



1 July 2003

**Panel to celebrate the entry into force of
the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant
Workers
and Members of Their Families**

**Statement by the Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights
Bertrand Ramcharan**

Distinguished members of the Panel,
Ladies and gentlemen,

When I participated in the parallel event during the 59th session of the Commission on Human Rights to give a boost to the need for ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, I expressed the satisfaction of the Office of the High Commissioner and my personal satisfaction in noting that the Convention had received the twenty ratifications necessary for its entry into force, and that according to the relevant provisions of the Convention, the date of the entry into force would be on 1 July 2003. Today, I wish to thank the twenty States which allowed the activation of the implementation procedure of the Convention and which, since March 2003, have been joined by two other States. All of them are parties to the Convention as from today.

The Convention was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the General Assembly in December 1990. It took more than 12 years to reach the number of adherences required to put in motion this new international legal machinery to strengthen the protection of migrant workers and their families.

In this connection, let me express my deep appreciation of the work accomplished by the Steering Committee of the Global Campaign for Ratification of the Convention. The enthusiasm and cooperation generated by the campaign for ratification has involved United Nations agencies, the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, Gabriela Rodriguez, non-governmental organizations, and civil society at large, including religious communities. Many of these invaluable supporters of the Convention are represented in this meeting today. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is, of course, a part of the campaign and, like all of you, I am here because I care deeply about the Convention and I wish to see this

treaty fully operative as soon as possible. May I just recall that in its resolution 2003/48, this year the Commission on Human Rights welcomed the increasing activities of the global campaign for the entry into force of the Convention and invited organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to continue and intensify their efforts with a view to disseminating information on the Convention and promoting understanding of the importance of this treaty.

Why is this treaty so important?

In his message for the International Migrants Day, on 18 December 2002, the Secretary General pointed out that:

"Immigrants and refugees should not – and must not – be seen as a burden. Those who risk their lives and those of their families are often those with the greatest ambition to make a better life for themselves, and they are willing to work for it. They do not leave their familiar surroundings, their culture or their families for a life of dependence, crime or discrimination thousands of kilometres away. They merely want a safer, more prosperous future for their children. If they are given a chance to make the most of their abilities, on an equal basis, the vast majority of them will be assets to society."

We should not forget that migrants give important and valuable economic, social and cultural contributions in both their countries of origin and countries of destination. The recognition of their rights according to the international standards established by the Convention is conducive to economic and social stability as well as cultural enrichment.

The Convention will assist in securing a protective international mechanism of the human rights of migrants, including those in irregular situations. If States manage migratory flows in a manner that is respectful of human rights of migrants, a climate of non confrontation and a feeling of security will grow in society.

By defining migrant workers and their basic rights, the Convention seeks to play a role in preventing and eliminating the exploitation of all migrant workers and members of their families throughout the entire migration process. In particular, it seeks to put an end to the illegal or clandestine recruitment and trafficking of migrant workers and to discourage their employment in an irregular or undocumented situation.

The promotion of the Convention has to be considered as an additional effort to affirm the rule of law, in particular for those groups like migrants who are too often exposed to abuse and denial of their rights. Rule of law and democracy have to be strengthened under the present conditions of globalization. I should like to encourage you to work together so that the international standards aimed at protecting those involved in the global phenomenon of migration also become globally and universally respected.

On this day, I would like, once more, to pay tribute to the memory of Antonio Gonzalez de Leon who played such a vital role in the drafting of the Convention.

