

**Speech on the  
BERNE INITIATIVE**

by

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In recent years, migration has been making its way steadily towards the top of the international affairs agenda and now calls insistently and urgently for the attention of all governments, whatever the nature of their involvement or interest in the management of migratory processes. World demographic, economic, political and social trends guarantee that governments and societies will need to put more emphasis on migration management in all of its dimensions.

The challenges to migration management take many forms and involve many different issues, such as security, social, political, and economic stability, trade, development, employment and health. Many of these challenges, however, can be turned into opportunities that can benefit countries of origin, countries of destination and migrants themselves, if effectively managed. Effective migration management cannot be achieved through selective attention to specific policy elements in isolation. What is needed is a comprehensive and balanced approach to migration taking into account migration realities and trends as well as linkages between migration and other key economic, social, political and humanitarian issues.

Migration is predominantly managed at the national level, with each State retaining its sovereign right to determine who can enter and remain in its territory and under what conditions. In exercising this sovereign responsibility, most States have pursued a unilateral approach to migration, accompanied by bilateral arrangements or agreements on an ad hoc basis. As a consequence, different national migration policies and practices have evolved autonomously. However, due to the increasingly trans-national nature of migration and its complex relationship to various other issues, governments increasingly recognize their shared migration interests and the value of strengthened cooperation and coordination in migration management. The effective management of international migration will only be achieved through a comprehensive and balanced approach to migration, attained through regional and international dialogue and cooperation.

The proliferation of regional consultative processes on migration, which bring together government officials, representatives of international organizations and, in some cases, NGOs, for informal and non-binding dialogue and information exchange, has been a positive development in inter-state cooperation at the regional level. Through regional consultative processes, considerable progress has been made toward creating common understandings and approaches on migration.

The Berne Initiative, launched by the Swiss Federal Office for Refugees at the International Symposium on Migration in 2001 ("Berne I"), responds to the need for closer cooperation and confidence building at the international level. The Berne Initiative is a States-owned consultative process with the goal of obtaining better management of migration at the regional and global level through inter-state cooperation. Participants in the Berne Initiative include governments from all regions of the world and relevant stakeholders, including international and regional organizations, civil society and independent migration experts. In particular, IOM and the International Labour Office (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Inter-governmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugees and Migration Policies in Europe, North America and Australia (IGC), the European Commission and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) have played an active role in the process. IOM serves as the secretariat.

As a process, the Berne Initiative has enabled governments from all regions of the world to share their different policy priorities and identify their longer-term interests in migration, and offers the opportunity of developing a common orientation to migration management, based on notions of cooperation, partnership, comprehensiveness, balance and predictability. The Berne Initiative process has contributed to a better understanding of the broad range of migration issues as well as to enhanced and constructive dialogue among States. It has created a climate where migration is seen as being of common interest and an opportunity, rather than the subject of division.

From the beginning, it was acknowledged that the most important outcome of the Berne Initiative process would be the development of a broad non-binding policy framework aimed at facilitating cooperation between States in planning and managing the movement of people in a humane and orderly way.

In order to consult governments in all regions to assess the desirability of developing and the direction for a common framework of principles, four regional consultations with governments and other interested actors were carried out. Participants in all four of the regional consultations emphasized the timeliness of developing a process for dialogue and consultation at the international level, recognizing that migration has become an issue of prime importance at the national, regional and global levels.

To complement the regional consultations, four regional studies on inter-state cooperation were conducted to provide a comprehensive overview of current inter-state cooperation, and a fifth examining current forms of cooperation at the international level. Other activities included commissioning and publishing an expert study taking stock of existing legal norms of migration -- "Migration and International Legal Norms", and a thematic compilation of non-binding significant international statements on migration emanating from the various regional consultative processes on migration and other migration conferences.

The result of these efforts is the ***International Agenda for Migration Management (IAMM)***, a non-binding reference system and policy framework on migration management at the international level, developed by States as the principal actors in the field of migration management with the advice and support of relevant stakeholders. The format of an agenda was chosen to highlight the non-binding and practical character of the document. The IAMM consists of two essential components:

- Its *Common Understandings* component outlines fundamental shared assumptions and principles underlying migration management and sums up values and perceptions that governments bring to migration. These common understandings are drawn from the rich experience of States in migration management at the national level and in regional consultative processes on migration.
- Its *Effective Practices* component offers balanced approaches to managing each of the many aspects of migration and sets out the major elements of a comprehensive national and international migration policy, with a focus on the means to enhance inter-state cooperation. These effective practices are drawn from the actual experience and practice of governments and from the statements they have adopted at migration conferences and fora.

The IAMM represents the first attempt of governments to map out in a comprehensive manner all major aspects of migration at the international level. The successful identification of common understandings and effective practices reflects the recognition that States, while retaining distinct national priorities, are all increasingly countries of origin, transit and destination simultaneously in one way or another. The IAMM

covers issues such as the human rights of migrants, labour migration, integration, irregular migration, trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling, trade and health issues, and migration and development.

At the Berne II Conference, held in December 2004, approximately 300 participants representing more than 100 countries (some of which attended in an observer capacity), as well as representatives from international organizations, NGOs and independent migration experts, engaged in a substantive exchange on three selected sets of issues addressed in the Agenda:

- Migration, Development and Inter-State Cooperation,
- Labour, Regular and Irregular Migration and Inter-State Cooperation, and
- Rights, Responsibilities, Integration and Inter-State Cooperation.

This substantive exchange highlighted the value of the IAMM as a basis for greater inter-state cooperation on migration. IOM believes that the IAMM is a seminal contribution to the field of migration management and holds great promise as a tool to enhance the capacities of government policymakers and migration practitioners to manage migration.

Specifically, the IAMM can be employed:

- as a common reference document mapping out the constituent elements of a comprehensive migration policy strategy,
- as a planning instrument for the development of administrative structures and allocation of administrative responsibilities,
- as an instrument to facilitate inter-agency cooperation at the national level,
- as an evaluation tool for States in reviewing and developing their own national migration policies, and
- as a training instrument and capacity building tool for governmental migration practitioners.

Now that the IAMM has been finalized, it will be widely disseminated among governments to assist them in the management of migration. IOM will assist governments, upon their requests, to utilize the IAMM at the national, regional, and global levels by organizing capacity building workshops on specific policy themes, facilitating the establishment of closer dialogue and cooperation with regional consultative processes, and undertaking migration policy research. The first capacity building workshop is tentatively scheduled to take place in South Africa in July 2005 for the South African Development Community (SADC) States.

In addition, the IAMM has been distributed to the chairs and secretariats of several of the major regional consultative processes on migration. It will also be made available to the Global Commission on International Migration and to the United Nations General Assembly for its planned 2006 High Level Dialogue on migration and development to inform and support their work and serve as a complement to their activities and approaches.

IOM believes that the IAMM holds great promise as a basis for greater inter-state cooperation on migration at the bilateral, regional and global level. The spirit of collaboration and partnership fostered by the Berne Initiative is essential to maintain, and is essential to maximizing the constructive potential of migration and reducing its disruptive effects. IOM looks forward to its role in supporting the realization of the IAMM's potential, both as a tool to enhance the capacities of governments to manage migration and as a basis for greater inter-state cooperation on migration.