



United States Mission to the OSCE

Special Permanent Council Meeting on Migration

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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I would like to start by expressing our sincere gratitude to Ambassador Claude Wild for chairing the Informal Working Group on Migration. Ambassador Wild, you have demonstrated leadership, conducted the working group in an open and transparent way, involved international partners and civil society, and worked tirelessly. Congratulations. The United States deeply appreciates your efforts and welcomes the report's comprehensive analysis and thoughtful recommendations.

Mr. Chair, the Informal Working Group set out to accomplish several objectives: to provide an overview of what the OSCE is already doing, to identify the main dimensions of a comprehensive OSCE approach, to identify new areas of action and policy guidance, and to identify areas of enhanced dialogue and engagement. The report and its recommendations meet all of these objectives and provide a set of clear, concrete decisions, actions, and measures for the OSCE.

Without question, there is an important role for the OSCE. As a regional cooperative security organization, the OSCE is in a unique position to improve cooperation to make migration safe and orderly and enhance protection practices in OSCE participating States. Many of the OSCE executive structures and field missions are already active, within their mandates, on humane migration management and combatting trafficking in human beings. The OSCE has important convening power, as Ambassador Wild has said, to bring countries affected by the migration crisis together, enable more effective cooperation, and facilitate the sharing of information to assist law enforcement. And as OSCE participating States, we have all made a number of important commitments regarding the human rights of migrants and refugees, including those reflected in the Helsinki Final Act.

As Ambassador Wild's report detailed, this phenomenon is truly a multi-dimensional, cross-cutting challenge that will affect security throughout the OSCE for the foreseeable future. As a global community, our first and foremost response should always be to focus on saving lives, providing timely humanitarian assistance, and ensuring that the human rights of all migrants and refugees are respected. At the same time, we must also include responses related to law enforcement, border security and management, as well as comprehensive measures to identify and assist victims of human trafficking. If not, we will face a growing threat from transnational organized crime to security and stability in the OSCE region.

Equally important, however, is the threat to security that arises when the human rights and needs of migrants and refugees are not respected. When migrants and refugees are treated inhumanely and violence against them goes unpunished, security is undermined. When we fail to successfully welcome new arrivals into our communities, labor markets, and societies, xenophobia increases and stability is threatened. We must speak out publicly against alarmist and extremist anti-immigrant rhetoric, which sows division in our societies. Make no mistake – respecting human rights and fostering tolerance and non-discrimination are crucial to our security and stability. For these reasons, the United States supports Ambassador Wild’s assessment that the OSCE needs an approach that is comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained and is part of a systematic global effort.

An important recommendation from Ambassador Wild on behalf of the Informal Working Group is the appointment of a Special Representative on Migration. There is a clear need to coordinate our Organization’s work on migration and refugees – someone who can work in collaboration with other special representatives, use this Organization’s convening power to bring together different participating States and partners, and synchronize efforts in all three dimensions of security. We support exploring how an OSCE Special Representative on Migration could develop this internal coordination, track progress on the report’s recommendations, and coordinate externally with organizations such as UNHCR and IOM. Simply stated, there is a great deal of work to be done to prepare our Organization for this long-term challenge, and we need to identify a clear role and resources for someone who would be responsible for coordinating a large body of migration-related work.

We welcome the recommendation in the report that a ministerial decision or declaration be adopted this year to reaffirm OSCE principles and commitments related to migration and refugees. We recognize that such a consensus-based document would communicate the importance of the issue, and highlight the OSCE’s response. But, we should not wait until the Ministerial Council meets in December in Hamburg before taking action. We should take immediate steps to reinforce and build upon activities that are already taking place, and take further steps that are within the capacity of the OSCE. It is time to act now.

Mr. Chair, a number of recommendations in the report can be implemented immediately. Just a few examples:

- The CPC and OSCE field missions should intensify their migration-related work, including through joint regional activities with other international organizations, as well as monitoring and early warning.
- The Secretary General should engage with participating States to recruit secondees to work on migration-related projects, reprioritize to have staff dedicated to coordinating migration-related activities, and create a network of migration focal points.

- The OSCE, and in particular ODIHR, can assist participating States with the integration of migrants and refugees.
- OSCE executive structures should increase engagement on migration-related issues with partner organizations.
- The Special Representative and Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings should increase engagement in the protection of victims of trafficking in the context of refugees and migration.
- We should look for opportunities to integrate issues pertaining to effective management of migration with other efforts. For example, the Secretary General has mentioned several times in this forum his intention to bring together mayors from cities from across the OSCE area. Mayors often are doing some of the concrete work - the engineering -- that Ambassador Wild referred to, in terms of helping to integrate refugees and migrants.

On a final note, let me say that in response to the extraordinary global challenge, President Obama will host a Leaders' Summit on Refugees on September 20 at the UN General Assembly in New York. Nations will be asked to make concrete commitments toward expanding the humanitarian safety net and creating more long-term durable opportunities for refugees. In advance of the Summit, the United States is urging other governments to contribute more funding for humanitarian aid operations, to grant more refugees the ability to work lawfully and attend school, and to provide more resettlement opportunities for refugees who cannot safely go home or remain where they are.

The day before the Summit will be the high-level General Assembly event that others have referred to, which will have a broader focus, and our Ukrainian colleague has reminded us today, of course, that there are other issues that should be seen as part of this family of issues of people who are displaced, including Internally Displaced Persons.

In short, we think we are ready to move from Ambassador Wild's enormously valuable fact-finding, input-gathering, analysis phase to a new phase where we use this as a basis for the work ahead.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank the German Chairmanship for recognizing the importance and urgency of the issue of migration and refugees, and for focusing our Organization's attention on developing a comprehensive approach. Thanks again to you, Ambassador Wild. We appreciate your leadership in getting us to this point, and we look forward to continuing our close collaboration.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.