

Country Statement - Bhutan

Meeting on International Migration and Development
Bangkok (22-23 September 2008)

As you all know Bhutan is a tiny Himalayan kingdom in between the two emerging giants of Asia, India and China. Bhutan started the planned development only towards the early sixties and the government had to import human resources from outside mainly India. Gradually, Bhutan produced educated lot and by now we are quite comfortable with the professional people available in the country. However, there is still the lack of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers and as a result we do have around 37,000 foreign workers in the country. Now with the major thrust on mega projects especially the hydro projects by the newly elected democratic government, we expect to import a huge number of foreign workers and this figure will be steadily rising.

On the other hand, our unemployment rate is increasing (1.9% in 2001 and 3.2% in 2006) and since our youths are reluctant to take up the blue collar jobs, it is expected that migration to other countries in search of a better job would be on the rise. As of now, we have very few people going out at their own arrangements and the government has not yet started to monitor their movement.

However, the thinking of the new government is that we must be able to develop a critical mass of our own people to attend to the developmental needs of the country. While we do not stop people from going out, we do not have any programs to encourage them either. There are lots of benefits from people working outside the country especially on the financial aspect but at the same time there are also problems being faced by them.

Now given the rapid globalization and development of a global village, we got to expect more movements of people between different countries and our governments would be required to address various issues emerging from this migration. I feel this meeting is timely and wish you all a very successful discussion.

Thank you

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