

**STATEMENT TO THE COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
(Thirty-ninth session)**

By

Hania Zlotnik
Director
Population Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

New York
3 April 2006



UNITED NATIONS

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates,

We estimate that there are at least 190 million migrants in the world and about half of them are women. Each one is a unique individual. There is no “typical” migrant. But their stories have much in common. For instance, a domestic worker in Hong Kong describes her migrant life as follows:

“At home, I had a good job as an administrator in a hospital. But I felt I needed to see more of the world. So, when the opportunity arose, I went to work in Kuwait in domestic service. I stayed there three years, went back home for a year and left again to work in Jordan as a caregiver. After returning home again, I found a job in Hong Kong. I have been here for ten years. I have a build a house and own a piece of land at home. But I do not want to return there yet. I have a role to play here, helping other young women working in domestic service. I am a community leader and I am proud of it.”

Or consider yet another migrant’s story:

“My father mortgaged his property to pay for my passage and tuition at a US university. While studying, I worked nights at a restaurant to pay rent and help with tuition. After graduation, I went back home to get married and returned to work in a chemical company. I had a good job, but I did not feel secure in it, so I looked for something else. With my savings, borrowing on my home and a loan from relatives, I bought a motel. My wife, brother and I worked very hard and doubled its profitability in two years. I could then buy a better property. Today, I own several hotels and have started a plastics company. My businesses employ 135 people. My net worth is in the millions. I intend to leave my son a one-hundred-million dollar industry.”

Mr. Chairman, these stories show what migrants bring to the global economy: hard work, courage, a willingness to take risks in order to succeed. And the benefits migrants may reap can be large. And as both cases illustrate, these benefits may go far beyond the migrants themselves. Migrants can and do engage in activities that help their compatriots and that can result in positive spinoffs for the economy.

Clearly, international migration today is one of the additives that makes the global mac foe006rforea

and migrants may not always proceed smoothly, in the end, there is no doubt that migration enriches the social and cultural fabric of receiving societies.

Mr. Chairman,

We all know that most of today's migration arises because of disparities: economic, social, demographic. Average incomes in high-income countries are 15 times as high as those of middle-income countries and 60 times higher than those of low-income countries. So the potential gains from migration are very large. In addition, because developed countries are farther along the path to population ageing than the rest of the world, they are poised to see their working-age populations decline. Today, developed countries still have 14 persons ready to enter the labour force for every 10 persons likely to leave it, but in just ten years, there will only be 9 young persons aged 20-24 for every 10 persons aged 60-64. And without migration, the expected deficit of young people in developed countries would be even greater.

At the same time, developing countries have today 34 persons aged 20-24 for every 10 persons aged 60-64. And without migration, the expected deficit of young people in developing countries would be even greater.

highly trained than their parents were. Therefore, developed economies need to promote the continued expansion of the knowledge economy that is to provide the high-quality jobs for this qualified labour force.

Developing countries are also realizing the importance that tertiary education has for maintaining and enhancing the long-term viability of their economies. Over the past two decades, there has been an upsurge in the number of students from developing countries getting an education abroad. Furthermore, realizing that it is better to train students at home, developing countries are encouraging or even underwriting the establishments were. Ther

will move along the same path. But over the next few decades, developed countries will experience rapid population ageing that, together with increased education, will produce