

DELEGATION OF TURKEY

**OPENING REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR YUSUF BULUÇ,
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SIDE EVENT ON

“PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES”

(26 September 2007, Meeting Room 1, OSCE HDIM, Warsaw)

Thank you all for participating in this side event. It comes on the heels of a substantive session we have had on migrants and migration. We are hoping to continue our debate from that session with a focus on the protection of the right of migrant workers and with a specific reference to *the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families*. Regretably, Mr. Rene Plaetevoet of ‘December 18’ will not be with us today. I am particularly delighted to see you here with us Ambassador Strohal, Director of the ODIHR. And thank you for offering ODIHR’s collaboration in organizing this event, which affords it a mark of recognition and credibility. We look forward to your contribution which would reflect the acquis of the OSCE and your personal commitment to the subject matter. But before I give the floor to you Christian and to other panelists who kindly accepted to share their experiences with us, let me say a few words on what motivated us to organize this side event.

I believe most of what I would say to introduce the topic today has already been said by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Louise Arbour on the occasion of International Migrants Day on 18 December last year. I quote:

“Migrants form an essential part of the labor force of the countries that receive them, doing work others often disdain and demonstrating great initiative and spurring growth. They also enrich their host societies culturally, opening a window onto otherwise distant worlds and serving as bridges between peoples in an increasingly globalized world.

But this is only part of the picture. The reality for many migrants is one of exploitation, exclusion, discrimination, abuse and violence amounting to widespread human rights violations. They frequently find themselves accepting dangerous or unhealthy employment with few avenues to seek redress when abuses occur.

This must change. We have to ensure that migrants enjoy the rights they are entitled to, regardless of their regular or irregular status.

These objectives represent a challenge for many societies, but much of our future ... depends on achieving them. And it is more than a matter of choice. We have built the international legal framework to protect the human rights of migrants as a matter of duty, of justice and of dignity. The latest block in that edifice – and the most comprehensive set of protections -- is the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. We must strongly promote the ratification of this treaty, which so far has been accepted by only 34 countries.” End of quote.

Since 18 December 2006, 3 more UN Member States adopted the UN Convention. Regretably, out of 37 State Parties to the Convention only 6 are from the OSCE area, namely Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey.

In 2006 there have been a number of key developments indicating the growing recognition by states and other members of society of the value of international migration. In September 2006, the United Nations General Assembly convened its High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development. We applaud the acknowledgement by many States at the High Level Dialogue of the importance of protecting migrants' human rights in the development of migration policy. However, most States did not undertake any commitment regarding the protection of migrants' human rights with a view to developing international policy and practice further. In addition, we are disappointed over the significant exclusion of migrant voices themselves at the High Level Dialogue.

The Committee on Migrant Workers, the Convention's monitoring body, has in the last year commenced considering States parties' reports about the implementation of the Convention at the local level. This has been an enriching and path-breaking exercise, not only for the countries concerned but for the protection of the migrant workers rights in general. For the first time, the Committee has been able to analyze and comment on the concrete application of the Convention to the domestic situation in order to assist States in respecting the migrants' rights. This, we believe, will greatly enhance the understanding of the value of the Convention in facing the challenges of today's migration processes.

In our view, one of the values of the Convention is that it provides States with a comprehensive framework for international cooperation in order to ensure humane conditions of migration. In order to play its guiding role, the Convention needs more support from the international community. We hope that our discussion today will help us understand the hindrances or possible reservations to ratification of the Convention and see if we can come out with some recommendations that they lay such concerns to rest thereby facilitating adherence to the Convention.

With these introductory thoughts, I give the floor to Ambassador Strohal, Director of the ODIHR, who needs no introduction. Christian floor is yours.