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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

**Statement submitted by International Presentation Association,
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters of St.
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International, non-governmental organizations in consultative
status with the Economic and Social Council***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Role of Migrants for the Eradication of Poverty to Achieve Sustainable Development for All

The global community is witnessing demographic shifts due to environmental degradation as well as social and economic instabilities. In 2015, the number of migrants globally reached a high of 244 million. A significant number of these people are within the working age. We are therefore convinced that with robust policies and governance in place at all levels; the economic pillar created by migrant workers contributes to the eradication of poverty.

We reaffirm the enormous progress made by the United Nations (UN) in addressing issues surrounding migration and the plight of migrants, especially with the recent adoption of the New York Declaration which acknowledges that “migrants can make positive and profound contributions to economic and social development in their host societies and to global wealth creation.” We also commend efforts by several Member States and civil society such as our own non-governmental organizations, the migrant diaspora, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and the International Organization on Migration (IOM) in highlighting the immense social and economic contributions made by migrant workers and the challenges they encounter.

At the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the commitment “to leave no one behind” and the firm belief that “no goal is considered met unless all are met”. We recognize the following targets of the SDGs which explicitly refer to migrants and migration: 8.7, 8.8, 10.7, 10c, 16.2, 17.18. We congratulate the few countries that have ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families and other related UN, international and regional instruments.

The role and contribution of migrant workers in the eradication of poverty has been long acknowledged in the process of development, especially through financial remittances. Data released in 2016 by IOM shows that the sum of remittances sent by international migrants to the families in origin countries amounted to \$581.6 billion in 2015. It also noted that in some cases, earnings remitted by international migrants constitute a significant portion of some country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Examples are countries like Liberia and Moldova with 25 per cent, Nepal and Kyrgyzstan with 33 per cent, and Tajikistan with almost 37 per cent.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) report in 2015 also highlighted positive impacts of migration on origin countries. According to ILO, remittances from migrants to their home countries contribute significantly to the education of their relatives. The report indicated a doubling in enrolment rates. An increase in education expenditure helps to finance schooling and reduce the need for child labour, and a rise in girls’ school attendance and educational attainment. Reports from our members on the ground in countries like Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe and many others also confirm that children receiving remittances from parents/relatives working abroad have better access to information technology and more often, continue to pursue university studies. Education is always a top priority if poverty is to be eradicated. In this regard, migration has an impact on SDGs 4 and 5.

It also has a bearing on SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 8 as remittances to origin countries are also used to fund health care, small businesses, food and other family needs.

Return migrants are most likely to return home with newly acquired skills and knowledge from abroad that they could certainly apply at home. They may become entrepreneurs because of accumulated savings while abroad. They may even develop networks that facilitate trade and investment flow between origin and destination countries. Our members in Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines, and other countries relate stories of return migrants establishing small businesses like fish farms, credit unions, groceries, and so on.

Migrants also contribute to the economic and social development of their host countries. A 2014 study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that migrants accounted for 47 per cent of the increase in the workforce in the United States and 70 per cent in Europe over the past ten years. They boost the working age population, and they contribute more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits. They often arrive with skills and contribute to the human capital development of receiving countries. In some cases, migrants become entrepreneurs after a period of time in their host countries. These businesses provide employment for other migrants mostly from their origin countries and sometimes, migrant entrepreneurs mentor other newcomers. For example, our members in San Antonio, Texas, report of immigrant families opening restaurants and subcontracting companies for electrical and plumbing work.

Furthermore, migrants contribute to the development of their communities in the host countries, although their contributions are not noticed and quantified because it is largely through informal volunteering. As a form of social capital contribution, they provide support networks and enabling pathways that help recent migrants integrate into their new communities. An example is the Kalakasan (meaning Strength) Migrant Women's Empowerment Center in Japan, which works to stabilize foreign women and their children and administers a babysitting cooperative.

Despite the economic and social contributions being made by migrants in both origin and host countries, violations of the human rights of migrant workers continue to occur on a regular basis. Migrants are often exploited as cheap and forced labour. Data released early in 2016 by ILO indicates that 11.4 million women and girls and 9.5 million men and boys are victims of forced labour. It also reports that 19 million of these victims are exploited by individuals or businesses, 4.5 million of whom are victims of sexual exploitation, and over 2 million by the state or criminal organizations. Furthermore, migrants suffer from discrimination, social exclusion, and xenophobia.

A very comprehensive study by IOM and other organizations in 2015 titled, "Other Migrant Crisis: Protecting Migrant Workers against Exploitation in the Middle East and North Africa," revealed that 87 per cent of respondent migrant workers in that region reported confinement to the place of employment, 79 per cent had their wages withheld, 73 per cent experienced psychological abuse, and 61 per cent experienced physical abuse. These findings very much resonate with the experience of many migrant workers with whom our members work. We, as advocates of the dignity of all peoples, particularly uphold SDG target 8.8: "Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers,

including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment.” Forced labour, from debt bondage to trafficking in persons and exploitation to social isolation, will make it impossible to fulfil the goal of “leaving no one behind”. The Member States must ensure that safe and secure working environments are created for all workers.

The fundamental principle of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter is to ensure the wellbeing, security and protection of the human rights and dignity of all the citizens of the world. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights maintains that the human rights of every individual is inalienable. This too includes the human rights of migrants, their migration status notwithstanding.

Recommendations for Member States and relevant institutions:

- Ratify the Conventions and International Agreements that would enhance migrants’ rights and protection, and improve their legislation to ensure that it is aligned with international principles
- Adopt and apply the ILO 2016 “Check Points on Eliminating and Preventing Forced Labour”
- Enhance recruitment regulations to ensure that employers comply with fair recruitment practices
- Educate workers on their employment and residency rights, as well as provide current information on how to access help in case of exploitation
- Monitor employers and recruitment agencies for deceptive recruitment practices; investigate, prosecute, and if necessary, withdraw practicing licenses of recruitment agencies that exploit or abuse migrant workers’ rights
- Conduct widespread, systematic education campaigns to counter xenophobic attitudes towards migrant workers and promote diversity
- Provide wider availability of reasonable money transfer operators and easy access to information to compare costs and services to send remittances

The submitting non-governmental organizations pledge to continue to collaborate with the United Nations in the efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals for all people.