



SOLOMON ISLANDS

STATEMENT BY

AMBASSADOR COLLIN BECK

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOLOMON

ISLANDS TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 14-15th September 2006

Please Check Against Delivery

Madam President,

Thank you for giving me the floor, my delegation would like to join others in congratulating you on your assumption as chair person of this important gathering. Madam President, international migration puts a human face to globalization. It defines and represents the global structure that divides the world between the industrialized north and the developing south. It is important to note that flow of migrants from the Southern hemisphere to the North, is due to the demographic and social structure of the industrialized world and the need for workers.

Solomon Islands values the meeting as it provides an opportunity to ensure there is a mechanism to measure and match the supply and demand of the global labour market as argued by the International Organization for Migration including the Group of 77.

Madam President, Solomon Islands as a Small Islands Developing State with Least Developed Country status attach much importance to the subject under discussion, it provides a developmental opportunity that if not well managed it becomes a security concern both for the receiving and sending states. Migration in other words is an integral part of achieving the MDGs.

Madam President,

At national level Solomon Islands is made up of half a million people that speaks more than eighty different languages, it has embraced the rich cultural diversity hence inter-island migration is an economic issue. The pull factor in all migration routes be it internal or external is related to economic gains. Movement of population tends to be where economic activities are located. The challenge is in balancing the participation of migrant workers and the indigenous population. To leave anyone a spectator to development, could see instability setting in, as in the recent experience by Solomon Islands couple of years back during its ethnic conflict. In this connection the High Level Meeting must take time to look at the domestic movement of labour as well.

Having said this, both internal as well as international migration contributes to the countries foreign income through remittance but most importantly the transfer of knowledge, capacity and good practice in other words it is a win win situation for both the migrants and the receiving countries.

It is also important to note that like in other Pacific Island developing states, an employed national looks after his extended family in providing food, school fees and health needs not only for his nuclear family but his parents, nephews, nieces and wider family commitment apart from his or her traditional and customary obligations. The income earned provides for their families in meeting all Millennium Development Goals.

Within the Pacific region there is varying levels of international migrant workers. There are countries within the region that provide labour to developed economies while there are others that acquire labour from developing countries.

Regionally the Pacific sub region has been exploring short term labour migration with some of its developed neighbours. While nothing concrete has yet emerged from these discussions, my delegation is pleased to say a dialogue on shared migration opportunities seeking a regional concerted action is put on the table. The regional discussion has allowed us to better understand the receiving states position and hopefully work towards striking a balance.

Madam President,

Development for many of the Least Development Countries have not kept pace with the growth of population, limited opportunities been the push factor for the local population to migrate to seek employment internationally. Solomon Islands on the other hand do not have a large migrant population but has an abundant supply of labour relative to the local employment market. A good portion of them are located and engaged in rural areas. Urban drift has put pressure on the agricultural based economies, it has not provided jobs hence the largest employer in the country remains the government rather than the private sector. The challenge is given the high costs of communication, transportation and smallness of the market, retracted foreign direct investors not to provide the engine of growth needed to see the economic take off.

In this respect the Government is examining all economic opportunities to guarantee our population a secure future. Solomon Islands can not agree more to establishing an adequate and transparent mechanism especially for short term contracts that will ensure workers are documented and legally process to avoid workers working outside the system that places them in a more vulnerable position.

My delegation would also like to see more coordination between all international organizations and United Nations Agencies in combating human trafficking and develop a common mechanism to address this.

Madam President,

I would like to conclude by assuring you of my delegation's on going support and cooperation as we seek an international economic solution that would ensure all countries could benefit from.

Thank you Madam President.