



AUSTRALIA



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High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development 14 September 2006

Australian Statement

**Statement by Senator Amanda Vanstone
Australian Minister for Immigration
and Multicultural Affairs**

Madame President

Throughout history, people all over the world have moved from their place of birth to some other place seeking a better life.

The scale of this movement has grown dramatically over the years as populations have burgeoned, knowledge of opportunities around the world has increased and improved means of transport have given people the ability to move long distances at relatively low costs.

People are now on the move as migrants within and between all continents. We can only expect this trend to continue - driven by economics, demography and other factors.

The challenge for states is how best to govern flows of people in a way that achieves the greatest benefit for all parties concerned -- sending and receiving states and migrants themselves.

Australia welcomes this Dialogue, in addition to discussions taking place in many other forums, as providing states with an opportunity to take stock of better practices and to learn from each other's perspectives and experiences.

Madame President

Australia is a country whose entire social and economic fabric and success have been built upon migration. We welcome migrants from all parts of the world for economic, social and humanitarian reasons.

Over the past decade, we have welcomed nearly one million people as permanent settlers. Reflecting our migrant heritage, nearly 25 per cent of our population was born outside the country.

We are pleased to have been recognised by the OECD as “an immigration country *par excellence*”.

Our experience convinces us that well managed migration is the best way to ensure that the process of migration results in the greatest benefits for all concerned and, importantly, to reduce many of the tragic abuses now associated with irregular migration.

Well managed migration goes well beyond the concept of border control and means that permanent and temporary migration is carefully facilitated through legal channels.

This is the best way to protect both the legitimate interests of states and the human rights of migrants. When states are able to facilitate legal migration, the scope for exploitation of migrants by people smugglers, traffickers and unscrupulous employers is vastly diminished.

The Australian experience also convinces us that well designed national migration policies, backed by effective administrative capacity, will do the most to open up opportunities for nation-building and development.

Migration policies based on labour market research, analysis, wide consultation with all stakeholders and follow-up evaluation ensure that migration is successfully geared to the needs and capacities of a State.

Migration policies can also take into account humanitarian considerations - as Australia does through our offshore resettlement program which has brought 100,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants to Australia in the last decade.

By fostering orderly humanitarian migration, where possible, we have been able to make a commitment to seek out those most in need and maintain a resettlement program, with generous post-arrival help in all those things required to establish a new life in another country, supported by ‘whole of government’ funding of A\$2 billion every four years.

Well designed migration policies that include post arrival support for individual migrants, including integration and citizenship for permanent migrants, will greatly contribute to a positive experience for individual migrants through respect, self-sufficiency and participation in society.

The development challenges and benefits of migration flowing from return migration, recirculation of skills, remittances and diaspora-related investment have been well documented.

Development plans and strategies would clearly benefit from much stronger linkages with the effective management of migration.

The contribution that migration can make in achieving development goals will not be possible without effective administrative capacity to deliver.

Capacity building needs to be tackled on a carefully targeted basis.

We believe that the International Organisation for Migration, with its unparalleled breadth and depth of experience in migration matters and its worldwide reach, is ideally placed to be the prime vehicle for worldwide capacity building.

In our own region, some states have strong capacities in this area and others do not.

Australia conducts a number of programs with partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region to help build capacities to reap the benefits of orderly migration and curb the abuses associated with irregular migration.

We are establishing the Australia-Pacific Technical College to contribute to the development of a skilled Pacific workforce with the potential to take up either domestic or international skilled labour opportunities.

Madame President,

The very nature of international migration requires cooperation between states.

Australia is a long term participant in dialogue and cooperation bilaterally, in regional consultative processes and at the global level.

We believe that the best way to promote understanding and cooperation on migration is by focusing on shared goals and practical cooperative activities.

At the global level we participate actively in the high-quality annual dialogue on migration policy sponsored by the International Organisation for Migration. We have been closely involved in best practice forums such as the Berne Initiative.

In our own region, we highly value our participation in, and the outcomes of, the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process), the Asia-Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC), the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

We will continue to work with our regional partners to strengthen these processes and, in particular, will look at initiatives to strengthen the Asia-Pacific Consultations Process.

Australia believes that these processes, and similar regional processes in other parts of the world, form the most effective building blocks of international dialogue and cooperation. We know they work.

Future international dialogue on migration is likely to be most effective if it is built on these existing regional processes. They reflect the shared interests of states

and utilise the expertise of bodies such as the International Organisation for Migration.

We favour bringing together the heads of regional migration processes on an annual basis as the most effective form of global dialogue, rather than creating any new, and possibly artificial, forum.

Thank you, Madame President.