



STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA,
AMBASSADOR/DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AT
THE SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, AT
MINISTERIAL LEVEL, OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WITH
SUBSTANTIAL INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT FLOWS IN
LIMA, PERU ON MAY 16, 2006

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen.

At the outset I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Government of Peru for hosting this very important International Conference devoted to a subject that is both topical and of great relevance to many developing countries. I would also like to convey my deep gratitude for the warm welcome, excellent arrangements and generous hospitality extended to us in your beautiful capital, Lima.

Mr. Chairman, migration is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon that is an indispensable part of the human situation. India has traditionally been an important country of origin and of destination of migrants. Over the centuries, dozens of communities have found a place in the Indian crucible. The resultant mix has enriched India and produced a tolerant and diverse society that has absorbed new customs, traditions and ideas from abroad.

Over 20 million people of Indian origin presently reside overseas. Equally, nearly 20 million migrants, including irregular migrants, have today made India their home.

Indians have achieved success abroad, while retaining emotional, cultural and spiritual bonds with India. This has struck a reciprocal chord with the people of India who have sought to nurture this symbiotic relationship to mutual benefit. Overseas Indians have also played an important role in global brand building. The perception of India today as a "knowledge economy" has benefited from the reputation that many overseas Indians have earned for our higher educational institutions by their creativity, entrepreneurship and diligence abroad.

There are an estimated five million overseas Indian workers. Their hard work helps build their host countries while their remittances contribute significantly to the economic empowerment of their families and the development of their communities in India.

In fact, India is presently the top remittance receiving country in the world. Recorded remittance inflows into India have surged from US \$ 13 billion in 2001 to US \$ 21.7 billion in 2005. India is further improving the effectiveness of its financial and consular services and implementing an even easier-to-use, affordable and efficient remittance facility. We are also streamlining the process of emigration and creating awareness among workers of their rights and obligations. We will help develop workers skills and provide credible mechanisms for their certification. We have launched a programme to extend enhanced insurance benefits to Indian workers abroad.

Mr. Chairman, there is no restriction on Indians migrating overseas. This is a choice exercised by the individual. However, we would like to see a regular, non-discriminatory and orderly process for our nationals migrating overseas, whether on a short term or permanent basis. We recognize that migration opens up opportunities for migrants, and benefits for their country of origin. We have also learnt that 'brain drain' as a result of migration of highly trained professionals can be translated into an overall gain. Considerable emigration of Indian IT specialists had recently taken place due to the suction demand for their skills abroad. Yet, India was not only able to replace them, but create a thriving services export industry.

Moreover, returnees became an important driving force for the growth of the Indian software industry.

Countries of origin benefit from the return of migrants with skills or capital that they would not have acquired at home. The existence of reliable domestic institutions encourages the involvement by migrants in the development of their countries of origin. Secure legal status in their country of destination, with work and residence permits allowing for temporary absences, also enables migrants to make better use of economic opportunities at home.

Mr. Chairman, globalisation has transformed different parts of the world at different rates. The resultant uneven economic impact has led to a rise in international migration and the international community has to meet the ensuing challenges. Increased globalisation has also led to companies looking abroad for specialists to strengthen their international competitiveness.

We are convinced, Mr. Chairman, that cooperative international efforts are needed to support and supplement, rather than supplant national efforts in addressing the challenges associated with international migration. These should result in comprehensive, mutually beneficial solutions that are based on the best practices dealing with international migration. We are also sensitive to the fact that international migration solutions and approaches that appear relevant for a particular country or region may not be appropriate for others. This is especially so for developing countries that are both countries of origin and countries of destination of migrants.

There is as yet no consensus on a legal framework to address international migration. Accordingly, it may be early to move ahead with notions such as 'shared responsibility' in the context of international migration. The word 'responsibility' can have several connotations in an international legal context, one of which implies an underlying international obligation that in this instance is yet to be established. From a legal standpoint 'responsibility' of a state may not apply, since international migration is not something imposed by one state upon another. In any case, our approach should not be one

of apportioning blame or determining liability or accountability, but of cooperation and consultation. We do, however, accept that there is one area in which shared responsibility may apply. Thus, there is a shared responsibility to combat trafficking in migrants, including migrant workers and their families. We would not be averse to see this reflected in the Lima Declaration.

Mr. Chairman, our efforts should focus on promoting teamwork amongst nations, on cooperating to maximize the benefits of international migration while reducing its negative effects. Migration is a "win-win" phenomenon from which both sending and recipient countries should benefit. The international community must reassess the migration phenomenon and concentrate on securing common benefits and common commitments and addressing the common concerns arising from international migration, and accordingly promote cooperative arrangements amongst state of origin, transit and destination of international migration.

I am convinced that our deliberations would result in useful conclusions that would make the Lima Declaration an important contribution leading up to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development to be held during the UN General Assembly Session in New York in September this year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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