



## **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

### **The Secretariat**

**Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE  
Economic and Environmental Activities**

**Tirana, 17 March 2009**

### **17<sup>TH</sup> OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

“Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region”

### **SECOND PREPARATORY CONFERENCE**

TIRANA, 16-17 March 2009

### **Closing Remarks by**

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**Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Dear colleagues and friends,

I would like to thank you all for your active participation and support during these two days. I would like to take this opportunity to summarize the key points and recommendations discussed throughout the Conference:

In the Introductory session we discussed the links between migration management and economic, social and environmental policies.

As it was pointed out, migration is an engine of growth and economic and social well-being for both countries of origin and destination. In normal times, it is a factor of economic growth in the countries of origin through increased foreign exchange. It contributes to the reduction of household poverty and helps to promote investment in human capital. It also contributes to economic efficiency of the destination countries by increased labour supply and by encouraging job creation through migrant entrepreneurship.

We discussed the current financial and economic crisis. It was noted that there is an unprecedented recession in sectors with a high concentration of migrant workers, especially in the construction sector, as well as a strong push for migrants to return. Preliminary data points to a dramatic reduction of remittances in real terms. So when it comes to the impact of the current financial crisis on migration, the need for a coordinated migration management approach was highlighted.

In this connection, it was recommended that

1. Short term planning should focus on the protection of the most vulnerable. This is translated, among others, into ensuring prevention of discrimination of migrants in host countries, and using cooperative arrangements as a mechanism to prepare for reintegration of returning immigrants.
2. On the other hand, long term planning should focus on developing labour strategies and the adoption of policies and institutional reforms that improve economic development and create employment opportunities. Furthermore, actions should be oriented towards skills improvement through education and vocational training.

In the second session we discussed migrants' contribution to the economies of destination and origin countries as well as the positive impact of migration on the global economy.

We heard that migrants are net contributors to the countries of destination through their generally net-positive fiscal contribution. This was contrary to the common held perception that migrants are "a drain" for host countries. Therefore, given a chance, legal migrants can bring great benefits to both host and origin countries.

We also heard that both origin and destination countries should work to maximise the positive effects of migration to the economic development. This means accepting a new concept of mutually supportive development that should include co-development. Governments should enter into bi-lateral and multilateral agreements that ensures the development of both origin and destination countries.

Also stressed during the session was that remittances help in the capitalization of countries of origin. Therefore, it is important for governments to support this important transfer of funds by undertaking the necessary regulatory reforms that can help to encourage remittance holders and recipients to invest in new businesses, including self employment opportunities. We heard that Albania has undertaken interesting reforms and has been successful in this area.

Moreover, the role of diaspora can be a powerful engine of growth in the private sector. It is important to ensure governments work closely with diaspora communities to benefit from their knowledge and capital.

In session three, the broad agenda of social and labour policy challenges in managing migration was addressed. These concerns involve responsibilities of a wide range of government ministries and agencies, including those addressing labour, employment, education, family welfare, social security, industry and trade, banking and security concerns. We listened to ways and means of protecting and promoting the rights of migrants to achieve equality of treatment and therefore decent economic and social status for both national and foreign workers.

Ensuring decent working conditions, and preventing abuse and exploitation of migrants including through strengthened labour inspection and enforcement of national standards, as well as the promotion of social cohesion are key elements. In particular, it was observed that differential treatment and polarizing national preferences against migrants may encourage xenophobic hostility and violence that then become serious challenges to security and stability in all OSCE participating States. Without quick action and preventative measures,

inter-communal hostility against foreigners can threaten social peace and social cohesion, making it an immediate challenge for governance and law enforcement.

Session four focused on the complex inter-dependencies between migration and environmental factors. It was stressed that there are research, policy and operational gaps concerning the links between environmental change and migration. Therefore, we must try to bridge these gaps by taking a comprehensive, proactive, and co-operative approach.

Also, efforts need to be doubled at both the national and international levels, to raise awareness on the links between climate change and migration. A good example of this is EACH-FOR, a project that is carried out by a number of partners, including the OSCE. Moreover, the OSCE could act as a catalyst to promote better cooperation and help facilitate identification and exchange of best practices.

There was also a call for more reliable and harmonized data for evidence based policy making. This would require local, national and regional co-operation between governments.

The next steps will be for us to carefully assess the contributions and recommendations made at this Conference in preparation of the agenda for the Athens Economic and Environmental Forum to be held on 18-20 May. We are looking forward to continuing the dialogue established in the Forum process on how to improve migration management in order to reduce potential threats to our security and stability, also taking into consideration the challenges raised by the current global economic crisis.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the Albanian Government and, especially to the Minister Nishani, for hosting our second Preparatory Conference, to our OSCE Presence in Albania, especially to our Economic and Environmental Officer, Robert Mangham, and to the Greek OSCE Chairmanship. A special thanks also goes to Florjan Nuri and Enila Hassani from the Ministry of Interior as well as Andrea Gredler and Martina Gadotti-Rodrigues from my Office who all so tirelessly supported us.

Finally, I want to thank all the speakers, moderators, rapporteurs, participants and interpreters for your excellent contributions to our discussions.