



BANGLADESH

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Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Md. Lutfur Rahman Khan (Azad)
Hon'ble Minister of State

Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

at

the High-level Dialogue on
International Migration and Development

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227 East, 45th Street, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 867-3434 • Fax: (212) 9724038 • E-mail : bangladesh@un.int
web site: www.un.int/bangladesh

Madam President,

Bangladesh delegation most warmly welcomes you upon your well-deserved election. It is our firm conviction that under your able stewardship, this Meeting will see effective results. Our appreciations are owed to the Secretary General for his comprehensive report.

Madam President,

Contemporary views on migration dictates that like most other economic flows, migration operates as an equilibrating mechanism at national and international levels. Many developed countries are now leading towards rapid increase in dependency ratios. Labour surplus economies on the other hand are loaded with huge unemployment. These opposite factors are the main determinant of labour migration. Liberalization of policies by the receiving countries can generate significant welfare gains. It leads to superior development outcomes and to a "win-win" situation for both sets of countries and for the individuals themselves.

The relationship between migration and development is now widely recognized. However, there is a conspicuous gap on how migration is linked to attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Under current architecture, in most cases, migration has been a costly phenomenon, which the poor people can not afford. This must be halted expeditiously if we want to reach the benefit of migration to the poorest segment of the society. We must develop a blueprint so that the poor, unskilled and unemployed section of the society can get the cross border access without much hindrance. It will facilitate achieving the millennium development goal on poverty eradication in a timely manner.

Migrant workers bear high economic, social, and political costs in their migration. They are mostly vulnerable to exploitation. Women migrant workers are generally placed into low-paid household services and reproductive works. Efforts are needed to fully eliminate the exploitation and discrimination by way of ensuring fair treatment, decent work, minimum wage and recognition of their status. The integration process of the migrants needs to be simplified. We must protect the basic human rights of all migrant workers and members of their families including those without proper documents.

Facilitating remittance flows is another action with potentially high payoffs, and governments can work together with the private sector and NGOs to achieve this goal. Host countries must ensure unhindered transfer of funds to the countries of origin with minimal transaction costs. Sending countries should also help migrants use remittances properly and invest back home in productive sectors.

Madam President,

Bangladesh is a labour surplus country and belongs thus to the supply side of the world labour market. The current flow from Bangladesh is some 250,000 annually which is about 13.5% of the annual increase in domestic labour force. International migration has assumed centre-stage in the policy discourse of our country. The present Government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, immediately after assuming her office, established the

ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. The exclusive mandate of this Ministry is to secure welfare of the expatriate workers and enhancement of the overseas employment.

The Government of Bangladesh is constantly engaged in promoting a mechanism of managed migration. Recently the Government of Bangladesh has adopted a comprehensive "Overseas Employment Policy". This policy is focused on protecting rights of the expatriate workers at home and abroad, preserving the existing market and exploring newer job markets, and welfare of the expatriates. This gender-sensitive policy has been drafted in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The Government is in constant collaboration with the civil society, NGOs and the private sector to forge a holistic approach to ensure a properly managed migration.

Bangladesh is committed to ensuring safe migration opportunities for its people. Steps are being undertaken to extend pre-departure orientation and pre-employment training for potential migrants. Efforts are being made to expand the migration welfare funds so that they are utilized for the benefit of migrant workers. New opportunities are being created particularly for female migrant workers.

Madam President,

Bangladesh would seek a regime to facilitate the movement of temporary service providers, under Mode 4 of GATS. We all recognize the immense potential in this field, which may exceed the benefits of trade in merchandise goods under complete liberalization. We urge the international community to undertake expeditious measures for liberalization of markets for the movement of service providers under Mode 4. It can also contribute to addressing the challenges of migrants smuggling and trafficking in persons.

I take this opportunity to put forward a proposal to this august gathering. All members of the labour sending countries can set up a negotiating forum for furthering the case of movement of service providers. We look forward to the favourable consideration of this idea by the Hon'ble Ministers and distinguished delegates.

Madam President,

Migration has now become a global phenomenon and warrants a comprehensive solution. We need a normative framework to achieve effective international coordination and enhanced cooperation among all stakeholders. A Properly managed international migration holds enormous potential for the development. The momentum generated through this high-level dialogue must be nurtured to set the foundation for enhanced international cooperation in optimizing the benefits of migration. We should not miss this opportunity.

I thank you Madam President.