

STATEMENT BY MR. DEREK O'BRIEN, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION ON AGENDA ITEM NO: 22 (B) INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE 67TH SESSION OF THE UN
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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. India associates itself with statement made by Algeria on behalf of the G-77. I wish to speak on sub agenda item 22 (b): International Migration and Development.



Mr. Chairman,

The era of globalisation is an era of unprecedented mobility - mobility of ideas and technologies, of capital and resources, and of people. More people live outside their countries of birth or origin than ever before in human history. Indeed, our planet's most dynamic economies and societies are those that welcome migrants. A closed economy and a closed mind begin, we must remember, with a closed door. As such, bringing international migration and its impact on the global economy and development to the centre-stage of contemporary discourse is not simply a matter of choice. It is an absolute imperative.

India is happy that a High Level Meeting on Migration is to be held next year, and look forward to it imparting a strong political commitment to international migration as a development paradigm.

In this interconnected world, Mr. Chairman, it is no gain saying that free movement of capital, goods, services, labour and technology remains of paramount significance. Managing international migration to transform it into a humane, orderly, and mutually beneficial process is a natural corollary. This, however, remains an acute challenge for all nations of the world.

Such frameworks must also address key issues of brain drain and capacity building in the South, which are certainly not compensated merely through individual earning and his/her willingness to plough some of it back home.

Remittance, however, has had measurable impact on development. UNCTAD studies have pointed out that 10% increase in remittance has led to 3.1% drop in poverty in developing countries. The salience of migration as a development tool could not be more compelling. This also brings us to the long felt need to put in place specialized institutional structures within the UN to attend to the ever expanding ramifications of international migration.

We hope these issues along with intra-country migration, in particular rural-urban migration in developing countries, would receive due attention in the ongoing discussion on the Post 2015 development agenda.

On a different note, Mr. Chairman, of late, in financing conversation globally, remittance has come to be compared or equated with ODA. We do not subscribe to this. Remittance to developing countries may have increased substantially in recent years reaching USD 372 billion in 2011 as per the World Bank, but it cannot be seen anything more than household income.

And surely cannot be passed off as another source of financing for development, for which the imperative is to meet the agreed international commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

International migration, in majority terms, continues to be a North-South phenomenon with migration to Europe and the United States being the most visible. But growing interconnectivity of goods and labor markets today feed multiple migratory circuits across the world. South-South migration in 2010, mostly dominated by labor migrants, was pegged at 73 million, not significantly lower than the 74 million South-North migrants.

The benefits that migrants bring to the destination society are many, and the developed world would do well to clearly recognize and accept this.

It adds to their economic competitiveness, meets the gaps in labor and skilled manpower supply and contributes to intellectual and institutional resource and capacity.

The movement of persons, especially from the South to the North, will continue to be propelled by the structural needs stemming from demography and labour supply gaps.

Mr. Chairman,

In today's globalised economy, the issue of short term migration especially from an economic perspective needs greater policy support.

There is also the issue of contributions to the Social Security Fund made by migrants in several developed countries which are lost once they leave the country. We must, therefore, work to develop frameworks to ensure portability of pensions and totalisation of social security benefits. These subjects must be brought forth in the ongoing discussion on inclusive social protection policies advocated by the ILO.

Curbing irregular migration is of concern not only in developed countries but also for many of us in the developing world. We clearly understand that such migration also has societal and security ramifications. We also need to work in a concerted manner to address the scourge of trafficking of persons, especially women and children.

Mr. Chairman,

India is perhaps the leading sending, destination and transiting state with a long history of receiving migrants and sending people to other lands. Our composite civilization and free and tolerant society have drawn sustenance from the diversity and co-existence of people coming and settling in India over centuries. We are proud of the achievements of our citizens living overseas and of the Indian diaspora.

The unskilled overseas worker constitutes the most vulnerable section of our emigrant population. We remain committed to strengthen the mechanisms for coordination and cooperation with the Governments of the destination countries to give them requisite social and economic protection.

In recent years, we have taken several measures for protection and welfare of our migrant workers and those of our other citizens and diaspora. We have established the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, a Ministry exclusively devoted to their interest and welfare. We have set up the Indian Council of Overseas Employment

to provide policy direction for recruitment procedures and employment contracts. We have also revamped our emigration rules and set up the Overseas Workers Resource Centre in New Delhi and Indian Workers Resource Centre in several destination countries including the UAE.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration is the oldest poverty alleviation tool. Yet we shy away from clearly recognizing the development aspects of international migration. The main reason for this is the reluctance or unwillingness of the developed world to accept and act on the fact that they have been and are beneficiaries of migration from the South. This needs to change and we all need to work collaboratively for international policies and frameworks to make international migration a 'win-win' situation.

We have to move to an understanding that migrants are not a burden; they are much more often an asset and a force multiplier. They need secure status at destination. This would help them realise their full potential, for the benefit of the migrants individually and their families, as well as for the benefit of the society that embraces them.

In respecting and protecting migrants, in giving them opportunities to flower, in integrating them into the social and institutional structures of the host country, we will also be promoting multicultural understanding and making our world a happier and better place. The results can be truly astonishing and dazzling. For evidence, we only need to leave this building and walk around in the wonderful and welcoming city outside - a global metropolis shaped and sculpted by generations of migrants.

I thank you.

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