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DESA

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Note to the Secretary-General
Through Ms. Bárcena

Ref: Speech to High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development

Dear SG,

Please find attached a draft of the above for your review. Based on input from Mr. Sutherland's adviser Gregory Maniatis, it is approved by Mr. Sutherland himself as well as MMB and RO, and incorporates some changes suggested by the head of DESA Population Division (Ms Zlotnik). I have also sent it to Professors Doyle and Bhagwati for comment, as you requested.

Please note that I will be on leave next week, but will have a laptop with me and can be reached by email. Annika will be o.i.c. of the speechwriting unit in my absence. I hope to be back in the office on the afternoon of Monday 11 September.

Yours sincerely, EM

Edward Mortimer
1 September 2006

cc: DSG, RO, CL, AS

A good draft. Regarding the Global Forum, please reformulate, indicating clearly that I intend to set up the forum as soon as possible.

NB We should not be bogged down. I need the flexibility to move quickly and set up a competent forum.

26-11340

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Draft: EM September 1, 2006

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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

ADDRESS TO THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION & DEVELOPMENT

New York, 14 September 2006

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Only a few months ago, many people did not think it possible to discuss international migration at the United Nations. Governments, they said, would not dare to bring into the international arena a topic on which their citizens are so sensitive.

Yet here you are, and I sense that the mood has changed.

More and more people are excited about the ways in which migrants can help transform both their adopted and their native countries. More and more people understand that governments can cooperate to create triple wins—for the migrants themselves, for their countries of origin, and for the societies that receive them.

No one can deny that migration has negative aspects—trafficking, smuggling, social discontent—or that it often arises from poverty or political strife. But by

being here today you show yourselves willing to tackle those negative aspects through dialogue and cooperation, rather than antagonism and isolation.

Your presence is also a tribute to the infectious energy and visionary pragmatism of my special representative, Peter Sutherland. His efforts have reassured and inspired everyone. I am deeply grateful to him.

As you begin your Dialogue, let me suggest three reasons why this is the right moment for it.

First, to put it simply, we are all in this together. More countries are now significantly involved in, and affected by, international migration than at any time in history. And they can no longer be so neatly divided into “countries of origin” and “countries of destination”. Many countries are now both. Countries that are very different in other respects face surprisingly similar migration challenges.

Second, the evidence on the potential benefits of international migration for development is mounting.

The money that migrants send back to developing countries now dwarfs all forms of international aid combined. And money is far from being the whole story. Migrants also use their skills and know-how to transfer technology, capital, and institutional knowledge. They inspire new ways of thinking about social and political issues. They form a dynamic human link between cultures, economies, and

societies. As a result, we are better positioned than ever to confront the challenges of migration, and seize its opportunities.

Third, governments are now beginning to see migration through the prism of opportunity, rather than of fear. You are focused on magnifying the positive, mutually beneficial aspects of migration: on sharing your experiences, developing practical ideas, building partnerships and capacity.

For all these reasons—and also because people migrate not only between pairs of countries or within regions, but from almost every corner of the world to every other—migration today cries out for a global discussion.

Of course, it also stirs passionate debate. It can deprive countries of their best and brightest. It can divide families. It can generate social tensions. Sometimes criminals and terrorists exploit it. But the answers to many of these problems can be found through constructive engagement and debate.

That's why I think the dialogue you are starting today on International Migration and Development should not end tomorrow. And I'm delighted that so many of you have taken up my suggestion of a Global Forum.

I believe such a Forum could foster practical, evidence-based cooperation among governments. It would give you all a chance to frame the issues in a way that

allows you to move forward together, to discover areas where you agree, and to find ways of improving cooperation.

Such an initiative must be led by States. But the UN System, and I personally, stand ready to support it.

Clearly, few countries want to make migration the subject of formal, norm-setting negotiations. There is no appetite for a World Migration Organization. But, as I understand the thinking of the countries that back it, the Forum would be the opposite of that. It would be informal, voluntary, consultative. Above all, it would not make decisions.

It would allow us all to build relationships of trust, and to bring together the best ideas that different countries have developed: facilitating remittances; engaging diasporas; exploring new ways to reduce poverty; building educational partnerships; and so on.

Lastly, it would show that Governments are willing to address this complicated, volatile issue in a thoughtful and constructive fashion.

For far too long, my friends, international migration policy has been based on hunches, anecdotes, and political expediency. It is now time to turn to the evidence, and use it to build a common understanding of how migration can bring benefits to all.

Thank you very much.