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Contribution of Migrants to Development:
Trade, Investment and Development Linkages

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STATEMENT

By

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**Palais de Nations, Geneva
Room XII – 29th July 2009**

Excellencies, honourable delegates, distinguished participants, dear colleagues,

Before I start, I would like to convey UNITAR's Executive Director Dr. Carlos Lopes' warm greetings to all those present here today, and his wishes for the utmost success of the ensuing discussions.

It is a pleasure to participate in this prestigious ad-hoc expert meeting, along with other key agencies in the field of migration and development. Human mobility has in the last few years evolved from being considered a purely demographic phenomenon to attracting increasing attention as a result of heightened awareness of its scale and impact on various fronts – social, economic, environmental, etc; as well as due to a progressive unveiling of its connections with important policy areas including security, social cohesion, economic growth, and other such dimensions of human development.

Thus, a number of high-level international events have been organized in the last years to discuss policy and practice on migration and development. Efforts to enhance international collaboration in this field can be traced back to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its outcome document known as the Programme of Action (PoA), which were instrumental in reshaping the UN's outlook on international migration by focusing on its linkages with development.

More recently, the 2003 Doyle Report commissioned by the UN Secretary-General spelled out options for the United Nations to strengthen its role in the field of international migration; the 2005 report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) underlined the need for "comprehensive, cohesive and coherent" directions for the international community so as to maximize the benefits of migration while reducing its negative effects; and the 2006 UN General Assembly's High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD) recognized the "win-win" potential arising out of concerted international efforts to link migration and development. Based on this positive perception of the issue, in 2007 the Global Forum process on Migration and Development (GFMD) was launched, focusing its first session on questions of human capital and labour migration, remittances and policy coherence.

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has engaged in these discussions from the beginning, spurred by its broad mandate to strengthen the UN system through appropriate training on social and economic development, and peace and security issues. UNITAR decided to focus its migration work in helping bridge gaps in existing knowledge, capacity and communication, and in supporting the global processes of dialogue and sharing of ideas and practices.

Thus, from 1998 to 2003, UNITAR carried out an inter-agency International Migration Program in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), building capacity of stakeholders from the international and diplomatic communities, civil society and academia, in migration-related law and other issues that were relevant to the incipient international policy dialogue on the migration-development nexus. In 2004 and 2005, it provided support the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) by functioning as its Secretariat.

In 2005, UNITAR launched the *Migration and Development Seminar Series*, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the MacArthur Foundation, to assist the diplomatic community in strengthening its knowledge and understanding of migration and development issues. Since then, the Series has generated almost 20 high-profile debates on topics ranging from diaspora contributions to development, to countering human trafficking, resulting in the build-up of an extensive body of knowledge and significant policy recommendations being made available to the international community. In 2009-2010, the Series will continue to explore emerging issues that deserve further attention, such as the impacts of the current financial crisis on migration and migration policies, and will expand its reach beyond UN headquarters to target audiences around the world via ICT mechanisms.

UNITAR has also engaged in a proficuous partnership with the IOM to relaunch its *Migration Programme* in Geneva and expand its training activities to UN locations around the world through a joint project supported by the Government of Spain. This important partnership was consolidated and extended in April 2009, with the signature of a comprehensive and multi-year framework agreement covering a wide array of areas, including in-country capacity development projects; satellite imagery analysis and education to assist in operational missions, utilizing the highly praised UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme – UNOSAT - that produces maps that serve the work of the humanitarian community; the dissemination of international migration law (IML); the advancement of strategic policy thinking and dialogue in this important field; and the strengthening of local networks to foster inter-regional collaboration on integration issues.

Finally, and in recognition of its substantive contributions to the field, in June 2009 UNITAR assumed the rotating chairmanship of the *Global Migration Group* (GMG) for the usual six-month period. Established by the UN Secretary-General in 2006, this inter-agency body is, as you know, currently comprised of 14 UN and non-UN agencies actively working on migration issues, and aims to promote a wider application of migration-related international and regional instruments and norms, and to provide coherent leadership to improve the overall effectiveness of the international community in its response to migration challenges.

The GMG has already had several of its accomplishments recognized as important. It has played a pioneering role in identifying major linkages in the migration-development nexus, and in guiding and focusing the international debate on the subject. The Group and its members have substantively contributed to the UN Secretary-General's report on International Migration and Development. The GMG has also organized a series of Principals and working level meetings for policy coordination; has actively supported the first 2 *Global Fora on Migration and Development* by preparing papers and contributing experiences and expertise to Roundtables; and has launched various initiatives and projects under each chairmanship, such as for example the discussion on Migration Governance during UN/DESA's term. A workspace has also been created, allowing efficient internal and external sharing of information, tools, research findings and statistical data, particularly on issues related to migration and development.

UNITAR intends to deepen the GMG's contributions to the debate. To that end, hand-in-hand with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - which will be the first agency to chair the Group in 2010, has developed a June 2009-July 2010 GMG workplan focused on three main orientations:

- (i) To engage heads of agencies in concentrating on substance rather than procedures, focusing on the topic of the global economic crisis and its impact on migration and migration policies;
- (ii) To streamline efforts of the GMG on the basis of a joint review of the Group's mandate and working methods/objectives and modalities of operation, to result in concrete proposals for future processes; and
- (iii) To raise the GMG's profile as a convener, coordinator and think tank on challenges and responses regarding migration, by opening up the public debate with a conference in November 2009.

Three working level meetings have been planned, with the first one having already been carried out in June 2009, to discuss the workplan. The two remaining working level meetings will focus on ways to improve effectiveness of GMG's work processes; and on policy statements and guidance on the main topic.

A one-day retreat has been planned for the Principals, to take place in October in the outskirts of Geneva, which will deliberate on the urgency of a United Nations response to the current global economic crisis and its impact on migration. High level expert speakers and the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on International Migration will also be invited. Outcomes of the retreat will be shared by the GMG Chair at the third Global Forum on International Migration and Development (GFMD) in Athens, Greece on 4-5 November 2009, where UNITAR will represent the GMG. Of course, the GMG will also technically and logistically support the Forum, as it has done with the 2 previous ones.

Finally, the GMG intends to develop and release a series of fact sheets highlighting the various impacts the crisis will have on migration, migrants and related socio and economic policies. This ambitious agenda is expected to be carried out with the commitment and contributions of all GMG members.

The importance of the international community's examination of the impacts of the economic and financial crisis on migration cannot be overly emphasized. This is a key issue for development, as well as for human rights. In this regard, UNITAR extends its warmest congratulations to UNCTAD for the timely initiative of organizing this prestigious ad hoc expert meeting. Thank you.