

October 29, 2008

UNGA 63/ SECOND COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 54: Globalization and Interdependence: (b) International Migration & Development.

Madame Chairperson, Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates,

Migration and Development is a multifaceted global phenomenon gaining more and more attention as its complexities unravel. Armenia has been no exception from other countries with transitioning economies in registering large numbers of outward migration reflective of the transformation of the national economy due to circumstances of military confrontation and land blockade. While labor migration has been comprised of the outflow of mainly unskilled or low-skilled workers in early stages of migration, the later years have been characterized by a brain drain. Improved economic performance has contributed to the slow down of outward migration. Prior to 2001 the negative balance fluctuated between 50-60 thousand people annually. It gradually decreased becoming positive in 2005-2006. However, Armenia's Migration Agency has begun to notice a return to negative flows of migration with an increase of 26 thousand out-ward migrants in comparison to the index of 2007.

Madame Chairperson,

It is acknowledged that remittances play an important role for developing nations through aiding many families. Since 2001, in Armenia, statistics have indicated a 20% increase of transfers on average, reaching approximately 2 billion dollars in 2008. In most cases, remittances account for merely 2% of investment in business ventures and are used to sustain households and therefore cannot be the sole driver of development. Nevertheless, while helping many in the country, the inflow of foreign currency also has affected the exchange rate of the national currency resulting in its appreciation. This, in turn, can adversely impact the competitiveness of the national economy and exports. Due to the current challenging global economic environment, Armenia anticipates a decrease in remittances from the USA, EU and Russia, which will put greater pressure on its domestic labor market.

Madame Chairperson,

Labor migration can be beneficial for countries of destination, origin, as well as migrants within the framework of circular migration. With training and new skills, migrants who return to their countries of origin can impart knowledge and expertise, contributing to the development of the nation. Further, returning migrants can also invest funds in their countries of origin by establishing small business enterprises. Migrants returning with knowledge and capital yield positive outcomes, stimulating the development process. Hence, it is important for governments to create social and economic pull factors in order to attract migrants to return and invest their skills and

earned savings into countries of origin. A return of high-skilled labor and professionals into Armenia can contribute to a more sustainable form of development and we are working towards this endeavor.

Madame Chairperson,

It is a critical time to assess the dynamics of migration, namely circular migration, and its effects on the development process. In this regard, Armenia has taken steps to evaluate and to better grasp the complexities of migration through active participation in OSCE and IOM discussions, which aim to elucidate challenges to migration and development. Evidenced challenges include the treatment of citizens in host countries where many migrants encounter xenophobia and discrimination. Further, in the case of undocumented migrants, governments should cooperate on national, regional, and local levels to ensure the protection of the human rights of these individuals despite their status in the host nation. Undocumented migrants are especially vulnerable to human rights violations, as they often fear to come forward to authorities due to their illegal status in the host country. It is with joint efforts and attention from the international community that the human rights of all migrants are protected.

Madame Chairperson,

We are confident that combined efforts on the part of national governments, as well as international and regional organizations dealing with the issue, will generate mutually beneficial results. Armenia is looking forward to the outcomes of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, hosted by the government of the Philippines. Our delegation will be participating in this forum and anticipates fruitful deliberations in order to shed light on the issue of international migration and development.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson.