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**ADDRESS TO INAUGURAL GLOBAL FORUM
ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Brussels, 10 July 2007

Monseigneur [*Prince Philippe of Belgium*]
Prime Minister,
Excellencies,
Delegates

I am honoured to welcome you to the launch of this Global Forum -- a milestone in our work to understand the connection between international migration and development, and to harness the power of one to advance the other.

Let me express my deep appreciation to His Majesty King Albert of Belgium, who is recovering from a minor procedure and could not join us today. I wish him a speedy recovery.

I am grateful to Prince Philippe for honouring this event with his presence, and to His Excellency Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, and the Government of Belgium for their gracious support and hospitality. This event would not have taken place without you.

The road that brought all of us to Brussels was long. It may not have been as tortuous, nor as solitary, as the road travelled by some of the world's 200 million migrants. But in its own way, ours was a road full of detours and obstacles. I am heartened that we have reached this stage at last.

For many years, Member States of our United Nations found it hard to discuss the sensitive issue of migration in the international arena. So the topic was never high on the UN agenda -- until the High-Level Dialogue at UN Headquarters in New York last September. Even then, some sceptics predicted that positions would be too entrenched, that north and south would become hopelessly embattled, and that genuine dialogue would be impossible.

The past nine months have proved those sceptics wrong. As we have grasped migration's powerful potential for good, old stereotypes have crumbled, and new opportunities have captured our imaginations.

As a result, under the wise leadership of Belgium and of my Special Representative, Peter Sutherland, well over a hundred Member States have worked together steadfastly over the past year. You have built on the momentum of last year's High-Level Dialogue. You have seized on the idea championed by the UN to gather in a Global Forum. And you have drawn on the invaluable contributions of civil society, representatives of which met yesterday to contribute to the Forum.

Now that we are here, we must make the most of this chance to address one of the great global challenges of our century. We must seize this moment to begin transforming what too many perceive as a threat into an opportunity. It is our obligation to understand the implications of the migration phenomenon, to learn from each other, and to build partnerships that will make migration work for development. It is our duty to counter the marginalization, abuse, and discrimination that some groups of migrants still face today. It is our calling to move forward together with courage -- in the same bold spirit that intrepid migrants display around the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

How can we achieve this? Not by making grand pronouncements, or creating elaborate new structures. We are not building an organization to solve the world's migration problems -- far from it.

Nor are we here to design a blueprint for how to manage international migration flows. There can be no such thing: people move to the pull of a better life, to the push of danger or despair, to the forces of the market, to the call of the human heart.

Nor have we come to dictate to one another how many, or how few, migrants should come or go from our countries. These should be decisions made by individuals within the framework of each sovereign nation's laws.

Rather, what we acknowledge together, by convening this Forum, is that we live in a new age -- an age of mobility, in which more and more people will move across the globe with ever-greater frequency. More countries are part of the migration system than ever before, and migrants journey from one corner of the world to another.

This is a global phenomenon that defies the easy categorizations of the past, with its neat separations, such as that between countries of origin and destination. Today, we recognize that we are all in this together. The revolutions in transportation and communications, together with the globalization of our economies, make our experience of migration different from any previous time in human history.

We cannot stop this force of human nature. But we can do a great deal to build a better migration experience. We can ensure that people move in a way that is safe and legal, and which protects their rights. We can work to strengthen the positive impact of migration on the development of migrants' home countries. We can encourage destination countries to promote the success of migrants, both in their original and their adopted homes. We can advance the understanding that the better integrated migrants are, the more they will have to contribute to their countries of origin -- as returnees or as engaged members of a global diaspora.

Over the next two days, our task is one of educating ourselves:

- to understand what we, as policymakers, can do to maximize the benefits of migration for development, while ensuring that development leads to qualitatively better migration.
- to learn from each other in a systematic, comprehensive way.

- to build on the experiences we have gained at the regional, national, and local levels.

Let me be more specific. At this early stage of international cooperation on migration and development, we are trying to build trust among States. So we should focus on those policy actions that stand to benefit all the actors in the migration system -- but above all, migrants, their families, and their communities.

For decades, the toil of solitary migrants has helped lift entire families and communities out of poverty. Their earnings have built houses, provided health care, equipped schools, and planted the seeds of businesses. They have woven together the world by transmitting ideas and knowledge from country to country. They have provided the dynamic human link between cultures, societies, and economies. Yet only recently have we begun to understand not only how much international migration impacts development, but how smart public policies can magnify this effect.

That is what you are here to discuss. In so doing, you can make a major contribution to the collective well-being of humankind. Consider just this example: in the past few years alone, Governments have understood the importance of remittances to development, and taken steps to encourage greater competition among banks and money-transfer companies. This has dramatically reduced transfer costs in many markets. As a result, literally billions of extra dollars have reached residents of developing countries every year. This Forum has a key role to play in building on that momentum.

But the wealth of migrants is not measured in money alone. You will also discuss how countries of origin can tap the great wealth of skills and knowledge accumulated by migrants. How can migrant doctors who have prospered abroad help train the next generation of physicians back home? What strategies can countries pursue to attract back their scientists and entrepreneurs? How can we advance co-development – whereby, for instance, developed countries that recruit highly-skilled professionals channel aid back to countries of origin to support education there?

Equally, you will discuss the contribution of migrants to the progress and well-being of developed countries. Here too, their economic, social, and cultural contributions are evident everywhere. Their cultures, values, and traditions not only enrich our societies, but enable us to adapt successfully to a world that is changing fast. They have founded countless enterprises, including household names such as eBay, Mittal, Google, and Intel. And they have pioneered research as a basis for innovation. In the United Kingdom alone, at least 20 Nobel Prize Laureates came to the country as migrants or refugees.

Migrants with lower skill levels are also critical to the success of our economies. Every hour of every day they tend to our sick, our elders, our children. They clean our homes, harvest our crops, labour in our industry. They perform many of the most essential tasks that undergird our well-being. Yet, they work in sectors of the economy where they are vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, or worse. As we learn to make migration work for development, we must learn to protect the rights of migrants.

Excellencies,

Through the process that led to this Forum, we have already reached an understanding of the interplay between development and international migration -- an understanding based on evidence and sound analysis, rather than on anecdote. An understanding that can form the basis of a rational, forward-looking, and less politicized conversation about migration. An understanding that can help foster partnerships among countries, so as to magnify the development impact of migration while addressing its root causes.

Throughout this process, the Government of Belgium has provided judicious and constructive leadership. At every stage, it has given effect to the principles that underpin the Forum, putting in place a sound basis for its future development.

Under the tireless direction of Her Excellency, Ambassador Régine De Clercq, Belgium assembled a multinational Task Force that has worked doggedly to respond to the real needs of UN Member States. The team has done so in a collegial and consultative spirit, acting as the servant of this new States-led process, rather than as its owner.

Belgium proposed a Forum agenda on the basis of input from over 100 Member States. It asked Governments to designate focal points for the Forum, enhancing policy coherence in capitals around the world. It convened three meetings of the "Friends of the Forum" to build up the process. And it worked in partnership with several dozen States and international organizations to develop the substantive content of this meeting.

In addition, by partnering with the King Baudouin Foundation in organizing a civil society day, Belgium has underscored the crucial role played by non-State actors in the dynamic of migration and development.

Soon, responsibility for the Global Forum will pass to the Philippines -- one of the world's most important actors on migration. I thank Her Excellency, President Gloria Arroyo, for her Government's engagement. I have no doubt that she will carry forward the work begun by Belgium with seriousness and skill.

For my part, I will remain deeply committed to the Forum's work, and pledge to maintain its link to the United Nations through my Special Representative on Migration, Mr. Peter Sutherland. I am sure I speak for all of us in extending my gratitude for the way Peter Sutherland has generated the energy and the vision that have made this Forum possible.

Finally, I hope the Forum will develop closer collaboration with the entire United Nations system through the entities of the Global Migration Group. I have asked Mr. Sha Zukang, my Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and current chair of the Group, to explore ways of building synergies between GMG members and the Forum process.

The Government of Belgium has asked that the Forum produce concrete and practical outcomes. Because the Forum is not a negotiating body, such outcomes depend crucially on the will of each one of you. They require you to follow up on whatever is agreed here, and explore future possibilities for collaboration.

Let us remember: migration is not only about wealth and poverty. It is about the kind of societies we want to live in. You have a unique opportunity to help shape them, for the benefit of future generations.

Thank you very much.