



**Message by Mr. Juan Somavia,
Director-General of the International Labour Office,
on the occasion of
International Migrants Day
(18 December 2006)**

Today we pay tribute to the millions of migrant workers who have left their home countries to find work and better opportunities elsewhere to support their families and communities. This movement largely reflects the failure of policies to generate enough decent jobs where people live. Too often migrant workers become trapped in the most difficult of circumstances including situations of exploitation, discrimination, poor working conditions, lack of respect for their rights at work, and limited or no social protection.

And yet, international migration, properly managed has a positive side. The international community is recognizing the vitality and dynamism that migration can bring to economies and societies.

This was evident at the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in September 2006. The discussions underscored that it was in the interest of the international community to agree on the principles and modalities of the governance and management of international migration for the benefit of all concerned, including migrant workers themselves.

Responding to a call from our constituents, the ILO developed the *Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration*, endorsed by our Governing Body in March 2006.

This comprehensive Framework provides practical guidance for the development and improvement of labour migration policies. This multifaceted and rights-based Framework covers decent work for all, governance of migration, protection and promotion of migrant rights, development linkages, and international cooperation. At the same time it is based on the sovereign right of all nations to determine their own migration policies. This Framework complements the three migrant-specific international Conventions – Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No. 97), the Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 (No. 143), both ILO instruments, and the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and their Families adopted by the United Nations on 18 December 1990.

As things stand, many migrants leave their home countries out of necessity. The long-term agenda should be clearly to make migration a matter of choice. To a large extent, this means effectively tackling decent work deficits in countries of origin. Working with member States to expand opportunities for decent work is an integral part of the ILO's efforts to promote good governance and effective management of international migration.

The ILO remains committed to ensuring justice for migrant workers and making migration work for all.

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