

**Commission on the Status of Women**

*Fiftieth session*

New York, 27 February – 10 March 2006

High-level panel on  
“The Gender Dimensions of International Migration”

**The Contribution of Empowered Migrant Women to Development**

*Submitted by*  
**Ndiro Ndiaye**  
**International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

\* The paper has been reproduced as submitted.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Note by the Secretariat on Gender Dimensions of International Migration encouraged consideration of a number of questions related to the particular contribution of women migrants, and I would like concentrate on the aspect of maximizing the benefits of women's migration.

To reflect on this topic, IOM co-organized a conference of women leaders dedicated to the relation between Migration, Gender and the Millennium Development Goals in Haifa in September of last year.

Over 50 women leaders from over 40 countries, including ministers, members of parliament, professional women from the academic, legal and scientific world, as well as senior officials from international organizations and UN agencies, and I recognize here Ms. Mayanja, discussed the topic for four days and came up with a number of very concrete recommendations, some of which I would like to share with you today.

One of the recommendations was *that donor and recipient countries should facilitate the creation of channels for women leaders in diasporas, and subsequent generations, to be partners in development planning and programming and to actively support migrant women in diaspora communities to engage in development efforts through their skills, knowledge and experience; and to engage subsequent generations.*

We must recognize that in spite of enhanced attention to the relevance of Diasporas' participation in development – particularly with the view to stabilizing societies emerging from conflict – we do not yet have a systemic mechanism to engage and support diaspora associations in their potential role. The Peace Building Commission should give some serious consideration to this aspect.

Women from the diaspora are important agents of change, helping to devise strategies for the transition between the norms and values of their societies of origin and those of the society of destination. Women migrants thus play an important role in promoting universal values and human rights. Empowered female role models encourage subsequent generations in areas key to development such as health and education, family welfare, and local environment.

Another recommendation the conference suggested was *for governments to foster sensitivity towards the cultures of migrants, but in doing so, ensure that all cultural and customary practices that negatively affect the rights of women (e.g female genital mutilation) are eliminated, including through specific legislation;* - Sensitivity towards the culture of migrants needs to be taken into account when working on integration strategies. It is important for governments to consider, how immigration should be regulated not only in order to protect the national labour market and the social welfare system, but also to foster sensitivity toward the cultures of migrants.

Furthermore it was recommended *that governments finally needed to adopt a rights -based approach to the management of migration, promoting policies and programmes responsive to the needs of female migrants.* - The 21<sup>st</sup> century still sees a profound contention between a

human rights based approach to protection of migrants and in particular women and the deregulated Globalized exploitation of labour. Governments have the tools, but are often lacking the political will to ensure that migration and in particular labour migration is governed by human rights rather than only economic factors.

One last recommendation, which I thought might be of interest to you was *that governments were asked to develop practical means effectively implement an inter-ministerial cooperation on migration, gender and development within their own ranks.* – The lack of coherence in migration policies is one of the greatest challenges faced for us today. In most governments a number of ministries deal with one aspect or another of migration – ministries of labour, foreign affairs, justice, home affairs, development, to name only a few, are usually involved. This cooperation is crucial to finally enable policy coherence within governments.

As IOM, we remain committed to work for the implementation of these recommendations into the development cooperation agendas, as well as the mainstreaming of migration into national development strategies, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

The gender dimension of international migration constitutes an important topic to be discussed at the General Assembly's High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which will take place on September 14-15. IOM attaches the greatest importance to a successful High Level Dialogue and is together with Member States and relevant UN entities actively engaged in its preparation. IOM stands ready to support any activity that the Commission on the Status of Women would recommend to adopt as its contribution to the High Level Dialogue.

Thank you