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Twenty-Second Session of the Committee on the Protection of the
Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families



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*Chairperson,
Distinguished members of the Committee,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

It is a pleasure to be with you for the opening of the **twenty-second session of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families** and to welcome you on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We meet today in the Palais des Nations against an international context in which the plight of migrant workers continues to make the front pages of the world's newspapers, but is still failing to generate durable solutions. Earlier this month Italian authorities rescued a staggering 1,500 migrants in one 24 hour period. Figures released by the International Organisation for Migration revealed that the number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Italy by sea in 2014 reached a total of 170,100. That was about four times the number registered in 2013. Large increases in migrant flows were also recorded in 2014 from Central American countries towards North America, from conflicts in the Middle East and Africa as well as across South East Asian nations.

The human rights challenges these flows of migrants generate are well known to us in this room. Since the start of his mandate in September 2014, the High Commissioner has given priority to the rights of all migrants. On Human Rights Day in December, he devoted a speech to this issue, warning that the depiction of migrants as “invasive hordes”, who are “threatening our way of life” and “jumping the queue” must stop, and States must act with full respect for the human rights of all – including migrants. “Rich countries” he said, “must not become gated communities, their people averting their eyes from the bloodstains in the driveway”. A copy of his speech is available online and I commend it to you.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families provides a comprehensive framework of rights to be respected at all stages of the migration process. It is a text built on the rights set forth in the two international covenants, each of which will celebrate 50 years since their adoption next year. This year we

celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Migrant Worker's Convention. It is time for all of us to redouble efforts to bring the rights in the Convention to the people who are entitled to its protection.

Distinguished members

General Assembly

Allow me to briefly update you on developments in the United Nations system on the rights of migrant workers since your last session. The General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions on the protection of migrants. In resolution 69/167, the Assembly acknowledged the contribution of the Committee to the international system for the protection of migrants, and again called upon States to consider signing and ratifying or acceding to the Convention as a matter of priority. As the Committee considers embarking on a general comment on children in the context of migration, resolution 69/187 on migrant children and adolescents recognized that migrant children should be placed in the least restrictive setting for the shortest possible period of time and encourages States to adopt alternatives to detention that take into consideration the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. Finally resolution 69/229 on international migration and development recognizes that international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of the countries of origin, transit and destination, and should be addressed in a coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner, integrating development and with due regard for social, economic and environmental dimensions and respecting human rights.

Post-2015 agenda

Distinguished members of the Committee,

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to developments in the elaboration of the sustainable development goals within the **post-2015 agenda**. On 4 December last year, the Secretary-General issued his Synthesis Report on the post-2015 agenda. In his report, the Secretary-General stresses that millions of people, including migrant workers, have been left behind in the wake of unfinished work of the Millennium Development Goals. He recalls that human

development also means respect for human rights, and he advocates for a post-2015 agenda which accommodates the voices of all persons, including migrants.

Member States are now embarking on negotiations towards adopting the post-2015 development agenda at the UN General Assembly Heads of State Summit in September 2015. This final phase is crucial to ensuring the goals, targets, indicators and accountability frameworks are closely aligned with human rights norms, especially those enshrined in the Migrant Workers Convention.

The Human Rights Council and Special Procedures

Dear members,

In addressing the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner has continued to prioritise the issue of migration. While noting the current migration crises to which I referred earlier, he called for responses that are not only humane but which also fully acknowledge the human rights of every individual involved at all points of origin, transit and destination. In the previous session, the High Commissioner also addressed the situation of discrimination against migrants and expressed concern over the number of avoidable deaths of migrants in the course of their journey, brutal forms of human trafficking, ill-treatment at borders, and prolonged detention in deplorable conditions. The High Commissioner closed his address by stating that human rights are not reserved for citizens only or for people with visas. They are the inalienable rights of every individual, regardless of his or her location and migration status.

Since your last session, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Mr. Francois Crepeau, has submitted his report to the General Assembly (A/69/302). The thematic section of his report was dedicated to advocating for the inclusion of the human rights of migrants in the post-2015 development agenda by providing guidelines, conclusions and recommendations on how to mainstream the human rights of migrants within key sustainable development goals, targets and indicators. The Special Rapporteur is also following up his EU border management study. He is urging

the EU and its Member States to progressively establish a human-rights based, coherent and comprehensive migration policy and developing a common narrative celebrating mobility and diversity, recognizing real labour market needs as well as the needs of migrants, based on human rights guarantees and access to justice.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

In December we celebrated International Migrants Day. The Secretary-General, in his message, focused on the post-2015 development agenda as offering an opportunity to ensure that the needs of migrants are made a priority to meet the new framework's core objective of "leaving no one behind". He also called on States to ratify and implement the core international human rights instruments, including the Migrant Workers Convention.

The High Commissioner's statement for International Migrants Day was issued jointly with the ILO Director-General, Mr. Guy Ryder. The two heads of agency noted that refusing to give migrants and their families access to education, health care and adequate housing is practically short-sighted as equality and non-discrimination are important drivers of sustainable development. The statement also mentions the 25th anniversary of the Convention and calls on States to make use of the Convention as well as other core international human rights instruments and international labour rights standards.

Treaty Body Strengthening Process

Distinguished Members,

We will remember 2014 as the year in which the intergovernmental treaty body strengthening exercise came to a successful conclusion with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268. We now turn to the work of implementing the vision of the resolution. This Committee has been provided with three additional days of meeting time for the purpose of increasing the number of States parties that it able to review annually.

At the end of 2014, we unfortunately witnessed a significant cut in OHCHR's extra budgetary resources. This cut affected all parts of the organization and the Human Rights Treaties Division was not spared. In this constrained financial environment, and in line with resolution 68/268, OHCHR will focus its support in 2015 to reach targets set out in the resolution in terms of numbers of lists of issues, lists of issues prior to reporting and concluding observations.

In addition to reducing backlogs, which is relevant for most other Committees, the General Assembly recognized that strengthening the treaty body system requires the increased harmonization of working methods across treaty bodies. It will make the treaty bodies more accessible to States and stakeholders, and benefit the system as a whole. As the first Committee to adopt all of the recommendations contained in the Report of the former High Commissioner on the strengthening of the human rights treaty bodies (A/66/860), we hope that this Committee will continue to lead by example thereby showing other committees the road to greater efficiency and unity.

We welcome the decisions the Committee has already taken in this regard, such as by offering the simplified reporting procedure, providing concluding observations that focus on priorities and conducting largely paperless sessions. This also fits the new requirements for States parties to strictly limit the length of reports. We encourage the Committee to continue to look at ways to strengthen the role of the Country Rapporteurs and the dialogue with the State parties, as well as develop guidelines on the independence of treaty body members.

Implementation of resolution 68/268 also involves tracking our progress. The General Assembly has requested that the Secretary-General submit a report on progress made in the implementation of the resolution every two years. OHCHR has started collecting data and tracking progress specifically for this purpose. These reports will be used to ensure that the regular budget resources devoted to the committees keep in line with the expected number of reports to be reviewed and the corresponding reduction in backlogs. They will also be used in the next review of the entire treaty body system scheduled under the resolution for 2020.

Tracking progress of implementation of the resolution also includes a review of the application of the Addis Ababa Guidelines on independence and impartiality of members of the human rights treaty bodies. The resolution specifically requests Chairs of the committees to keep States parties updated on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Guidelines. In preparation for this reporting, you might wish to consider how you are approaching the implementation of the Addis Guidelines, and, in doing so, give thought to the establishment of an internal mechanism to keep track of progress.

Members of the Committee,

OHCHR continues to work to support the Committee and the application of norms and standards set down in the Convention. In addition to the substantive and technical support provided by the Human Rights Treaties Division, the Office also works to encouraging ratification of the Convention by communicating with signatory States, liaising with civil society and international trade unions through the Steering Committee on the promotion of the ratification of the Convention, as well as following up recommendations made during the second cycle of the UPR with both States concerned and the relevant field presences. The High Commissioner has been championing the rights of migrants through bilateral meetings and speaking engagements. The Office pledges its continued support to the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrant workers and to the very important work of this Committee.

I would also like to take this opportunity to announce that Ms. Ilona Alexandra has joined the CMW Secretariat replacing Ms. Harumi Fuentes. Ms. Alexandra is a very experienced OHCHR staff member, and was formerly with the Rule of Law Section of OHCHR. She has published academically on the issue of migration, and we are very happy to have her with us.

Without further ado, I thank you for your attention and wish you a very successful and productive 22nd session and open the floor for questions and comments from members.

Thank you.
