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**Presentation for Segment 4
General Assembly's Informal Interactive Hearings on
International Migration and Development
Austin T. Fragomen, Jr.**

Nations have historically viewed migration policy as a domestic prerogative and an area where the state has plenary power to determine through law who can enter and under what circumstances. Laws are enacted regulating the admission of foreign nationals based upon the perception of national interest. National governance of international migration has traditionally been undermined by lack of coherence, poor implementation and lack of knowledge and resources. Parochial domestic political concerns buffet agreement on national objectives, frequently resulting in partisan disagreement over basic objectives. Fundamental questions such as the role of international migration in economic growth and development may not be addressed or with each change in government may be approached in a different manner. It is not uncommon for migration policy to become a focal and divisive political issue with restrictionist opposing labor migration as well as family reunion. The cry to stop or severely restrict the admission of migrants is heard in many countries. So, the establishment of a coherent national approach to international migration, although imperative, is difficult to achieve. The question is how can the global community support the advancement of national efforts. The key is international cooperation, coupled with on-going efforts to support states to formulate and implement migration policy.

International cooperation with other states broadens the perspective of nations. For instance, issues regarding the admission and treatment of refugees are commonly accepted by states to require international cooperation. Moreover, the use of bilateral and regional trade agreements to address the admission of labor migrants essential to trade in goods and services has further legitimated the concept of international cooperation.

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Recent trends heighten the importance of collaborative efforts between states. The globalization of the labor market allows sophisticated services to be performed anywhere by highly educated workers. At the same time demographic trends in developed nations cause a domestic shortage of workers with essential skills which can be filled by workers from less developed countries. Cooperation is essential to address core issues such as the "brain drain" and striking an appropriate balance between the free will of the migrant to pursue personal objectives and the negative impact on development in the sending country. Moreover, the impact on development in sending countries particularly between neighboring countries underscore the importance of innovative policies such circular migration coupled with economic development assistance.

The primary responsibility for economic migration policy lies with each state. A business-government partnership is the basic foundation with the involvement of labor where appropriate. This cooperation should include determining policy but extend through the implementation of policy. All too often coherent policy objectives are perverted in their application. Domestically there must be a basic reconciliation of mobility of labor with security and labor market protection. This is best accomplished where high level decision making process is conducted at a ministerial level.

The next level is the bilateral agreement between neighboring countries addressing labor migration including essential workers, highly educated professionals, short term, intermediate and long term or permanent admissions, and irregular migrants. Such agreements are particularly important between contiguous countries and adjacent islands with disparate levels of development. The focus of such agreements should be to broaden the zone of control of migrants to encompass the boundaries of both countries and within that zone to focus upon migration policy as a development tool.

On a broader scale regional mobility treaties particularly as an aspect of a trade treaty are frequently achievable because of the common culture and interest of the nations involved.

I would suggest that to successfully promote bilateral and multilateral treaties the scope start on a modest level. For instance, the admission of short term assignees and business travelers or cross border cooperation on irregular migration are topics which could serve as a stepping stone to more comprehensive agreement. In fact, bilateral and regional agreements on labor migration will facilitate the development of migration policy within the state.

The United Nations can play an important role. Certainly inter-agency cooperation initially and integration into one migration agency ultimately are necessary. However, economic migration is a dynamic global phenomenon which has exploded with the advances in information technology and telecommunications. While moving ahead with the Inter-agency Migration Facility, I would recommend establishing a global agency for economic migration – possibly the IOM or perhaps a new agency. There is a profound lack of objective information and data available. This agency could serve the repository of information, best practices of various states, commission studies of innovative government initiatives, propose model laws addressing economic migration issues and provide advisory services to nations and regional trade authorities.