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Statement

by

Ms. Mary Wallace T.D., Minister of State

at the

Madame President
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to represent Ireland today at a UN forum which specifically links international migration to the concept of development. I can say from Ireland's perspective that our preparation for this Dialogue has developed and improved our understanding of the synergies between these two areas and provided the impetus for increased contacts and action.

I want at the outset of my remarks to express my appreciation to my fellow

announced its proposals for new Immigration, Residence and Protection legislation which represents a radical overhaul of our immigration laws dating back to 1935. This legislation will provide the framework for orderly and managed legal migration into the State. It will set out, in a single code, comprehensive statutory procedures for the application of stated policies to the various stages of the immigration process.

As Ireland is an integral part of the European labour market of 200 million it is envisaged that the majority of our future skills and labour market needs will be met within this market.

We are also developing policies aimed at encouraging people with special qualifications, skills or entrepreneurial abilities to consider Ireland as a permanent destination. An important provision set out in the new proposed legislation is the status of "long-term resident", with entitlements and access to State services that will approximate to those of Irish citizens.

We have also plans to introduce a Green Card system for highly skilled and highly paid migrants from third countries. This will comprise a gateway to permanent residence after two years, immediate family reunification and unrestricted spousal access to employment.

INTEGRATION

Madame President, integration strategies for legal migrants are another vital element in this whole area of people movement. Ireland is committed to enhancing the framework already in place for integration as well as ensuring that our migrant population is provided with full legal protection against exploitation whether in the workplace or elsewhere in society.

It is an understatement to say that the Ireland of 2006 has a diverse population. As I said earlier the rate of demographic change that has occurred in recent years has not been gradual. This rapidity has presented its own issues and Ireland continues to learn from others' experience. We are, however, coming to terms with the reality that Ireland is irrevocably a major multicultural society with over 160 nationalities living and working in the country.

The integration of newcomers into that new multicultural society is one of the most important social issues we face over the next few decades. Investment in social infrastructure will be critical to ensure that our migrants can participate not only in the economic aspects of society but also in its equally important social and cultural dimensions. We cannot afford simply to have a multicultural society and to leave it at that. We must ensure an intercultural society where the different cultures speak to each other, listen to each other and enrich each other in the context of a common aspiration to promote the welfare and values of a new Irish society. This is no easy task.

A priority of the Irish Government aid programme is to support our partner countries to improve management and working conditions of health workers so that they are encouraged to continue working in their own countries.

We also recognize the responsibility of richer countries to manage international recruitment so that skilled health workers are not encouraged to migrate from severely understaffed countries. The Government of Ireland is committed to best practice in recruitment and we welcome the European Union initiative to develop a Code of Conduct for ethical recruitment of health workers.

There is increasing recognition of the potential of migrants' remittances to contribute to economic development at household, local, national and regional levels. Ireland takes the view that work on the development potential of remittances must take place in a context where it is recognised that such remittances are private funds and are not substitutes for national development efforts, comprehensive development strategies, or