



ITALY

*Statement by the Minister of Social
Solidarity of Italy*

The Honorable Paolo Ferrero

*To the High-Level Dialogue on
International Migration and Development*

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I wish to thank the United Nations for this historic international meeting. I hope it can be a tool for a better understanding of the migration phenomenon and, therefore, contribute not only to economic development but also to a better coexistence among different cultures: the foundation for collective security and the safeguarding of peace.

Italy's views are reflected in the concepts expressed earlier in this hall by the European Union.

Italy was a country of emigration until a few decades ago. Today it has become a country of immigration. Our communities are present throughout the world. The city of New York is direct testimony to this. Italy knows well the problems that immigrants face. Many Italians were themselves victims of racism and exploitation. It is this experience that drives our government to address the subject in a more innovative manner, also through new legislation currently being drafted to create a welcoming mechanism centered on people and respect for their human and social rights, and thus to end the drama of illegality.

Migratory flows are fed by many factors rooted in the unequal distribution of wealth between the north and south of the world, the need to escape from wars, and the quest for freedom and rights. This is why Italy wishes to promote new immigration policies that are part of the comprehensive design of a foreign policy of peace and cooperation. We wish to focus on strengthening development cooperation in all its components: by reactivating dialogue and both European Union and bilateral cooperation with the main countries of origin and transit on their economic and social development issues; and by revising migration control policies so as to safeguard the dignity of migrants and strengthen collaboration with the international organizations and United Nations agencies active in international migration issues and in countering the traffic in human beings.

This is the basis for our support of education and training programs, including teaching migrants the language and culture of the country to which they mean to travel—programs to be offered in the country of origin with the support of the country of destination. Italy is developing such a policy through labor agreements that allow the home and host countries to share operative instruments, information, and common standards.

Through such instruments we are seeking to strengthen the legal channels for access to the Italian labor market, also by facilitating a better match between labor supply and demand both in the countries of origin and Italy. This mechanism aims not to increase the number of entries into our country but rather to heavily reduce situations of illegality, prevent organized crime's trafficking in human being, and provide more regular treatment and dignified conditions to those who enter our country.

In order to obtain tangible results, migration management must also include measures that maximize the macroeconomic benefits of remittances. Italy is particularly aware of this, remembering how important this phenomenon was for our country. From a

perspective on migration as a co-development factor, it is very important to allow migrants the possibility to develop business activities in their home countries.

Women and children are often the main victims of trafficking in human beings. With regard to minors, it is fundamental to guarantee them full access to the rights and protections established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The issue of the impact of migration on children has not received the attention it deserves. A significant share of second-generation immigrants do not attend required school on a regular basis, creating the risk that one of the most important places for becoming citizens will not be utilized.

The right to citizenship is at the center of our government's action, which has already presented two bills to Parliament to make family reunification easier and to bring down to five years the time needed for an immigrant to acquire Italian citizenship. Naturally this is a road that can only be pursued through the fight to lower school drop-out rates, the full utilization of social and health services by migrants, and the valorization of cultural mediators. This is why we wish to affirm our opposition to any double-standard that places citizens with privileges on one side and immigrants with watered-down rights on the other. We must thus fight the institution – de jure or de facto – of "differentiated" rights for foreigners, by creating possibilities for immigrants to vote in local elections and by creating a law that safeguards freedom of religion and creed and that recognizes the cultures of origin and unique nature of each by facilitating the inclusion of migrants in the social fabric of our country. In this framework, the formation of a Council of Migrants is a very significant element that will take effect in the next few weeks.

Migrants are not guests on perpetual probation but rather new citizens, able to enrich our cultural heritage with their cultures. First and foremost they are people seeking to build their own life project. We must therefore work to take the migration phenomenon out of the realm of illegality, and to foster the integration of foreign citizens into our communities, social cohesion, a sense of common belonging, and loyalty to the laws and rules of coexistence. For this cohesion to be effective, we need a strong action by the State and by social organisms in which our values of freedom and democracy are embodied in respect for the dignity of those who are trying to honestly build a better

future.