Honorable Vice President and Members of the European Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a great honour and a pleasure to welcome you at this event to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.
- I would like to thank all the European Parliamentarians who agreed to participate in this event for their support, and I would also like to thank our civil society partners, December 18, for their major contribution to the organisation of this event. I would also like to thank EU Member States (Spain) participating in this event as well as representatives from a number of State Parties to the Convention (Mexico, The Philippines).
- This anniversary is, of course, one which gives reason for reflection rather than for celebration, given that the Convention has not been ratified by any of the European Union Member States and that the effective protection for the human rights of migrant workers in Europe still requires our attention in view of the challenges ahead. But it should not be a reason for resignation.
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recognizes human rights in the context of migration as one of her global priorities – and indeed, various issues linked to migration are inevitably among the key challenges which the Regional Office of Europe has been addressing in its first year of existence (including a colloquium on the rights of migrant domestic workers in May and the support to the HC as the Chairperson of the Global Migration Group).
- We are fully convinced that adherence to international instruments and the cooperation with the relevant human rights mechanisms is of key
importance in this context. Therefore, we have been actively supporting the creation of a new ILO Convention and Recommendation on domestic work (which does not cover only migrants, of course, but in the European Union it concerns mostly migrant women...) and emphasizing the need to address migration issues in the context of the other international human rights instruments and mechanisms.

- And therefore, we will to continue to call for the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families. The ratification of the Convention and the participation in the work of the Committee monitoring its implementation would certainly be extremely useful for sharing views and concerns with the rest of the State parties in addressing the challenges faced by migrants all over the world because migration is a global phenomenon.

- I would like to stress that this is not just a position of the United Nations’ Human Rights Office, but of the UN as a whole. Indeed, the Secretary General himself, Ban Ki-moon, mentioned the issue of human rights of migrants and the non-ratification of the ICMRW, in his recent major speech to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg:

  Here in Europe, ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families has been disappointing. Twenty years after it was adopted, none of Europe's largest and most wealthy powers have signed or ratified it. In some of the world's most advanced democracies among nations that take just pride in their long history of social progressiveness migrants are being denied their basic human rights.

- In our view, the lack of ratification on part of EU Member States is increasingly problematic for the European Union. At a time when the EU itself is making the groundbreaking move of becoming party to an international human rights instrument – the much more recent Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – the contrast with the absence of ratification of the ICRMW is increasing. This situation creates an unfavourable impression that European States, similarly to others in the world, are selective about human rights which they wish to uphold and those which they ignore.
• As the EU and its Member States often – and rightly – encourage their partners in other parts of the world to embrace international human rights treaties, projecting an appearance of selectiveness on their own part is very unfortunate. It casts doubts on the consistency between the internal and external policies of the EU and its Member States, thus undermining the credibility of their human rights policies worldwide. Indeed, apart from bona fide criticism by relevant human rights instruments, the failure to ratify this Convention also provides a cheap rhetorical weapon for those Governments who are themselves receiving the critical attention of the EU and its Member States concerning their human rights records.

• Taking all these aspects into account, we will continue to argue that ratification of the ICRMW is essential not only for the effective protection of the rights of migrant workers on the territory of the EU – which is obviously our primary concern – but also for the effective pursuit of European human rights policy on the global scene, including areas which are not even related to migration.

• However, ratification and engagement with the human rights mechanisms at the international level represent just one area for potential action. It is equally important how the rights of migrant workers are protected in the regional and national legal frameworks. For this reason we have decided to carry out an up-date analysis of the most recent relevant developments that could help in advancing discussions in the region. Our consultant Marie d’Auchamp will present a draft study of recent developments in migration legislation and policy both on a European level and in several Member States (plus one non-Member State, Norway) and their linkages with the provisions in the Convention. And although the picture is mixed, there is some good news, too; at least some of the gaps are narrowing, particularly due to development of EU policies and legislation concerning legal migration.

• In the new set-up after the Lisbon Treaty, it is clear that the European Parliament has a major role to play not just by continuing to making its voice in favor of ratification heard, but also by contributing ever more
tangibly to the further development of EU migration legislation. The formulation of more human-rights-conscious policies on European level can result not only in improvements for migrant workers and their families on the ground, but also in creating better conditions for the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.

• Thank you for your attention.