



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

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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”

**Welcoming Remarks by
Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities
Goran Svilanovic**

Madam Minister,
Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

I am pleased to join the previous speakers in welcoming you to the second part of the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum here at beautiful Lagonissi Resort.

Allow me also to join in cordially thanking the Greek Chairmanship for the guidance they have provided during the last months; and to thank our international partners and experts for helping us elaborate possible policies and activities to improve migration management within the OSCE area. I would also like to pay my compliments to all of you who are so actively involved in ensuring the success of this Forum.

In the course of the preceding preparatory Conferences in Prague and Tirana, and the Vienna Forum, we discussed not only possible policies to improve efficiency in migration management but also means to enhance the positive contribution of migration to economic development, as well as social and environmental aspects of migration.

Let me recall you the results of several studies that illustrate the high correlation of migration with economic growth. As evidenced, migratory flows do have significant positive effects on national economies. Some of the wealthiest countries in the world have the highest proportion of immigrant workers, who, in fact do not substitute national workforce, but complement it. On the other hand, origin countries can benefit from remittances and acquired skills and knowledge of their returning migrants. According to the International Labour Office, regional migrant remittances in the OSCE area amounted to a total of around US \$ 50 billion in 2007. They have therefore become a significant income source for millions of family members staying at home, helping to reduce poverty levels. We should also within the OSCE framework discuss how we can facilitate governments, financial intermediaries and others to provide a more supportive environment that maximizes the benefits of remittances in particular to the senders and the recipients.

Let us also not forget about the vulnerability of labour migrants. In particular in the current financial and economic situation, it is important to stress that migration is a positive force which can help governments to overcome economic downturns. Therefore, we should carefully examine different options to deal with migration and migrant labour as tightening regulatory regimes and cutting immigration may not be the most beneficial for long-term socio-economic development in many of our countries. Reduced channels for regular migration may even lead to a worse situation in terms of increased irregular migration, exploitation of migrant workers and trafficking in human beings. In times of crisis, I would like to call upon all state authorities to fully respect the human rights of migrants and their families.

Therefore, I would like to call for reinforced international co-operation among OSCE participating States and international organisations in order to effectively address this important topic. I do believe that the OSCE, together with its partners, can play an important role in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the upcoming Sessions, we will, based on our consolidated recommendations and ideas, conclude the Forum process by once again highlighting different aspects that need to be considered in the elaboration of effective policies related to migration management. Among the different subjects for discussion, we will examine the influence of the global financial and

economic crisis on migration, review the development impacts, address gender aspects in labour migration policies and analyse environmental factors as well as discuss ways to strengthen regional and interstate co-operation.

The Forum's programme is structured in such a way that thematic presentations will lead and serve as a foundation for interactive discussions.

The first session will focus on managing migration in a changing global environment. Given the current global financial and economic crisis, it is even more important to develop a comprehensive and co-operative approach for enhancing economic development and stability, while incorporating migration policies in national and international policy responses. Session I will also discuss the need for upholding migrants' rights, dignity and equality of treatment as well as the combating of discrimination and xenophobia.

Session II, as already mentioned, is dedicated to the review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension focusing on migration. I am looking forward to the presentation by Mr. Ibrahim Awad, Director of the ILO Migration Department of the review report.

In **Session III** the new *Guide on Gender-Sensitive Labour Migration Policies* produced by the OSCE as a cross-dimensional activity will be presented. The presentation will be followed by a discussion on gender aspects related to labour migration policies and an exchange of information on new initiatives and policies developed in the OSCE area that take gender into consideration.

On Tuesday we will start with **Session IV** on enhancing the development impact of migration, whereby we will engage in exchange of ideas on how to respond to increased unemployment among national and migrant population, return migration and the issue of remittances. The overall aim of this session is to further strengthen the positive contributions to economic and social development made by migrants and to promote policy coherence between national economic development policies.

Session V will include a discussion of scenarios and awareness raising concerning the future impact of climate change on migration and the interrelation between environmental change and migratory flows. Together, we will work on ways to enhance early warning and preparedness

policy responses in order to address possible impacts on migration in the context of regional security.

The second day will conclude with **Session VI** on strengthening regional and inter-state co-operation. Key issues will be discussed in a regional context. In the course of this part, we will look into co-operation for standardised and harmonised migration databases, the need for migration management institutions and structures and, last but not least, the promotion of legal channels in order to combat irregular migration and related criminal activities.

Then, on Wednesday, the last day of the Forum, we will discuss possible OSCE contributions and follow-up ideas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I look forward to the active participation from participating States, Partners for Co-operation, experts from international organizations, and representatives of NGOs and the business and academic community. I am also very much looking forward to the contributions by our Economic and Environmental Officers from the OSCE field presences.

Your contributions here will lay the foundations to our continued work in this area.

Thank you.