CENTER FOR MIGRATION STUDIES

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Conference on International Migration and Development: Continuing the Dialogue Legal and Policy Perspectives

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OPENING REMARKS

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Deputy Secretary-General Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Mr. Brunson McKinley, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, let me wish you a Happy New Year. I sincerely hope that 2008 will be a good year for everyone, especially the many people are living under difficult and troubling circumstances. We certainly wish them improved lives in this New Year.

I would like to join Brunson McKinley in welcoming all of you to this Conference. We are very pleased and honored to be working with Mr. McKinley and his colleagues at IOM, which as you know, is the leading international organization addressing international migration matters.

At this point, I would to thank Dearfield Associates for their important financial contribution to the convening of this Conference at this hotel during these two days. Also at this time, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Permanent Missions of Belgium and the Philippines to the United Nations for their active involvement in international migration and convening the first two inter-governmental forums.

Since the establishment of the Center for Migration Studies nearly a half century ago, my colleagues and I at the Center have been focusing on the many critical dimensions of international migration. Our mission has been primarily educational, providing an interdisciplinary approach and international perspective to migration research. In addition to books and our occasional paper series, we publish the journal, International Migration Review, which I'm pleased to say is entering its 42nd year of publication.

This Conference will also result in a joint CMS-IOM publication based on the written remarks of our invited expert speakers. We plan to make this publication available prior to the United Nations debate of international migration and development later this year.

All of us know quite well that international migration is an increasingly critical issue in the world today. The international community, regional groups, individual nations, researchers, non-governmental organizations as well as many other parties are struggling with the question of how best to manage the many dimensions of international migration.

As many of you are aware, several years ago the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan requested the preparation of an internal document to address this very question. Shortly thereafter, the Secretary-General encouraged the launching of the Global Commission on International Migration in December 2003. In October 2005, the report of the Global Commission was presented to the Secretary-General at a ceremony held at the United Nations.

Our organization, in collaboration with Fordham University, organized a Forum at that time reviewing the findings and recommendations of the Commission's report. The publication from that Forum was distributed to United Nations Member States and interested parties, and it is still available to those wishing to have a copy.

Subsequently, as is well known, the United Nations held its High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in September 2006, and this was then followed by the Brussels Forum held last May; and in October the next Forum will be held in Manila. More will be said about these important developments later in this Conference.

During the sessions of today and tomorrow, this Conference will provide an opportunity for us to critically review the outcomes, implications, and achievements of these events. Our focus is on legal and policy perspectives and we wish to have this Conference be a dialogue. We have invited expert speakers who will help us undertake this critical review, in particular the strengths and shortcomings of these events.

Also, we will be addressing the following important question: "Where should we be heading in the coming years?" In addition to the invited speakers, we are fortunate to have many knowledgeable participants among the audience who will certainly enrich the discussion.

Finally, I wish to thank all of you for attending this Conference and wish you success in your work in the increasingly vital issue of international migration and development.

Thank you very much.