Remarks by Mr Charles Dan Special Representative of the ILO on Youth and Social Inclusion

Dear Excellencies,
Dear Ambassador Dr A.K. Abdul Momen,
Dear Jean-Pierre Gonot,
Dear Gianni Rosas,
Dear Panellists,
Dear Young Participants,
Dear colleagues,
Dear friends,

It is a privilege for me to address this important event on youth migration and development which marks the 2013 United Nations International Youth Day.

Today, 214 million people live outside their country of origin. This is more than at any time in history. Almost half of these international migrants are women. And one in eight is a young migrant aged 15 to 24.

As mentioned by the ILO Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder, in his Statement for this Youth Day, we should acknowledge the significant contribution of young migrant workers to the economic and social advances in their countries of origin as well as destination.

For young people, the decision to migrate is often related to important life transitions, such as obtaining higher education, starting work or getting married.

Stirred by hope and in search of decent work opportunities, youth also migrate to improve their lives and support their families.

The economist John Kenneth Galbraith referred to migration as the oldest action against poverty for most of human history ("The Economics of Mass Poverty", 1979).

In the world, four out of ten unemployed persons are young women and men. Many more are in the informal economy, under-employed or working-poor: 228 million young people earn less than 2 US Dollars per day.
The global youth unemployment crisis is currently driving millions of young people to think about or decide to migrate.

But labour migration can lead young people into precariousness, poor working conditions and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or religion. In the worst cases, migration can trap vulnerable young women or men into human trafficking and forced labour.

Young people should be able to realize their potential, meet their needs, exercise their human rights and fulfil their aspirations in their country of origin.

For young people, migration should be a possibility, not a necessity.

With the right set of policies, the benefits of youth international migration can be harnessed, and its negative impacts reduced.

The 2012 ILO’s Call for Action on youth employment and the wide range of international labour standards are important tools that can guide decision-makers in designing and implementing youth employment and migration policies.

Let me focus here on three key policy dimensions of youth migration: competences, care and communication.

**First, competences**: millions of young people are ready or preparing themselves to shape the world. In many cases international migration can allow young workers to get a better job, gain experience or acquire skills which can benefit themselves, their countries of destination and their communities of origin.

**Second, care**: countries of origin need to put in place efficient and fair recruitment systems and ensure that potential migrants have access to pre-departure information, training and adequate protection. Destination countries should ground their admissions’ policies on sound labour market analysis. They should also take into account the rights and social protection of young migrant workers’, while guaranteeing equal treatment with other workers.

**Third, communication**: today’s celebration provides a major opportunity for everyone - national governments, employers’ organizations, trade unions, international partners and youth-led organizations - to foster the dialogue on how to secure decent work for youth, including for potential and returning migrants. And everywhere, we need to condemn and address the problems and particular abuses women often face in the
migration process. We need to ensure that labour migration policies are gender-sensitive.

Each of you has something that only you can give to the world by being responsive to inequalities and injustices - including through the use of internet and social media.

You are celebrating this International Youth Day with us because you believe. You believe that a better world is possible. You believe that we can improve the situation of young migrants worldwide. You believe that your opinion can make a difference.

Let me tell you one thing: you are right.

Your voices count. Every voice counts to give respect, rights, protection and recognition to young migrants around the world.

Thank you so much for your attention.