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

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Session I: Managing migration in a changing global environment/ Upholding migrants’ rights, dignity and equality of treatment, combating discrimination and xenophobia

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The wording of the last key issue for this session could have been copied/pasted from a CoE doc. Maybe it has but in this case I can only praise its author because it means that OSCE and the CoE are on the same line when dealing with the important issue of how to **Manage migration in a changing global environment**. The CoE as a human rights organisation is convinced that the way forward in managing migration has to include ‘Upholding migrants’ rights, dignity and equality of treatment and combating discrimination and xenophobia’.

As our Secretary General Terry Davis said at the Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe held in Madrid 6 days ago- 12 May 2009, ‘in times of political uncertainty and economic turbulence you need more democracy, not less democracy, you need more human rights, not fewer human rights, and you need more rule of law, not less rule of law’.

That is why the role of the CoE which is 60 years old is today more important than ever, in all its spheres of action, and that includes migration.

Migration is a phenomenon no government in the world can stop. The root causes of migration are basically the same as one or two decades ago: economic and social distress, persecution, war, environmental changes, human rights violation and political, ethnic and religious conflicts.

But the migrant now knows that he will almost certainly find himself lacking basic rights and human dignity in the destination country he thought would be an Eldorado and he is still putting his life in danger to come to Europe.

Let’s admit that before the crisis Europe was playing a hypocritical game of making the migrants feel they are not wanted while profiting from what they have come to offer us.

The crisis is telling us that the time to play games with the migrants is over.

As the Chair of the European Committee on Migration (the CDMG) puts it in a draft statement about the economic downturn, “the speed at which the current economic crisis has affected Council

of Europe member states, its depth and its likely duration bring an increased risk of xenophobia, violence, discrimination and exploitation towards migrants across Europe, whether they be from member states or further afield, whether newly-arrived or long term residents, or even the children or grandchildren of migrants. This will put already vulnerable migrants at risk of becoming even more vulnerable, especially in the informal sector of European economies. The European Committee on Migration (CEMG) expresses its great concern for the potential effects that the crisis will have on migrants around Europe. Whilst States may be tempted in these circumstances to tighten their borders, this will undoubtedly serve to place increasing numbers of migrants into the hands of people traffickers. Bitter experience in many states has shown that such persons will not hesitate to put the lives of unwitting migrants at risk in dangerous sea and border crossings and in often inhuman conditions.

The economic downturn is likely to reduce the flow of remittances from migrants to their families in countries of origin, who will be less able to pay for basic needs such as food, housing, health and education. We know that racist attacks against foreigners will rise as the economy slows. Reports of events in some of the Council of Europe's 47 member states suggest that these fears are rapidly becoming reality."

Long-term, well-integrated migrants are invited to return to their home country and to leave their place in the host society, that place it took so many efforts to get, to country nationals. Lawfully residing migrant workers are being expelled on futile grounds, criticised, but unfortunately too late, by the courts of appeal. These are just a few examples from the growing numbers of reports that cause concern for the human rights and welfare of migrants, particularly those who are already in a vulnerable situation.

At the 8th Council of Europe ministerial conference on migration (Kiev, 4-5 September 2008) Ministers from many Member States called on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to continue to develop measures to promote and protect the human rights of especially vulnerable migrants and persons of migrant background (*Final Declaration, Plan of Action, paragraph C*). As a result, many of the activities that the European Committee on Migration is putting in place are directly relevant to the global economic downturn and its impact on migrants. These include, for example, combating xenophobia, developing preventative measures for elderly migrants and isolated migrant women to avoid them falling into situations of abuse and vulnerability, strengthening reintegration programmes for returning migrants, promoting the role of migrants as agents of integration and development, and strengthening the interaction between migrants and host societies.

In the Council of Europe we believe in a full and effective dialogue that can lead to a constructive and positive approach to the management of migration. Dialogue that would help migrants to benefit from a legal framework that protects their basic rights and avoids exclusion. Central to this approach is the principle of the respect of the dignity of the person. This entails the right of migrants to be treated with dignity and not as criminals who need to be controlled and subjected to criminal sanctions.

Measures to facilitate dialogue are crucial, respect of the dignity of all migrants is a must. These are unavoidable measures to prevent further damage; the CoE has always stressed the importance

of our work on prevention. To paraphrase the SG, “Dealing with migration crises and conflicts is important, but preventing crises and conflicts by investing in integration and migration management is even better. It not only reduces costs, it reduces injustice and distress”.

More than palliative measures is needed to really manage migration in a changing global environment. Upholding migrants’ rights, dignity and equality of treatment and combating discrimination and xenophobia’ need to be more than words on a conference programme, they need to become part of the programme.

This is what the integrated approach of the CoE puts forward. The importance of having an integrated approach to migration issues was recently discussed at the 8th Council of Europe ministerial conference held in September 2008 in Kiev.

The analysis of the current state of migration regarding management of economic migration and its impact on social cohesion and development were deeply examined in the thematic report prepared for the conference. The revised report has just been published.

What I would like to draw your attention to in particular is the Final Declaration adopted at the end of the conference. The declaration enumerates a series of principles and specific measures in accordance with which member states should work together in the management of economic migration.

One of principles invites member states to ‘pursue an integrated approach to economic migration, development and social cohesion at national and international level’.

Those of you present in Prague for the First Preparatory conference last October or those who met my DG in Vienna, in January for Part 1 of this Forum already know about the integrated approach.

Specific suggestion and follow-up

The key elements of the strategy are : (i) dialogue and co-operation at international level between receiving, origin and transit countries, (ii) co-ordination between different policy areas and the mainstreaming of migration issues, and (iii) within member states, co-ordination between government departments and between local, regional and national bodies (including the involvement of social partners and civil society), with a particular attention to improving the quality of research and analysis.

In concrete terms, the Ministers agreed on the following measures to give effect to this integrated approach :

- Strengthen partnerships and consultation mechanisms between receiving, transit and origin countries with a view to improving the mutual understanding of their respective challenges in the field of economic migration and maximising its benefits for all actors;

- Put in place agreed mechanisms for research and analysis in the field of economic migration, including the use of indicators, for the purpose of undertaking regular assessments of trends at local and national level in the light of the international context and feeding the information upwards with a view to informing policy-making;

- Improve the understanding of the social and economic realities of migration and the impact of policy at national, regional and local level by:

- Setting-up structures for monitoring social cohesion and integration;
- Establishing indicators for social cohesion and the integration of migrants and setting short, medium and long term improvement targets;
- Introducing regular dialogue between state and civil society, including migrants' associations, and evaluating the outcomes.

At the CoE we are convinced that it is one way forward and that it is important to implement it at the national level. That is our concrete proposal.

With this integrated approach the CoE hopes to meet the challenge of Mr William Lacy Swing, when he declared "Let's not make a migration crisis of an economic crisis" (<http://us.oneworld.net/>, "Migrants can help solve economic crisis", 18 December 2008)..