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**STATEMENT BY MR. ULADZIMIR MARHEVICH,
CHIEF INSPECTOR AT THE DEPARTMENT OF CITIZENSHIP AND
MIGRATION OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BELARUS, AT PART II OF THE 17th OSCE MEETING
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**“Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and
environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the
OSCE region”**

**Session VI: Strengthening regional and inter-State co-operation in the
area of migration management for the benefit of stability and security**

**Co-operation of the Republic of Belarus with other States to combat illegal migration
and associated criminal activity**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I should like to thank the keynote speakers for their interesting statements.

It is a generally accepted fact today that illegal migration is closely linked with a number of other social phenomena that have long been objects of attention both at the intra-State and the international level. These phenomena also include the institution of refugees, the use of political asylum, the connection with transnational organized crime, international terrorism, trafficking in human beings and many other factors.

From being a secondary phenomenon, illegal migration has joined the ranks of global problems. It has become a challenge to the world community whose scale and possible ramifications could present a serious threat to international stability and the sustainable development of countries.

The changes in the global geopolitical situation in the last few years and the current world economic crisis provide a background to the steady annual increase in the amount of illegal migration. The high mobility of the populations of the different countries of the world is conditioned by the widening gap between developed and developing countries in terms of living standard, well-being, culture and public health.

The successful combating of illegal migration depends in many ways not only on the political will and the ability of countries to effectively prevent it but also on international and regional co-operation in this field.

The legal basis for co-operation in combating illegal migration in the Republic of Belarus is formed by universal conventions, bilateral and multilateral agreements and national legislation.

Co-operation by the Republic of Belarus in countering illegal migration exists at the bilateral, regional and international level between States (within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the European Union and others) and with international organizations (the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the OSCE).

Belarus is a party to the international agreements on migration concluded within the CIS. It has also acceded to the international instruments concluded under the auspices of the United Nations.

Belarus is both a destination country and a transit country for illegal migrants. Most of the illegal migrants to Belarus are bound for the countries of the European Union.

The countries of origin of illegal migrants passing through Belarus to the European Union are Vietnam, Pakistan, China, Cameroon, India, Iraq and Sri Lanka.

The country has acquired considerable experience recently in preventing illegal migration. Specifically, national legislation and law enforcement practices have been established and there has been successful international co-operation resulting in international technical assistance projects in this area.

The Department of Citizenship and Migration was created within the Ministry of the Interior in December 2003 to co-ordinate the work of the ministries and agencies involved in monitoring migration processes and combating illegal migration.

In 2007, an international training centre was opened within the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior for the training, advanced training and retraining of personnel in migration issues and the prevention of trafficking in human beings.

Given the complex nature of present-day migration processes, the interrelations as they apply to the countries of Eastern and Western Europe and also the objective need to elaborate effective measures for concerted management of these processes, we firmly believe that there is a need to develop and strengthen international co-operation to combat illegal migration.

We can safely say that if the law enforcement agencies of the various countries do not adopt all-embracing measures together to stop illegal migration, the countries of destination, transit and origin could in the near future experience the real and tangible political, economic and social consequences of this illicit activity.

Unilateral efforts to secure the borders of destination countries of illegal migration result in more and more people turning to representatives of criminal organizations to arrange illegal passage across State borders.

In countries where illegal passage is part of the “business” of transnational criminal organizations, the existence and activities of these organizations in themselves can already create a serious problem for public safety. The threats experienced by countries of destination and transit are notable for the fact that the latter do not suffer any long-term consequences of an increasing number of permanent illegal migrant communities but rather that in the majority of cases these problems are either temporary or latent. Transit countries are faced with serious problems through the growth in crime, for example, in places where the final stage in the illegal passage of migrants is organized.

Most often it is in the transit countries that forged travel documents or identity papers are made or acquired, officials and transporters are bribed to organize the illegal border crossing and some of financial resources acquired by criminal means are laundered.

Loopholes in national legislation and the slight risk of being arrested and prosecuted in comparison with the financial rewards for organizing illegal migration are the main factors that encourage transnational criminal organizations to operate in this area.

Experience has shown that it is not enough to organize this work in just one country. Experts often compare the phenomenon of illegal migration with the mythical Hydra who grows two new heads whenever one is cut off. Such is the case with illegal migration as well: no sooner has one channel for the passage of migrants been closed than two new ones, more sophisticated and better concealed, have to be confronted.

It is for this reason that this negative social phenomenon can be countered only through the concerted efforts of all countries involved – the countries of origin, transit and destination – and international organizations. The establishment, development and fine-tuning of international and regional co-operation and also the devising of a unified concerted strategy within the States are essential to success in this area.

There is a need for an approach that is constructive, open and non-political.

Thank you for your attention.