

Statement

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With the social issues related to globalisation taking increasingly the centre-stage in the activities of our respective organisations and our constituencies, migration is a central humanitarian and labour concern calling for concentrated action and increased international cooperation.

Migration has always been high on the ILO agenda. This is underlined by our constitution, by our standard-setting activities at the very beginning in 1919 and by our board of technical and advisory services. Of particular importance are Conventions number 97 and 143 on the situation of migrant workers. Quite a few European countries have ratified at least one of these two instruments. More recently the 1998 Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work recalls that the ILO should give special attention to the problems of persons with special social needs, particularly the unemployed and migrant workers, and mobilize and encourage international, regional and national efforts aimed at resolving their problems.

It is to be expected that the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation set up last month by the ILO and co-chaired by the Presidents of Finland and Tanzania will touch upon issues related to migration also. The conclusions and recommendations of this independent group of eminent persons are due sometime next year. Growing concern for the issue of migrant workers has also led the Governing Body of the ILO to decide last month that there will be a general discussion on this issue at our annual conference in June 2004 with the view of defining future action, and we certainly could greatly benefit from your experience in this context.

Our estimates suggest that today nearly 100 million persons are migrant workers or members of their families. This is two thirds of all people living outside their countries of origin. In order to determine the options for response and the needs for co-operation we need to have an accurate grasp of the main characteristics and the main trends. Certain features of globalisation are leading to the deterioration of human security and to increased human displacement. Two years ago an ILO study concluded that there likely will be increasing pressures for migration in many parts of the world. For many countries, particularly developing countries and countries in transition, the

opening-up of global markets is leading into dislocation of traditional industries and changed trading patterns, growing unemployment and no relief from poverty. Faced with the crisis of economic security migration may seem to be the only escape route for an increasing number of people. This of course is seriously compounded by crises and military conflicts, which deepen and affect whole regions and create the humanitarian catastrophes with which you are dealing every day.

Economic, technological and demographic developments which determine the framework of globalization have resulted in increased supply and demand in both the high- and the low-skill categories of migrant labour. Many countries have adopted restrictive immigration policies in the last two decades. But at the same time growing competition encourages new admission programmes for highly educated specialists. Serious labour shortages in notably the information and communication technology sectors are resulting in a significant rise in skilled labour migration. And still at the same time there is ample demand for what sometimes is called the three-d-jobs: dirty, dangerous and difficult.

Demand for cheap and low-skilled migrant labour in both industrialized and developing countries is a factor of economic development. Also in many industrialized countries governments consider replacing migration as a policy option due to current and foreseen demographic trends. Consequently there are several different factors affecting migration leading into migratory movements at different levels of skills and with different degrees of human security. It is also evident that there is a growing contradiction between objectively assessed needs for migrant workers and the public perceptions which feed political and social rejection, discrimination and in worst cases violence.

Two particular features compound the vulnerability of migrants. One is the feminization of migration. Today nearly half of the migrant workers are women. The second one is the rapid rise of trafficking in migrants. In Europe as in some other parts of the world this concerns particularly girls and young women trafficked into the sex industry. The further serious risks areas involve HIV/AIDS and the migrants lack of access to prevention and treatment.

Many migrants-sending countries continue to lack comprehensive foreign employment policies by which they could manage the outflow of migrant labour to the benefit of their societies. Parallel to this many migrants-receiving countries lack comprehensive immigration policies that would help to manage the irregular inflow and to better regulate the employment of migrants. Important steps are planned in this part of the world and although it will not be easy to elaborate a common European asylum and immigration policy, clearly the future of European economic and social integration will in no

STATEMENT

small part depend on a coordinated approach to immigration norms and practice.

Increased competition and the informalization of economic activity continue to underpin high levels of exploitation and the lack of respect for basic human rights and the dignity of migrants. In Europe and elsewhere manifestations of discrimination, xenophobic hostility and violence towards migrants have dramatically increased. As I have noted earlier both skilled and unskilled migrant labour are in demand and there is a growing realisation that it is an important ingredient of the future growth of many countries. And yet the response to the negative reactions and outright exploitation of this trend remains roughly inadequate. The often tragic consequence of this contradiction is an area where our respective constituencies and institutions should join forces really more efficiently than today.

We can note important signs of progress towards a more coherent humanitarian and productive way of addressing the problems of migration. In the last couple of years the protection of migrant rights has finally been brought to the centre of world affairs. Visible manifestations of this change are the imminent entry into force of the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers, the high profile given to the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants, the extensive attention to combating xenophobia at the recent UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban and also in our own area in the ILO the importance that the Global Report on Forced Labour gave to the problems of trafficking last year leading into an action programme of forced labour, which has combating trafficking as one of its key features.

There is an emerging understanding that addressing migration requires a comprehensive approach at the national level as well as careful international consultation and cooperation among all states and all social actors concerned. Our experience suggests that such a comprehensive approach is indispensable for achieving results. Elements of such an approach could include the following:

1. An informed and transparent labour migration admission system for each country responding to measured legitimate needs and taking into account domestic labour concerns.
2. A standard-based approach to combating the trafficking and exploitation of migrants together with measures to protect and enforce the fundamental rights of all migrants. As the social and human defects of dictatorship demonstrate the legitimacy of law enforcement and that of the state itself are derived from justice, human dignity and democratic values.
3. The enforcement of minimum national employment conditions in all sectors of activity together with the criminalization of the abuse of persons

and measures to discourage irregular employment. Particular attention should be paid to sensitive areas such as agriculture, domestic work, the sex industry and other irregular employment among other things to prevent and eliminate various forms of forced and child labour.

4. The institutional arrangements for consultation among governments, the social partners and other actors from civil society. This is the best way for elaborating gender-sensitive migration policies which not only focus on equal treatment but ensure substantive equality.

In fact, the ILO will continue to support its tripartite constituency in elaborating in each country the policies and administrative and practical measures needed to effectively manage labour migration including the respect for migrants' fundamental human rights at work. Much efforts are needed for awareness and advocacy given that public support is a particularly important requirement for any successful approach in this field. Moreover, direct action needs to be taken to identify and protect victims of exploitation and abuse. Special efforts are needed urgently for prevention, protection, rehabilitation and the restoration of rights of victims of trafficking. Some European countries have taken steps in this direction by according temporary resident-status to victims who testify against their traffickers. Counselling services have also been provided and support from non-governmental actors has been facilitated.

The upcoming 7th Conference of European Ministers concerned with migration, which will take place in September in Helsinki, will deal with relevant issues also discussed here over the next two days: human rights and dignity of migrants, racism and discrimination and managing diversity in a democratic society. Within Europe we have identified problems of violence, discrimination and xenophobia faced by migrants in both conflict driven countries and others as well. For example two years ago violent attacks on migrant workers in one European country led to a discussion in the International Labour Conference. Following that action was taken by the government and by the social partners to improve the national policy on migration and to protect migrants from violence and discriminatory acts.

Today migration can be one of the most important ingredients of regional, economic and social integration in Asia, Southern and Western Africa, the Southern Cone of South America as well as in Europe. Particular attention has to be paid to strengthening the capacity to prepare potential migrants, encourage the productive use of remittances, address social protection and help to prepare for the migrants returned. The ILO will continue to assist countries of destination in the conducting of labour market assessments, recruitment, supervision and monitoring of employment, ensuring decent work conditions and combating discrimination and xenophobia. Over the next years we an-

STATEMENT

ticipate devoting much attention to the multiple risks faced by women migrant workers. Similarly urgent action is needed on the impact of HIV/AIDS on labour migration. It is important to build and strengthen the bridge between relief and development through institutional collaboration.

Although the ILO can be said to be mainly in the business of development and reconstruction we need to interact more with humanitarian actors. A good example of this is the way in which our countries response activities to crises are implemented. They often involve displaced persons who are or who become migrants. In carrying out these activities we have learned the value of consulting and cooperating with the Red Cross and Red Crescent staff on the ground. Very often we come to the border-line between serious humanitarian concerns and labour concerns. And as I have tried to point out there are considerable shared concerns and synergies which we must make use of to the fullest degree possible.

Consequently I wish to conclude by emphasizing the commitment of the ILO to develop cooperation with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and with the International Federation. I would like to stress the potential for cooperation between our tripartite constituency and the National Red Cross Societies in all European Countries. We offer different kinds of support to governments and employers as well as workers' organisations and their partners. And I firmly believe that broad cooperation will help in building the understanding capacity and action needed to protect migrant workers and to manage in a manner which benefits all countries, all workers, the economy and all actors concerned.