



## Secretary-General opens historic UN migration meeting by welcoming Belgian offer to host forum

(UNITED NATIONS NEW YORK, 14 September) Secretary-General Kofi Annan today welcomed Belgium's offer to host the first meeting next year of his proposed Global Forum on Migration and Development, a standing body in which countries would be able to discuss and exchange the best ideas and practices on the issue.

In an address in New York to the opening of the United Nations' first-ever high level gathering on migration and development, the Secretary-General stressed that the planned Forum, which he first outlined in a report released in June, would not be a norm-setting intergovernmental commission but would be led and overseen by States, with the UN system providing support.

"It would be informal, voluntary, consultative. Above all, it would not make binding decisions," Mr. Annan told the two-day High-Level Dialogue of the General Assembly on International Migration and Development. The Forum would allow countries to build relationships of trust, he said, and to bring together ideas on matters such as facilitating remittances (monies sent home by workers abroad), engaging diasporas, new ways to reduce poverty and educational partnerships.

UN General Assembly President Sheikha Haya Rashed al Khalifa (Bahrain) told the 14-15 September General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development that the meeting would serve as a platform to mobilize political will and build effective partnerships. She stressed the potential of migrants in aiding development in countries of both origin and destination.

Speaking for the Group of 77 developing countries, Ms. Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula (South African Minister of Home Affairs) said that "the dialogue that we are engaged in cannot be the last word on the challenges" of migration, and that it is "too important not to have it within the United Nations."

The concept of an informal and voluntary Global Forum for inter-governmental consultations on migration and development was endorsed in a statement on behalf of the European Union by Ms. Tarja Filatov (Minister of Labour of Finland).

General Assembly debate continues through Friday 15 September, and this afternoon and tomorrow parallel discussions will take place in closed, informal round tables.

To request a preview interview with a senior UN official or obtain regional fact sheets on migration and development, contact Oisika Chakrabarti, 1-212-963-8264, [chakrabarti@un.org](mailto:chakrabarti@un.org), or Tim Wall, 1-212-963-5851, [wallt@un.org](mailto:wallt@un.org), of the UN Department of Public Information, Development Section.

For more information on the High-level Dialogue, please visit:  
[www.un.org/migration](http://www.un.org/migration)