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**Speech of the Minister of Interior Mr Neoklis Sylikiotis  
To the 100<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of International Organization for  
Migration  
Geneva, 6 December 2011**

Honourable Director-General of the International Organization for  
Migration,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for my country and myself to address the 100<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration, which marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding.

I would firstly like to strongly support the Statement of the EU and emphasise the fact that all these years, IOM consists a major pillar in the efforts of the Member States and organized groups, both for mapping the global migration situation, and for a just and fair establishment of a collective approach in addressing and managing the migration phenomenon.

The constantly increasing trend of population movement has its roots in poverty, economic and social deprivation, lack of real prospects for education, inadequate functioning of the rule of law in countries of origin, but also to the search for the minimum livelihood. These primary causes of

migration flows are, unfortunately, aggravated by the widening of inequalities between developed and developing countries.

A number of factors, such as the constant changes in demographic maps of migrant's origin and destination countries, the increasing rate of population aging in the developed world and the concurrent population explosion and growth of surplus labor in developing countries, the climate change and the manmade disasters, have brought the global community before a major challenge: the need for fair, humane and sustainable management of migration so as to maximize the benefits of this phenomenon on a global scale and to deal effectively and efficiently with its negative consequences.

Undoubtedly, therefore, to address this challenge we cannot rely on partial measures, but on organized collective action, both by countries of origin and destination countries.

This action must be complemented and supplemented by the work of organizations such as IOM, other organized groups, and civil society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a fact that the successful economic development of the countries of destination has relied heavily on immigrants, who are now a significant proportion of the population of these countries.

The multicultural societies that have emerged and the continuation of migration flows at a global level are throughout time accompanied with phenomena such as racism and xenophobia, trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration.

Therefore, a comprehensive immigration policy that aims at social cohesion and prosperity and has at its core the respect and protection of human rights, can only include measures for integrating immigrants into local communities, tackling racism and xenophobic phenomena and for successfully fighting trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration.

Meanwhile, within the context of the global economic crisis, host communities are called to face some new realities, such as the growing unemployment among their populations. It is therefore necessary to develop a global approach to migration in order to ensure efficient matching of supply and demand in the global labour market through policies for ethical recruitment and measures to improve the economic and employment prospects in origin countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cyprus is a country whose geopolitical position, has made it a receiver of strong mixed migratory pressures aggravated by its limited geographic and demographic size. On the one hand, our proximity to the Middle East, a sensitive geographic area plagued by serious political problems, wars, conflicts and economic instability, results to the fact that Cyprus receives disproportionate to its capacity numbers of illegal immigrants and asylum

seekers. This problem is magnified even more, since due to the Turkish occupation, the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control on the entire area of its territory. On the other hand, the economic prospects, the employment opportunities, the level of education and health and the respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms make Cyprus an attractive destination for immigrants and refugees.

Despite pressure from mixed migratory flows, in recent years we have made significant progress in the management of these flows.

We have managed to adopt and commenced the implementation of action plans for the integration of migrants into Cypriot society and combating trafficking in human beings, we have managed to greatly improve our asylum system, whilst being practically and effectively present at the formulation of a Common European Immigration and Asylum Policy that will effectively address the multiple challenges of these phenomena.

The key challenges we face today are related to the voluntary return of migrants in conjunction with the encouragement of mobility and cooperation with countries of origin.

These challenges require enhanced bilateral and international cooperation with other states and international organizations and for this reason Cyprus is promoting the further strengthening of cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. To this end we promote the establishment of an IOM Office in Cyprus which we hope soon to begin its operations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The effort to successfully meet the immigration challenges, goes far beyond the capacity of any state, no matter how big and strong this state is. For this reason, our objective should be to share knowledge, experiences and concerns through the development of wider partnerships and through the effective and practical involvement both of international as well as other organizations dealing with these issues, such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations. Today's meeting is a concrete and useful example of our effort.

The International Organization for Migration may be the driving force of this cooperation which will provide the global community with a comprehensive framework of expertise, practical tools for coordination and implementation with the goal of developing a truly global approach to migration. An approach that will take into account all relevant policies, such as reception policies and employment policies that will ensure the human rights of migrants and social cohesion and that will reinforce the positive effects of immigration on all levels.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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