysia presently is a receiving country for largely low skilled foreign labour. The number of foreign workers with work permits accounted for 15.0 per cent of the Malaysian labour force in 2005. Currently and in the future, Malaysia's intake of foreign workers will continue to be guided essentially by our policy to move to technology intensive and higher values added economic activities.

7. Malaysia will therefore gradually reduce the employment of low skilled foreign labour, while continue to employ highly skilled foreign labour or expatriates, particularly in occupations where we face shortages and lack of expertise as well as those related to foreign investment. Malaysia is of the opinion that employment of foreign labour has to be governed basically by the supply and demand of each country in terms of local market requirement, recognition of qualifications in relation to job descriptions as well as the local immigration laws and relevant government policies.

8. By helping to meet labour needs in certain economic sectors, international migration has, to a certain extent, contributed to our economic development. At the same time, the presence of foreign workers in large numbers, particularly undocumented ones, has posed problems not only for the receiving country such as Malaysia, but for the irregular migrants themselves, who are vulnerable to abuse by unscrupulous parties. As a demonstration of the government's commitment to resolving the issue, in 2004, measures were taken to regularise the presence of many of these undocumented workers. Further, the government has amended the Immigration Act to allow for heavier and stiffer penalties to be imposed on undocumented migrant workers and employers harbouring them.

Mr. Chairman,

9. Malaysia also experiences brain drain as a result of globalisation and internationalization of labour markets. To attract highly skilled Malaysian citizens working abroad to return home, Malaysia has introduced a programme in 2001 to encourage Malaysian experts residing overseas, to return to Malaysia.

10. In terms of brain gain, Malaysia has also implemented the National Brain Gain Programme to increase the supply of knowledgeable and highly skilled human capital. Among the measures to source global talent will include encouraging Malaysian scientists to return as well as attracting foreign scientists abroad to collaborate with Malaysian scientists in R&D.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The report of the Secretary General also highlighted the increasing number of women and girls among the international migrants. The growing feminisation of international migration driven by the need to seek better life opportunities, as we are all aware, has brought other complications. Women migrants, especially irregular women migrants, are unfortunately exposed to a much higher risk of discrimination, violence and abuse. Besides being exposed to a higher risk of being abused and manipulated, many women migrants remain unaware of their rights. For example, in relation to reproductive health many of them do not see the need and

make no effort to avail themselves of the available reproductive health care services, many of which are preventive in nature.

12. Malaysia views the issue of trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls, with great concern and is currently working with various agencies to strengthen the measures to prevent and eliminate this deplorable crime. Malaysia has introduced various laws in its efforts to eradicate or to suppress the trafficking in persons into Malaysia and prevent the resulting exploitation particularly of women and girls. Relevant laws are also being reviewed including the provision of shelter homes to protect the victims. The government is concerned that Malaysia is used as a transit point for trafficking in persons and has therefore carried out effective border and immigration controls as the first line of prevention. Given the transboundary nature of the problem, Malaysia attaches significant importance to regional and international cooperation as crucial elements in curbing trafficking in persons.

13. Finally, we also wish to reiterate Malaysia's commitments in implementing the ICPD-POA and will make all efforts to ensure its full implementation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.