

CLOSING REMARKS

Delivered by Hon. ARTURO D. BRION

First Global Forum on Migration and Development

9 – 11 July 2007

Brussels, Belgium

Excellencies,

Special Representative of the UN Sec. Gen., Peter Sutherland,

Madame Chair, Ambassador Regine de Clercq,

Distinguished policy-makers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start this Closing Address by thanking and congratulating the Government of Belgium and the Chair for this very successful Forum – the first of its kind in history, in breath, scope and modality. Let me convey the same sentiments too to the United Nations - through Special Representative Peter Sutherland – who hosted last year the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development – the dialogue that immediately gave rise to this Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today, we mark a milestone in world history as we successfully conclude the First Global Forum on Migration and Development. In these past two days, we witnessed the breakdown of a lot of walls as we engaged each other in friendly and productive dialogues to understand and address current issues on international migration so that its fruits and potentials can be linked fully and positively to development.

It is no mean feat for 155 countries of the world to come together, share experiences, learn from each other, and plan for future cooperative actions,

notwithstanding the absence of formal structures that normally characterize international meetings.

Through this informal, non-binding and consultative process that we now familiarly call the Global Forum, we looked at the same realities facing us today but from different perspectives dictated by our respective country-specific needs and challenges. By doing this, we all looked inwards but with lenses tinted by global realities. This, in picturesque terms, is the Global Forum process.

Preparatory to this Global Forum and with Belgium as the prime-mover, some stakeholders called “Friends of the Forum” conducted consultations about the framework and operations of the Global Forum process and recommended certain modalities to ensure its continuity and effectiveness. With the incorporation of the inputs given by assigned delegations, which we passed today in plenary, we shall soon operationalize these modalities taking into account the comments and observation we heard today and those which we shall continue to receive.

Beyond the structural framework issues, we have started to work, through this First Global Forum, on translating our common visions on migration and development into reality. The recommendations contained in the background papers and new suggestions amplified during the roundtable sessions and the plenary attest to this accomplishment. Collectively, these initial records constitute a rich pool of concrete, practical, and doable action programs for all stakeholders in migration and development to consider and to adopt as their individual interests dictate.

After we adjourn today, individual states, regional blocs, civil society groups, international organizations, and other non-traditional partners – in their respective varied roles – have the outcomes of this Forum to respond to and pursue. At the very least, we must continue the existing consultative mechanisms we have begun. We must continue as well the informal discussions and, to every extent possible, translate these into formal and firm commitments, partnerships, and international cooperation. Today, we addressed the issues of human capital development, improvement of remittance flows and utilization, and finally, promotion of partnership and policy coherence among participating countries. Hearing the comments in the past 2 days, I am sure we shall go beyond these in the future to address other direct, collateral, and cross-cutting issues in both migration and its necessary linkages to development.

Amidst these realities, the Philippines finds itself in a very challenging position. As the identified host of the Second Global Forum to be held next year, we must undertake three critical tasks expressed earlier by the Chair and which I reformulate as follows: First, we must spearhead the follow-up activities and dialogues of the First Global Forum and sustain the momentum and interest of the Friends of the Forum; Second, we must urge countries to pursue the projected outcomes of the First Global Forum, and third: we must bridge the agenda between the two processes in such a way that old issues will reach satisfactory conclusions while pursuing critical discussions of new but equally urgent issues.

We are prepared to take the lead, but as we do this, we look back to what Belgium has accomplished after the UN High Level Dialogue in September last year, to convene and host this first-ever global meeting on international

migration and development issues involving policy makers, government officials, and legislators. Taking off from the UN High Level Dialogue, Belgium took the lead in building the process that we shall soon look back to as the successful First Global Forum. We laud Belgium for this pioneering and innovative approach to the governance of migration and development in a multilateral setting. We are particularly happy that we can draw strength from the following solid achievements as we take on the Second Global Forum:

1. The First Global Forum already established a strong and vibrant network system among UN member states that we now refer to as the Friends of the Forum. The outpouring of resources for the First Global Forum, be it in the form of personnel seconded by several governments, financial donation, technical expertise, and others, showed all of us that this Forum is an achievement not of a single State, but of a community of nations differently situated but driven by a common purpose – to harness the benefits of international migration while minimizing its attendant costs.
2. This First Global Forum has, without doubt, drawn the attention of the world towards the importance of addressing the international migration phenomenon and its interconnectivity to development. Through this process, a new light dawned upon many countries, both sending and receiving, as they recognized the possibility of reaping net positive consequences from migration. With the promise of hope and possible solutions to many pressing socio-economic challenges, we can expect these countries to reiterate their support for the Global Forum process.

3. The First Global Forum has elevated the level of awareness and consciousness of migrant workers and their families about their rights and responsibilities, prompting governments, civil societies, international partners, and practically the whole world, to continue a focused debate on migration and development in the national, regional, and international fronts.
4. Last but not the least, we learned in this Forum to share past successful experiences that can serve others as vital and invaluable lessons in policy-design and implementation. If only to this extent, this First Global Forum has enriched all of us.

As Belgium passes the torch to us, we call on all of you to join and support us as the challenges are great and cannot be surmounted except through our common efforts. This is the critical lesson we learned in the past 11 months in supporting Belgium's initiatives.

We call on all UN member countries -- to all of you who are participating in this First Global Forum and on others, not here with us today, but who may be reached by the results of this Forum and who may find the present process relevant and useful. We call as well on all international and other organizations who have pioneered actions in the field of migration and those who, in one way or another, have migration concerns, to join or continue their active involvement in this Forum. Let us all join hands and work together towards the continuity of the process and the implementation of the gains we have so far made. Only with your continued assistance, support

and cooperation, can we continue to make the Global Forum a truly useful, valuable, effective and responsive process for mankind.

With these thoughts, I now formally declare on behalf of the Republic of the Philippines our readiness to host the Second Global Forum, and welcome you all, this early, to Manila.

Thank you very much and Mabuhay!!!