Position Paper for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The issues to be discussed in this intergovernmental body are: Social Development and Migration Development in Afghanistan; Gender and Migration; and Addressing trafficking in human beings (THB). For the Republic of Korea as a liberal free democracy, it is engaged in preventing uncoordinated escapes, assisting rejected asylum seekers and refugees, distributing people in different acceptance-countries, disseminating information, implementing return programs and refugee-reintegration by co-operation with the United Nations.

I. Social Development and Migration Development in Afghanistan

The Social Development and Migration Development in Afghanistan includes the Bonn Agreement (1999) which is about the Afghan political future, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. The government of the Republic of Korea wants to support UN’s efforts in Afghanistan and fully concurs with Security Council Resolution SC/Res/1401 (2002). Fighting against terrorism in Afghanistan, arising from September 11th attacks in New York, the Republic of Korea sent Navy and Air Force transportation corps to Afghanistan that fought on side of UN-Allies in 2001. Furthermore we assisted a team of military medical experts in 2002. In January 2003 the government decided to send 150 military engineers to Afghanistan. The next step in normalizing the situation after removing the Taliban-regime from power will be sending non-combat troops to the country that will extend the civilian assistance after building bases for fighting Allies-troops.

In order to solve the exacerbating problems of refugees, our Republic contributed US$ 12 million to different organizations like the UN Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and numerous non-governmental organizations.

The Republic of Korea is prepared to provide long term assistance for the people of Afghanistan, including the protection of aid workers and the coordination among peacekeeping troops and humanitarian organizations. To underline our efforts the Korean government will contribute US$ 45 million until June 2005, divided into humanitarian measures and infrastructure, to reconstruct Afghanistan. Humanitarian measures include health, sanitation, construction of schools and vocational training centers. Our support for infrastructure consists of developing-assistance in telecommunication, Information Technology, road repair and bridge constructions. In its extraordinary constrainment Afghanistan needs particularly help from industrialized countries. The Korean government provided immediate aid in March 2002, when an earthquake killed more than 4,000 people and destroyed houses and infrastructure.

II. Gender and Migration

Growing international migration is a problem, which the IOM has to coordinate. An alarming trend is the ‘feminization’ of migration. Nearly 80 percent of the migrants, seeking refuge abroad, are women and children, fleeing from traumatic home country conditions or economic circumstances. In the opinion of the Korean government it is an intolerable act to abuse these individuals as this undermines the basic tenets of morality and neutrality.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the initiatives of the UNHCR, introduced by the General Assembly report A/57/36 (2002), to improve the protection and aid for refugee women and children. The main issues in this report are to prevent gender-based violence in their home country, while fleeing and in refugee-camps, or in countries of asylum. In addition, to the protection of refugees our government ensured personnel support to the UNHCR and other international relief agencies which give humanitarian assistance under precarious circumstances. We also maintain the goals of the UNHCR report to involve women in the management and distribution to improve the role of women in conflict situations.

The UN Refugee agency reports that worldwide twenty percent of women are victims of rapes and 16.4 million women today live with HIV/AIDS. It is in the responsibility of the Korean government to protect women and girls, who are particularly vulnerable to get the virus. This problem can be resolved through free medical examination and treatment for illegal women immigrants, special care for mothers and appropriate immunization for children. To prevent the further
spreading of HIV/AIDS the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare informs people through health education programs and implements an effective HIV/AIDS control program including strengthening HIV tests and paying careful attention to the safe handling of blood products.

As a tolerant progressive nation the Republic of Korea established the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001. It protects women’s human rights by planning and coordinating policies concerning women, promoting gender equality, fostering human resource development of women and taking measures to eliminate violence against women. With the support of this ministry counseling centers and shelters for victims of sexual and domestic violence had been established nationwide. Through the ‘women’s hotline’ the violence can be reported from anywhere in the country and the victims can be recommended to one of these shelters. Moreover our government enacted laws for the prevention of sexual violence, the punishment of domestic violence and the protection of victims.

Korean people welcome the United Nations efforts to stop the culture of impunity. It is necessary to list the crime of rape in the Statutes of the International Criminal Tribunals, International Criminal Courts and to establish a capable system of reporting on violence against women and girls and their exploitation. The effect would be a signal that gender-based violence will be prosecuted in the same way like resemble félonies. The Republic of Korea urges all countries to implement national measures in their policies.

This vanguard position in protecting women’s rights is the base for combating the causes of gender-based migration in affected countries. The Republic of Korea constantly provides emergency and humanitarian relief aid for developing countries, wars and crises and post phases of natural disasters.

An example for the prevention of migration can be found in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula where the Organization Okedongmu Children in Korea sent powdered milk, bean-oil, medicine and diapers worth about US$ 1 million to North Korean children since 1996. Our government also supports economic rehabilitation as an aim of the ‘Sunshine Policy’ towards North Korea.

Furthermore our government is engaged in Afghanistan’s difficult post-war situation and assists the country after earthquake damages in March 2002 with supports to reconstruct houses as a shelter for affected people and assured US$ 45 million as a long-time support. In Addition, our republic founded a nutrition program for children and women in the beginning of 2003, which ensured food supply and medical care as well as preventing winter diseases.

The Republic of Korea is interested in global stability and development, which depends on the containment of forced migration, including women’s equality. For this reason all governments should continue to work closely with international agencies like the IOM and their member states, to find comprehensive solutions against the plight of migrants.

### III. Addressing trafficking in human beings (THB)

Annually more than 700,000 human beings are affected by trafficking. The business with people from poorer countries is the fastest growing part of organized crime. Trafficking human beings is defined as the recruitment, transportation, and harboring of migrants for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. The UN Global Programme against THB has the difficult task to combat the well-organized business and to provide social assistance for the victims.

At the start of the Second World War approximately 160,000 Korean women were forced to work in Japanese ‘comfort houses’. There they were raped, beaten and tortured by soldiers. Surviving victims urge the Japanese government for an excuse for suffering mental, physical and sexual harm. As a result of experiences of Korean women, our government is willing to combat any kind of THB.

The Republic of Korea works on several solutions to handle the problem of trafficking human beings. In a similar way it is mentioned in the US Trafficking in Persons Report about the Republic of Korea from 2001 with the crucial difference that it is untrue that Korea is a country of origin or transit for trafficking human beings. Several women from Asian nations are willing to flee from their native land and work in western countries like the United States of America, Japan and in states of the European Union. Due to the fact that the Republic of Korea faces the problem of trafficked women coming in from the Philippines, Russia and several other poor Asian nations, the whole US report became noticed as a negatively depiction in the Korean government. Moreover the mentioned women use legal ways to leave their country, which poses the question if they are victims of trafficking.

One of the serious problems is the plight of foreign women in the sex industry, as prostitutes or as low-paid workers with abusive employers, as Mr. Chwu-Le Hu-Pe, member of the Ministry of Labour, stated. To register the number of trafficked women the Korean government works closely together with local non-governmental organizations and the IOM offices. In the Republic of Korea 5,000 women have been working illegally in the sex industry since the mid-1990s. The listing of official statistics is the basis for information campaigns, technical assistance in returning to their native land or for integration in the Korean society.

Another reason for THB in the Republic of Korea is the intra-regional labor migration from South-East Asia. During the last decade we marked an increasing number of migrant workers, including 270,000 illegal employees in 2002. Most of them are ethnic Koreans from China. Others came from countries such as India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and several states of the former Soviet Union. In 1993 our government introduced the Industrial and Technical Training Programme for Foreigners, based on a Japanese model. It contains improvements for foreign workers who perform low-paid unskilled jobs. All Korean workers have the right to join the three basic rights as unionizing, collective bargaining and collective action. The foreign workers by now have the same rights.

Our Nation welcomes renewed efforts of the international community to combat the growing inhuman part of illegal action.