



**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Andreas D. Mavroyiannis,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus,**

**at the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development New
York 14-15 September 2006**

Madam President,

let me begin by congratulating you for convening this meeting. The time could not have been more appropriate for the start of a frank and open exchange of views and ideas on such an important international issue that affects the lives and welfare of us all, as individuals and as states.

We would, also, like to extend our gratitude to the Secretary General Kofi Annan for drawing high-political focus on the many linkages between development and migration. The MDGs is a realistic target that needs political involvement at its highest level.

Cyprus aligns itself with the joint statement presented by Finland, on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make, however, the following additional comments.

Migration is a global phenomenon as old as man itself. In a quest to find better lives and improve their standards of living, people are moving across borders. As we live in an era of increased human mobility due to technological advances, marked by diversity and multiculturalism, any prevailing negative perceptions in the past, must not be inhibiting factors in dealing with this normal fact of human civilization. Migration should not be seen in principle as a threat or a destabilizing factor to the economies of the recipient countries. Of course it is a phenomenon that needs to be regulated. But, if supported by the right policies, it can be a blessing for development in both the recipient countries and countries of origin.

Migration and development are closely interlinked. Through international cooperation and coordination of our policies we can maximize the beneficial effects of international migration to development and minimize the negative ones. We need, however, to build capacity in both countries of origin and destination in order to formulate coherent migration policies, in an integrated and a holistic way. Cooperation in this area is essential, not only between governments, but also with non-government actors, such as the civil society, the private sector and international organizations.

The challenges of the development aspect of migration are numerous and their successful address is not an easy task. Both, host countries and countries of origin, must deal with issues such as brain drain, protection of migrants' rights, minority integration, religion, citizenship, xenophobia, human smuggling and trafficking and national security. Human rights and protection of migrants, especially of women and children should be promoted and incorporated in government Policies. New patterns, such as selective migration are welcomed and may be desirable but they should not be implemented in a discriminatory manner in regards to gender, age and family status. Measures must be taken against illegal migration, human trafficking and smuggling ensuring at the same time that the migrants, who in search for a better life for them and their families become victims of smugglers and traffickers, are offered help, protection and assistance.

Madam President,

Cyprus had historically been a country of emigration, exporting migrants to richer countries. During the second part of the 20th Century, many Cypriots sought to escape poverty for a better life in more developed, more affluent societies abroad. In fact, it is estimated that as many Cypriots live abroad as on the island itself. The invasion of 1974 and the displacement of 1/3 of the population resulted in new waves of emigration. Many Cypriot refugees who had lost their livelihoods sought employment abroad. Since then Cyprus has seen extensive economic development and has become a "host" to migrants who contribute positively to the economy and its high growth rates. The contribution of the Cypriots of the Diaspora was also crucial for the economic miracle that Cyprus experienced in the 1980s.

Immigration policy in Cyprus has been changed in the 1990s to accommodate the entry of temporary migrant workers into the country in order to meet labour shortages. This change of policy quickly transformed Cyprus from a country that traditionally exported migrants to all corners of the earth, to a net immigration receiving country. Today the total number of resident non-Cypriots is estimated at approximately 80,000, representing almost 10% of the total population and 14% of the economically active population. Their contribution to the Cypriot economy is very important.

Cyprus is firmly committed to the protection of the human rights of all migrants and has ratified all major human rights instruments including the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols, the UN Convention on Refugees and is in the process of ratifying the UN Convention on Statelessness. Our Immigration and Refugee Laws have been harmonized with the relevant European laws and are implemented according to EU policies and practices in these fields.

However, economic affluence and the accession of Cyprus to the EU has also led to an influx of illegal migration. It is estimated that there are 10,000 to 30,000 undocumented migrant workers. Irregular migration is a major challenge many countries face which needs our collective response in order to address its primary causes. In doing so, we need to intensify our efforts in the combating of poverty and underdevelopment which are the driving force behind illegal immigration. Eradication of poverty, strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, economic and social development and creation of more and decent jobs for all, are some of the goals that, if reached, can change today's trend in a way that everyone can have an option to staying and prospering in his or her own country.

The report of the Secretary General provides an in depth study on the issue of international migration and development and contains a plethora of suggestions and ideas that merit further discussion and elaboration. Notable recommendations are also contained in the report of the Global Commission. Concerning the recommendation of the Secretary-General for a Global Forum, the position of the EU has been presented by the Finnish Presidency and Cyprus welcomes the proposal of Belgium to host its first meeting.

Cyprus is fully committed to cooperate at a national, regional and international level and through the common policies of the European Union, with all relevant actors for the enhancement of the benefits of migration to development and to play its part in the process that is initiated today'.

The launching of today's Dialogue is a hopeful start of the international debate on immigration and development and a step to move this process forward for achieving concrete results

Thank You Madam President.