

WELCOME STATEMENT

Secretary ROSALINDA DIMAPILIS-BALDOZ

Philippine Department of Labor and Employment

GFMD Migration and Development Seminar Series

“Migration Profiles as a Tool for Informed Policy Making, Integration and Reintegration, and Emergency Response”

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Greetings

1. **Dr. Carmelita S. Dimzon**, Administrator of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and Philippine Chair of this GFMD thematic meeting, **Ms. Beata Godenzi**, representing His Excellency Eduard Gnesa, Swiss Chair of the GFMD; **Mr. Ovais Sarmad**, Chief of Mission - International Organization for Migration - Philippines ; **Undersecretary Danilo P. Cruz, DOLE** who has closely supervised the preparation for this GFMD meeting, **Undersecretary Esteban Conejos of the Department of Foreign Affairs**, and Philippine GFMD Focal Person, the country participants, resource experts, and distinguished guests, good morning.

2. It is my pleasure to warmly welcome you all to this GFMD Migration and Development Seminar Series co-organized by the Philippines with the Swiss Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), and with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the International Organization for Migration - Philippines, and members of the Global Migration Group.

3. Since the GFMD was initiated in 2007, the Philippines has always been actively engaged in its initiatives through our participation in the state-led forums, seminars and meetings. We have been doing so because we

believe that cooperation and dialogue processes are crucial in the development and the enhancement of migration policies across the globe.

4. As a country of origin for migrants, the opportunity to be part of such processes is deemed integral to migration management. It was therefore logical that on the second year of the GFMD in 2008, the Philippines hosted the GFMD here in Manila with the central theme “Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development.” Of relevance to today’s seminar is the fact that in the 2008 GFMD, States recognized the concept of “shared responsibility” of governments and other concerned actors in protecting and empowering migrants and their families and that in taking on that shared responsibility, it is crucial that links between the availability of timely and accessible migration data and the development of coherent and evidence-based policies should be established. On that note, one of the 2008 GFMD outcomes was the creation of the AdHoc Working Group on Policy Coherence, Data and Research.

5. Today, on the 5th year of the GFMD process and consistent with the pursuit of policy coherence, data and research as vital to effective migration management, we convene this seminar on “Migration Profiles as a Tool for Informed Policy Making, Migrant Integration and Reintegration, and Emergency Response” building on the discussion and outcomes of the 3-year work of the GFMD on Cluster III. The seminar brings together -- for the first time-- the Colombo Process countries, the ASEAN plus 3 countries, and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue partners constituting the migrant origin and destination countries in Asia. Let us

also welcome the participants from the Swiss Federal government and Mexico and those representing international organizations, civil society, the academe, and key government agencies in the Philippines.

6. By hosting this expert's meeting, the Philippine government wishes to express our continuing solidarity with the States and partners of the GFMD in its collective quest for policy coherence, capacity building, and international cooperation to address the enormous opportunities and challenges posed by global migration in the world's economic and human development. Allow me also to recognize the Swiss Chair's leadership of the 2011 GFMD particularly their innovations in the dialogue process in terms of bringing the discussions at the regional level and yet retaining its global character. These smaller, focused and action-oriented GFMD thematic meetings are very much welcome as we are now at this stage where we want to test the applicability of GFMD outcomes from its previous meetings at the ground.

Comprehensive Information on Migration and the Challenges to Asia

Testing the applicability of GFMD outcomes – such as those that tackled adjustments in policy from both origin and receiving countries; policy coherence in migration management; development and improvements in reintegration programs; and enhancement of regional processes makes information on migration an imperative. We cannot actualize these outcomes without the data from which actions should be based.

7. Migration information is deemed highly crucial particularly in Asia because having it spells a whole world of difference when we craft responses to address issues in the whole migration cycle. Asia is both a major origin and destination of migrants. In its 2011 study on Labour

Migration from the Colombo Process Countries¹, the IOM reported that 5 out of the top 10 migrant-sending countries are in Asia. These are India, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. From the 2005 figures, our stock of migrants has increased by 42% in 2010, with remittance doubling from US\$ 84 billion in 2005 to US\$ 173 billion in 2010². Today, 44.7 million of our people can be found in the US and Canada -- where many permanent migrants flow, and within Asia itself-- the Middle East and South East Asia -- where majority of our temporary labor migration flow. With a substantial part of our respective populations found elsewhere in the world, isn't it just reasonable that we are kept updated with respect to information on migration?

8. The benefits our respective countries derive from the movement of our people to overseas destinations have been at the center of migration discourse even prior to the GFMD process. Among the benefits are the remittances that families of migrants receive from abroad. While we acknowledge the value of these remittances to our respective economies, questions still remain of how best we can utilize these monies to create greater impacts to national development. Arriving at responses toward that goal requires information. Until now, we have vague data on where the remittances are coming from.
9. For instance, whether the bulk of remittances come from permanent migrants or from temporary migrants and whether these come from certain geographical locations influences our policy and program responses such as those on minimizing the costs, determining the remittance channels, encouraging use for productive investments or

¹ "Labour Migration from the Colombo Process Countries: Good Practices and Ways Forward"

² World Bank 2011 Factbook

savings. Without getting more detailed information, we may be making wrong assumptions on the financial behavior of migrants as well as their families. As a consequence, we might also be embarking on response that may prove ineffective in the long run. In the same vein, we need to know the profile of migrants to determine their skills and competencies so that when the reality of return migration faces them we will be ready to facilitate their reintegration to our respective countries. The Philippines believes that a skilled citizen that opts to work overseas is not a resource lost but a development agent gained. Given enough support while working overseas and upon their eventual return, these migrants can be honed to become important actors in building enterprises, enhancing skills, and even defining policies in migration.

10. As migration continues to grow in number and as these movements become more diverse, we are also confronted with growing risks concerning the human aspects of migration such as the vulnerability of irregular migration, household service workers and low skilled migrant workers, to name a few. Governments have also been recently confronting vulnerabilities of migrant workers due to economic, political crises and natural calamities in countries of destination. We need to respond – effectively and immediately. With threats of discontinuity or contingencies that increasingly place the rights of migrants at risk, there is an increased pressure on governments for more effective institutional mechanisms and responses during emergencies and for aligning migration policies and strategies. To do that, we need information. It is encouraging to note that in times of crisis, countries of origin and destination, are able to work out arrangements so that migrants are expeditiously safeguarded. That

sense of cooperation should be the springboard for information gathering particularly on vulnerabilities attendant to migration.

11. We also see an increasing need to facilitate talent mobility given the demographic changes in some parts of the world. For the Philippines, these changes offer us an opportunity to redirect overseas employment toward those who are skilled and therefore capable of protecting themselves from abuse and exploitation. To avail of this opportunity, we need information such as those that will encourage the development of a common system for recognizing professional qualifications. Some countries retain barriers to entry into certain professions, requiring the passing of tests to obtain the requisite licenses for applicants who are not educated in the country in which they work. To hurdle that challenge while also addressing the demographic gaps in some countries, exchange of information is necessary.

Action as a GFMD Outcome

12. Ladies and Gentlemen, these are just but a few of the areas which the Philippines believes would need information as its base of response. I know that from the perspective of receiving countries, there could be more migration information needs and that these are equally seen by countries like ours as important to the development of migration policies across the globe.
13. But beyond identifying our information gaps, we should also recognize that data collection systems must also be enhanced or developed between countries of origin and destination, among countries

within a region, among migrant organizations, and among migrant workers organizations.

14. And for that, we see the value of the GFMD process in pushing this tangible outcome into its realization. With tools such as the migration profile and the sharings in this seminar, we will all look forward to a very important outcome from this year's GFMD.

15. On this note, ladies and gentlemen, I formally welcome you all to the Philippines and to this seminar. Let us maximize this opportunity for exchange of ideas on migration and work towards attaining a well-needed outcome.