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**Thematic discussion on the theme “Violence against
migrants, migrant workers and their families”**

Statement submitted by the International Sociological Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The International Sociological Association (www.isa-sociology.org) was founded in 1949 under the auspices of UNESCO. Its goal is to represent sociologists everywhere and to advance sociological knowledge throughout the world. Its 5,000 members come from 167 countries. The ISA has partnered with Criminologists Without Borders (www.criminologists-without-borders.org) to produce a review of the scientific, academic literature on violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families, which is summarized in this statement. Criminologists Without Borders is a registered non-profit organization which provides objective information and research to inform policy and programmes dealing with crime and criminal justice.

I. Scope of Violence Against Migrants, Migrant Workers and their Families

Broad search terms were used to conduct our search, including migrant, immigrant, refugee, settler, émigré, emigrant, transient, foreign worker, alien, migrant worker, family of migrant workers, coupled with [violence, victimization, threats, harassment, hate] and [programme, help, assistance, resources], in various languages, from 2000-2011. Our reference list at the end of this statement is broadly representative of the extensive literature on this topic. “Violence” includes crimes against the person as well as labour exploitation, intentional negligence, human trafficking, hate crime, xenophobia, discrimination and racism (as per paragraph 38 of the Salvador Declaration). Some common forms of violence repeatedly mentioned in the literature include: harassment, extortion, threats of and actual physical violence; and gender-based violence against migrant women as well as within migrant families. Violence is also directed at migrant children, through forced labour or discrimination or abuse in social situations or in school.

II. Risk Factors for Victimization by Violence

Available research shows some common findings and themes:

(a) Denial of rights and irregular status, as well as economic and social marginalization, are related to risk for violent victimization of migrant workers and their families (3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 16, 19, 27, 28, 30);

(b) Intolerance (including racism and xenophobia), exacerbated by political instability, is associated with higher rates of violence towards certain groups of migrant workers and their families (1, 4, 6, 20, 19, 21, 23);

(c) Impunity towards perpetrators of violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families, coupled with the fear felt by victims for reporting these crimes (7), means that it is difficult to establish the characteristics of offenders: these characteristics include native born individuals, employers, other migrants (especially in the case of domestic violence), organized criminal groups as well as, in some contexts, corrupt or discriminatory State actors (4, 6, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 30);

(d) Health and welfare needs: Criminal justice, social welfare, labour, health and educational institutions that are not sensitive to the particular needs of migrants, migrant workers and their families are more likely to be negligent in providing effective services, which can result in violent victimization (2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 18, 25, 30);

(e) Violent victimization occurs at high rates at the workplace for migrant workers (7, 10, 16, 17, 19, 25, 26, 27, 28), and there are also high prevalence rates of domestic violence within some migrant families (2, 14, 18, 29).

III. Research Gaps

The obstacles to presenting well rounded findings are that there is:

- (a) More research on victims than on perpetrators;
- (b) Less research on men than on women;
- (c) Little research on families. Research on children as family members is focused more on access to health care (including mental health) than on violent victimization;
- (d) Less research on migrants than on immigrants, and less research on violence in the country of origin or in the migratory process than at destination;
- (e) Little literature on prosecution/criminal justice effectiveness;
- (f) Little evaluation literature on prevention programmes/legislation/policy, particularly victim or offender treatment programmes, or on repatriation of victimized migrant workers;
- (g) Little information for Africa, Latin America/Caribbean or Australia. Despite a boom in literature in the 1980s and 1990s, there exists a dearth of recent literature although a resurgence of interest is evident for 2010 onwards;
- (h) Little cross-national comparative quantitative data.

Given the current state of knowledge about violence against migrants, migrant workers and their families, Member States need to invest in domestic and cross-national research efforts in order to be able to plan appropriate interventions.

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