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130th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 16 – 20.3.2014

PANEL DISCUSSION ON PROMOTING THE CHILD'S BEST INTEREST: THE CASE OF MIGRANT CHILDREN

*19 March 2014 (2-4 p.m.)
(Room A, Annex CCV, CICG)*

Concept note

International migration has grown exponentially in recent decades. Globalization and economic development have benefited from migration trends while at the same time fuelling them. Today, over 210 million migrants live outside their country of birth.

While the context of migration has evolved and workers are forced to seek employment abroad due to new reasons such as climate change and the disruption of livelihoods that are dependent on ecosystems, their motivation remains the same, namely: securing a better life elsewhere for themselves and their families.

Children are affected by migration on multiple levels: when they migrate with their parents (or are born abroad), when they migrate alone or when they are left behind by one or both migrating parents.

Migration can offer children significant opportunities in an environment that places their interests at its core. Effective migration policies therefore need to be accompanied by investments in health, education and social protection to ensure that children can indeed reap the benefits of migration.

As part of their mandate to defend the rights of the most vulnerable, parliamentarians should be at the forefront of efforts to protect the best interests of migrant children, hence the decision to organize a panel discussion on this topic at the 130th IPU Assembly.

More concretely, the panel discussion aims to:

- (1) Inform legislators of current trends in child migration, the opportunities and challenges that come with such migration and essential steps to offer a better future to migrant children;
- (2) Facilitate an exchange of views on what parliaments and their members can do to address the challenges posed by child migration, particularly through their law-making, policy-shaping and oversight powers;
- (3) Discuss different ways of mobilizing parliamentarians across the world, sharing best practices and promoting cooperation among parliamentarians and between parliaments and other stakeholders involved.

The panel discussion will be led by experts on migrant children, including representatives of UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and civil society, and leading members of parliament.