

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXEY POLISHCHUK,  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF EUROPEAN  
CO-OPERATION, MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE  
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**Challenges arising from current migration trends**

Mr. Chairperson,

We join in expressing our condolences to the Turkish people in connection with the act of terrorism at Istanbul airport. Among the injured was a citizen of Russia. Many have already linked the act with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which two years ago announced the creation of the so-called Islamic caliphate. In our view, terrorism has no justification.

We are attentively monitoring the migration trends in the world and in the OSCE area – in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the European Union (EU) and North America. Unfortunately, the situation everywhere leaves much to be desired.

In the last two years, attention has been focused on the migration crisis in the EU. In spite of the fact that statistically the Mediterranean-Europe migration corridor is not the largest (accounting for 1.2 million people in 2015/2016), it has become the most politically fraught because of the large number of victims (around 1,500 migrants have died in the Mediterranean Sea) and also the unpreparedness and frequent unwillingness of EU countries to accept refugees.

Experts divide the reasons for migration into two main categories – the attraction of other countries and the need to escape from their own. Both have contributed to the migration crisis in the EU. The political destabilization of their countries, fostered in part by the countries of the EU themselves and by the United States of America, drives migrants from North Africa and the Middle East. Many experts believe that restrictive measures and the well-known agreement between the European Union and Turkey alleviate the symptoms but do not cure the disease.

Major migratory processes are taking place in the CIS area as well, dating back to the break-up of the Soviet Union. The Ukraine-Russia and Kazakhstan-Russia migratory

channels are, respectively, in second and third place in the world rating. Every year 2 to 2.5 times more migrants use these channels than is the case with the EU migration crisis.

Russia is in second place after the United States in terms of the number of migrants, put at around 12 million. Over the last two years, political events in Ukraine, the persecution of those who oppose the coup, oppression of the Russian-speaking population, the economic situation and, finally, the conflict in Donbas have complicated the situation. Since 2014, Russia has taken in 1.5 million refugees from Ukraine, more than half of them children. They are all provided with accommodation, food and medical treatment and they have been able to find work and homes in the regions of Russia. We have acquired a lot of experience in managing migration and share this knowledge. In 2014, the OSCE Secretary General visited Ukrainian refugees in the south of Russia in person and was able to see their living conditions for himself.

By way of comparison, 13.4 per cent of the Ukrainians who from 2014 to 2016 applied for refugee status in the countries of the EU received a positive response. Incidentally, it was Ukraine's greatest "friends", namely Poland (99.4 per cent) and Sweden (97.1 per cent), who were the leaders in refusing.

However, all of Europe's migration problems pale beside the situation in North America. The United States is the absolute world champion by a long chalk when it comes to the number of migrants (45 million), and the largest migration channel is between Mexico and the United States (13 million people). The erection of fences at the border with Mexico is not alleviating the situation.

Our delegation recently raised the question in the Permanent Council of violations of the human rights of migrants in the United States. It was based on information in a report in February by a group of United States and international human rights organizations. Among the violations were mass deportations (in the millions), the harsh treatment of migrants, including children, by the authorities, the poor state of the temporary accommodation centres, inadequate health care, the large number of deaths and the delivery of migrants by the authorities into the hands of modern-day slave traders. We once again urge the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, our main human rights institution, to give this matter its most pressing attention.

A general analysis of these migration trends in different regions in the OSCE area enables us to draw basic conclusions about migration. The following, in our opinion, are the most significant.

Above all, there is a growth in forced illegal migration. It is forced for a number of reasons, in the first place because of political destabilization and coups in the countries of origin taking place as a result of external interference in domestic affairs.

The second conclusion concerns the increase in violations of the human rights of migrants owing to stricter migration policies in the receiving countries, the erection of Mexican fences and Schengen walls and the harsh treatment of refugees, particularly women and children.

I should like to highlight the problem of statelessness in some EU countries, where residents are denied basic rights and effectively put in the position of being refugees in their

own country, where they were born and have lived all their lives. The continued existence of this situation reveals the EU's real attitude to human rights.

Third, the influx of illegal migrants fosters the growth of criminal activity, especially trafficking in human beings, illicit drug trafficking and crimes of a sexual nature.

Radical and extremist elements and foreign terrorist fighters arrive in the OSCE countries together with migrants from conflict regions, which substantially increases the risks of radicalization and terrorism. In the host countries themselves, a rise in extremism and xenophobia among the local population with respect to migrants can be observed.

The problem of the exodus of Christians from the countries of the Middle East and North Africa may be delineated as a separate factor. This is leading to a change in the ethnic and religious make-up of regions directly bordering to the OSCE area. We once again urge that close attention be paid to the subject of discrimination against Christians. This should be considered at a dedicated OSCE conference and discussed at the Ministerial Council meeting in Hamburg in December.

We are pleased to note that the subject of migration challenges is now firmly established on the OSCE agenda. There is an informal working group on migration in Vienna, and a special meeting of the Permanent Council on this theme is planned. Three draft resolutions were submitted at the same time at the session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Tbilisi. The OSCE Security Days in Rome this March also dealt with this topic. Just a few days ago, a new project was launched in Vicenza, Italy, to combat trafficking in human beings along migration routes. The OSCE's activities could make a contribution to the work of the United Nations, in particular in preparation for the meeting on migration in autumn 2016.

We believe that the OSCE's potential could be more actively exploited. We should concert our efforts to stabilize the situation in the countries of origin, quite a few of which are OSCE partners, to ensure observance of the human rights of migrants and to combat radicalization, crime and terrorism.

Considering the OSCE's experience in engaging civil society, it would make sense to invite to migration meetings not only experts but also representatives of the migrants themselves, who arrive in the United States of America, the EU and Russia from Mexico, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and also Ukraine. Then they could recount their problems in person. We suggest that you think about this.

We believe that discussion of the migration problem should be continued in our Organization and we would be will to play an active role in it.

Thank you for your attention.