



**STATEMENT BY HON'BLE MR. E. AHAMED, MINISTER OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, AT THE HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON SEPTEMBER 14, 2006**



Madam President,

International Migration is a subject of much global interest at present. It involves people and has differing impact on sending, receiving and transit countries, including on their economies and societies. I am therefore glad that international migration is being discussed at the United Nations. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the detailed report as well as the events organized as part of the preparatory process for this High Level Dialogue.

Madam President,

India is a major country of origin, destination and transit of

migrants, with a long history of attracting and sending people to other lands. It is estimated that around 20 million people of Indian origin live in other countries while another 20 million migrants, including a large number of irregular migrants are in India today. Overseas Indians, through sheer dint of effort, very often in trying circumstances, have significantly contributed to the countries of their destination while, at the same time, playing a positive role in building a bridge with India. Recognizing this, every year we celebrate their achievement with a "Pravasi Bharatiya Divas" or "Day of the Indian Migrant" and have taken several innovative investment and policy initiatives

including the "Overseas Citizenship of India".

Madam President,

In the context of globalization there is need to recognize the inevitability of international migration. This presents challenges and opportunities, including the increased demand for specialists in developed countries to strengthen their international competitiveness. In fact, the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects 2006 notes that a rise in migration from developing countries raises incomes of natives in high-income countries. The developed countries would therefore benefit by a greater openness than hitherto in allowing movement of natural persons across national frontiers and through greater political will and determination for a successful conclusion of the GATS MODE 4 negotiations.

High income countries must address the legitimate needs of migrants, including receiving back their pension benefits and social security contributions, especially in cases of migration of shorter durations. The lack of appropriate or matching structures in the country of origin should not be made an excuse for the denial of a migrant's legitimate pension benefits. Efforts, especially in

the case of short duration migrants, also need to be made to reduce the cost of remittances.

Madam President,

Coming from Kerala, which is one of the largest places of origin of many of our workers overseas, I can personally testify to the importance of remittances, which are often the most important source of livelihood for the families of the migrant workers, and support not just one but many persons.

Madam President,

There is no restriction in India on migrating overseas. We favour a regular, non-discriminatory and orderly process, whether for permanent or shorter-term migration. In this context, artificial barriers to migration by high-income countries should not be created and that receiving as well as sending countries act to reinforce the positives from migration and work together in a cooperative atmosphere while being sensitive to each other's concerns.

We also believe that countries of origin benefit from the return of migrants with skills or capital that they would not have acquired at home. The existence of reliable domestic institutions encourages the

involvement by migrants in the development of their countries of origin. 'Brain drain' as a result of migration of skilled and highly trained people can also be translated into an overall gain.

Madam President,

As we speak about international migration today, we also need to note the problematic facet of irregular migration, which is a cause of concern for our collective well-being. Moreover, there are serious security implications, including the use of irregular migrants as an instrument for cross-border terrorism and for creating social tension in the host country. This needs to be tackled with a firm resolve. It is no longer the concern only of domestic law enforcement, but is a matter of global priority requiring coordinated and concerted action. A similar firm resolve is required to tackle the scourge of people smuggling

and trafficking, especially of women and children.

Madam President,

Cooperative international efforts should result in comprehensive, mutually beneficial solutions that are based on the best practices dealing with international migration. We recognize that international migration solutions and approaches relevant for a particular country or region may not be appropriate for others. Our efforts should focus on promoting teamwork amongst nations, to maximize the benefits of international migration while reducing its negative effects. We also believe that regular interaction among countries, including at the UN, could result in a win-win situation for all.

Thank you, Madam President.

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