Statement by Mr. Abdelhamid El Jamri, Chair of the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families to the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention

30 March 2013

As Chair of the Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the States parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families for their efforts in implementing this most important Convention as well as undertaking other measures to protect the human rights of migrant works.

Migrant workers throughout the world continue to suffer systematic discrimination and violations of their basic human rights. Migrant workers in an irregular situation are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse as are members of their families. Some of these abuses, including slavery, forced labour, torture and other inhuman treatment, violence, threats, intimidation, discrimination, and lack of due process are featured in the news on a regular basis. Such abuses are of course shocking and disturbing.

The world community must strengthen the international treaty framework to protect migrants from such abuses. In 2010, the total number of international migrants in the world was estimated at 214 million. International migration will only increase as men, women and youth from less developed economies continue to seek better opportunities in countries with more developed economies. In addition, the patterns of migration are changing and becoming more complex. South-to-South migration is now just as important in volume as South-to-North migration and North-to-South migration is a growing phenomenon.

Migrant workers, including those in an irregular situation, contribute to economic growth and development in both States of origin and States of employment. Last year, according to the World Bank, migrants sent 401 billion dollars to their families in developing countries. By 2015, this figure could rise to over 500 billion dollars. Not only are migrant workers filling gaps in labour markets and contributing economically to the States of employment, they are also lifting whole villages out of poverty back home providing a lifeline to extended families. Migrant workers also make social and cultural contributions to societies in countries or origin and destination. Migration is an important economic and social phenomenon, a mega trend, as well as a fundamentally human process.

The Committee welcomes the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development as an important opportunity to discuss migration and development as well as the need to highlight the human rights of migrant workers during the Dialogue. The Committee hopes that these discussions will lead to a human rights-based approach to migration at the national level as well as encourage more States to consider becoming party to the Convention evidencing to the international community their commitment to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.

The Committee would also like to highlight a number of activities which may interest the States parties. At its 18th session held in April 2013, the Committee adopted general comment no. 2 on the rights of migrant workers in an irregular situation and members of their families in order to provide guidance to States parties on implementing Part III of the Convention. The Committee also held a half-day general discussion on the role of migration statistics for treaty reporting and migration policy. Over 75 participants attended including representatives of the Permanent Missions, specialized agencies and other entities, non-governmental organizations and academia.

As you may be aware, the Committee has adopted a fixed reporting calendar and the simplified reporting procedure as well as a procedure whereby it can review the implementation of the Convention in a State party in the absence of a report in cases of long overdue reports. These initiatives are part of the recommendations stemming from the High Commissioner’s Report on Treaty Body Strengthening, which the Committee also adopted at its eighteenth session, including the Addis Ababa Guidelines on the independence and impartiality of treaty body members. As part of the fixed reporting calendar, the Committee will be reviewing 45 States parties over a 5 year cycle, which will increase its workload considerable from currently reviewing 4 to 5 States a year to reviewing 9 States a year. The review of 9 States parties and the adoption of concluding observations thereon would be in addition to the adoption of lists of issues to update reports submitted by States parties as well as lists of issues prior to reporting or in the absence of a report, which together with their replies would constitute the reports of the States parties under article 73 of the Convention.

In order to effectively implement the reporting calendar, the Committee will be requesting an additional week of meeting time in 2014 and 2015 for a total of four weeks per year. The Committee would very much like your support regarding this request as it will come before the General Assembly this year.

The Committee would like to thank the States parties for this opportunity and we wish you luck with the election of members to the Committee.