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PRESS RELEASE

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Statement by Assistant Secretary Ellen Sauerbrey, at the plenary meeting of the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, September 15, 2006

Thank you Madame President. The United States is pleased to participate in this event, which provides the opportunity for U.N. member states to discuss our collective experiences on migration and development.

The issue of immigration is close to America's heart. It goes to the very core of who we are as a people, and what we believe in as a country: hard work, opportunity, rule of law, freedom, tolerance, and liberty. Let there be no confusion: the United States' commitment to promoting orderly migration as a positive development for all nations is firm, undiminished by the challenges of the post-9/11 world.

Last year alone, over one million foreign nationals received permanent legal residence in the United States. America hosts approximately 20% of the world's migrants, coming to us from every corner of the globe.

All countries of the UN family have shared with us their people, culture, and faiths, representing the magnificent glory and range and reach of God's human creation.

So when America looks in the mirror, it is you that we see.

Madame President, the United States takes the issue of migration very seriously. We are deeply and sincerely committed to promoting legal, orderly and humane migration as an engine for economic growth and prosperity for all countries. We are also, without hesitation, fully committed to respect for the human dignity and human rights of migrants. On these points, there should be absolutely no doubt.

My country approaches the subject of migration with humility. Through over 200 years of experience, we have learned that the political, economic, and human complexities of this phenomenon defy easy answers. Even in the 18th century, our founding fathers debated the

appropriate scope of immigration to the United States. They mistakenly feared that "foreign influences" would somehow undermine America's democratic principles.

Our national conversation on migration continues today. Americans understand the need to work through these hard issues as a nation. We offer ourselves as an example, and perhaps a reassurance, to others who struggle with immigration as a relatively new topic. The United States recognizes that there are negative aspects of migration, such as human trafficking and smuggling. We are committed to confronting these challenges.

Americans are a practical people when it comes to immigration. This national preference for the pragmatic and the concrete, coupled with our unwavering commitment to migration as a positive phenomenon, shapes how the United States fosters international cooperation in this realm. In our experience, migration relationships work best between neighbors and neighborhoods, near and far, where there are common interests and concerns that lead to tangible outcomes. We are not interested in grand and elaborate global dialogues simply because we have seen the inherent weakness that results from their size and scope. They lumber under the great weight of rounds and rounds of conversation, far removed from immediate problems and realistic solutions.

The United States welcomes the work of the Global Migration Group, which will enhance the ability of the UN system and International Organization for Migration to address the nexus between migration and development. We believe, however, that the international community, including the UN system, already has adequate capacity to address migration issues, and that creation of additional structures will hinder, not help, international cooperation on these issues. Any consideration of UN-affiliated discussions must be fully vetted by the member states in a transparent and open manner, in keeping with UN rules of procedure, and out of respect for the traditions of this institution.

We continue to believe, as did our forefathers, that what binds Americans together is a shared belief in principles guaranteed under our Constitution. The United States expects that immigrants, for their part, respect the fundamental rights and responsibilities that accompany residence and citizenship. We work as a society to build immigrants' appreciation for U.S. institutions, recognizing their personal connection to our shared American history as an immigrant nation.

Moreover, Americans support the principle that immigrants, while fully integrating into their new communities, can also remain connected to their country of origin. One of the strongest links is remittances. These financial flows are a manifestation of migration's pains as well as its benefits. They represent enormous toil, sacrifice, and the sorrow of separation from family and community. Yet they also symbolize the profound love of those people and places left behind, and the courage to follow one's dreams.

Both migrant sending and receiving countries have responsibility to maximize migration's benefits, including remittances. Remittances are private transfers of funds, which will have a greater overall impact on development in countries of origin when those countries undertake economic and social reforms that create an environment conducive for asset building, entrepreneurship, and investment.

Immigrants come to the United States, as President Bush has said "not only to take, but to give. They come for a chance to work hard, to support their families, and to rise in the world." While migration can be beneficial to sending and receiving countries, as well as to migrants themselves, it is important to note that the decision to migrate should be made out of choice, not necessity. Countries of origin and destination must work together to make this a reality.

Thank you.