STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR JEREMIAH MAMABOLO, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UN DURING THE IOM ROUNDTABLE CO-CHAIRMED BY SOUTH AFRICA AND SWEDEN ON “STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, MECHANISMS TO EFFECTIVELY INTEGRATE MIGRATION INTO DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, AND PROMOTE COHERENCE AT ALL LEVELS”, 23 APRIL 2013

Your Excellency Mr Tobias Billstrom, Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy, Ministry of Justice of Sweden,

My Co-Chair, Ambassador Marten Grunditz, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN,

Fellow Panellists,

Excellencies,

At the outset, I wish to announce that this important meeting will be broadcast live by UN webcast.

Indeed, it is a great honour and privilege for me to be part of a discussion on strengthening partnerships and cooperation on international migration, and in seeking to explore how best to integrate migration into development policies through greater coherence at all levels.

I congratulate the International Organization for Migration and partners for their initiative in organising today’s event, towards raising greater awareness internationally on the subject of migration. Events of this nature are critical to dispelling existing negative perceptions and misconceptions that the phenomenon of migration is a negative one.

In this regard, I am sure that you will agree that migration holds positive benefits not only for migrants, but also for countries of origin and destination. However, the reality is that countries of origin, transit and destination continue to face enormous challenges in dealing with the issue. As such, finding and developing appropriate responses to deal with such challenges are the collective responsibility of all Member States and the international community, supported by the United Nations system and relevant entities.

The theme of today’s roundtable discussion is particularly pertinent as it closely mirrors the theme of the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development that will be held in October this year. We trust that the outcomes arising from our discussions today will add value by feeding into the substantive preparations for the High-Level Dialogue under the theme, “Identifying concrete measures to strengthen coherence and cooperation at all levels, with a view to enhancing the benefits of international migration for migrants and countries alike and its important links to development, while reducing its negative implications”.

We see the High-Level Dialogue in October as providing a timely opportunity and platform for the renewal of political commitments at the highest level to issues of international migration. Indeed, we are hopeful that the High-Level Dialogue will culminate in the adoption of a negotiated outcome document that will signal a renewed political commitment to advancing the international agenda on migration through concrete and measurable actions. It is my understanding that the President of the General Assembly will organise a
Panel Discussion in preparation for the High-Level Dialogue and I urge you all to participate and make proposals that would further feed into this on-going process.

My country, South Africa addresses the issue of international migration from a rights-based approach, in which the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants need to be promoted and protected at all times. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is a guiding instrument on these rights.

The theme of our discussion today on strengthening partnerships and cooperation on international migration, underscores the reality that international cooperation and support is an essential ingredient for the successful implementation of any plan of action. Undoubtedly, we need to strengthen public and private partnerships. We have observed the vital role played by NGOs, especially in addressing the challenges of migrants during humanitarian emergencies. The private sector has contributed enormously to the creation of decent work and the transfer of knowledge, skills and technology, including efforts to eliminate forced labour.

The international community has a key role to play in assisting developing countries efforts in policy-making at the national level. Statistics show that women and girls account for almost half of all international migrants; consequently there is an urgent imperative to develop gender-sensitive and gender-responsive policies for migrants.

In the framework of partnership and cooperation, more focused attention is required in the area of humane and orderly migration. Human trafficking and smuggling of migrants requires our collective cooperation. Migrants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and violence, including sexual violence, where cross-border cooperation can mitigate the risks they face.

We must actively engage the Diaspora and open up space and opportunity for the promotion of entrepreneurship in countries of origin. Member States can play a significant role in reducing the transfer costs of remittances as these remain very high. Remittances contribute significantly to the upliftment of the standard of living of millions of people in developing countries and have a direct correlation to poverty eradication and the realisation of sustainable development, as families use these financial resources for education and health-care among other purposes.

Undoubtedly, the negative impact of environmental degradation, including desertification and climate change are contributing factors as to why people migrate. Therefore, assistance in mitigation and adaptation of climate change remains a priority consideration, in particularly for developing states.

In conclusion, given the reality and challenges posed by international migration, we support its inclusion in discussions on the future UN development agenda beyond 2015, including in the context of population dynamics and the implications it holds for development.

I thank you.