



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

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**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE DATO' SERI MOHD RADZI
SHEIKH AHMAD, MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS
OF MALAYSIA AT THE HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT,
NEW YORK, 14-15 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment to the Chairmanship of this important meeting.

2. The convening of this meeting is both important and timely, given the increasing prominence that the issue of migration and development will play in the coming years, as well as the increasing complexity of this phenomenon.

3. As a country that is strategically located in Southeast Asian region and which has enjoyed sustained economic growth, Malaysia is all too aware of the role that migration can play in the developmental process and the difficulties that it poses. For Malaysia, the key challenge is to balance the need to maximize the economic benefits derived from migration and the desire to protect the interests of all concerned. We believe that the key to achieve this is to ensure the orderly management of migrant flows. In this regard, Malaysia's foreign worker policy is premised on the need to manage migration in cooperation with source countries in order to achieve mutual benefits.

4. As part of these efforts, the Malaysian government has instituted the following measures:

4.1 Firstly, the signing of bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with seven (7) source countries namely Sri

- Lanka, People's Republic of China, Thailand, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia on the recruitment of foreign labour;
- 4.2 Secondly, promoting international cooperation, including at the regional level. In the ASEAN context, there is active cooperation involving foreign workers related agencies of ASEAN members;
 - 4.3 Thirdly, improving on monitoring and supervising systems as well as enforcement and preventive measures in accordance with the relevant laws of Malaysia; and
 - 4.4 Finally, Malaysia has conducted two amnesty exercise in which illegal immigrants have been repatriated to their home countries at the Malaysian government's expense;

Madam President,

5. In ensuring the effectiveness of the measures towards the orderly flow of migration, legitimate concerns of both receiving and sending countries must be reflected. In the case of Malaysia, the increasing numbers of migrant workers have given rise to cases of highly communicable diseases such as Hepatitis B, tuberculosis and leprosy, all of which were previously under control or eradicated all together. At the same time, the number of crimes committed by migrants has increased three-fold, from 1,333 in 1992 to 3,113 in 2002. We are concerned that the statistics show that 30 to 40 percent of crimes committed by migrants are violent ones.

Madam President,

6. Malaysia has taken various preventive measures to curb illegal migration including through the introduction of the Malaysian Readable Passport (MRP) in 2002. Using MRP, biometric details of outgoing illegal immigrants as well as new incoming legal foreign workers can be recorded in the Immigration Department's database as reference against illegal entries and other immigration offences. Such information are vital to ensure that the welfare of foreign workers in the country are safeguarded as well as assisting authorities against criminal and terrorist activities carried out by migrants.

7. In the same vein, the issue of remittances is a crucial one for migrants. In this connection, I wish to emphasise that Malaysia imposes

no restriction on workers remitting money back home. As to the figures, in 2002, 1.2 million foreign workers remitted US\$640 million. In 2005, 1.8 million remitted US\$768 million. As to the human rights of migrants, despite isolated cases of abuse, foreign workers enjoy full protection of their human rights under Malaysian law.

Madam President,

8. Like other countries, Malaysia is concerned at the issue of trafficking in persons. While we have made some inroads in addressing this issue, we note that two major difficulties exist. One, is the difficulty in distinguishing between genuine victims and those who knowingly allow themselves to be trafficked for economic gain. Two, is the lack of resources for destination countries to repatriate the victim on a voluntary basis.

9. I would like to conclude by touching on the issue of the follow-up to the High Level Dialogue. As a firm believer in the multilateral process, we believe that the UN is the best forum for discussing global issues, which include international migration and development. At the same time, clarity is required as to the follow-up process itself, lest it be duplicative and ineffective and does not do justice to this important issue. We therefore have an open mind on this issue and look forward to playing a constructive role in the ensuing discussions.

Thank you.