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ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Statement by
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Dear Madame President of the Conference,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Greek Government, I would like to stress the importance of the organization by the United Nations of the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD).

It was during the Greek Presidency of the European Union that the Council adopted for the first time Conclusions on Migration and Development (May 2003) containing a series of concrete measures and items for further elaboration by Community organs and Member States.

Since then a lot has been done in the framework of the EU action on the interrelationship between migration and development and migration has been rightly settled on our development agenda.

Links between migration and development are complex and they need further study. It seems that migration, when managed effectively, can have a substantial positive impact both for the country of destination and for the country of origin.

The European Council, in Its Conclusions on 15-16 December 2005, underlined the need for a balanced, global and coherent approach, in cooperation with third countries, using the benefits of legal migration, and covering policies to combat illegal immigration.

It recalled that migration issues are a central element in the Union's and Its Member States' relations with third countries. The EU commitment to support the development efforts of countries of origin and transit is also part of a long-term process to respond to the opportunities and challenges of migration. In this regard, the European Council recognised the importance of addressing the root causes of migration, for example through the eradication of poverty in countries and regions of origin, good governance and the protection of human rights. We fully subscribe to these basic policy principles.

In this vein, we deem that the Rabat EU-Africa Ministerial Conference (July 2006) is a fine paradigm in our relations with a basic set of countries of origin and transit and will contribute significantly to improve ways of communication and cooperation with African partners.

Nevertheless, it is an urgent need to address jointly, properly and effectively the illegal migration phenomenon.

The fight against illegal migration is an incessant struggle which takes place from West Africa and the Canary Islands across the Mediterranean to the Aegean Sea and the Middle East.

Illegal migration has lately taken huge and uncontrollable proportions. Given the fact that Greece's coastal line extends to more than 16.000 km, combating of all forms of illegal migration is a declared high priority for the Hellenic Government.