



**Statement by Ambassador Dr Boris Frlec,  
Head of the OSCE Task Force,  
at the Second Preparatory Seminar for the Thirteenth Economic Forum  
"Migration from an Economic, Environmental and Security Perspective"  
Almaty, Kazakhstan, 24-25 January 2005**

**Opening Plenary Session**

Thank you Mr Chairman, Distinguished Deputy Minister,  
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the host country Kazakhstan, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities as well as OSCE Center in Almaty for the excellent organization of the Second Preparatory Seminar for the Thirteenth OSCE Economic Forum. We furthermore appreciate precious assistance provided by International Organization for Migration and International Center for Migration Policy Development. I'm confident that this Preparatory Seminar will serve as an important opportunity in the further development of the traditionally rich OSCE migration discourse. It shall provide insight into most relevant migration issues of both general concern and of specific relevance to each of the OSCE regions.

Migration is driven by the natural instinct of people to move in order to seek new life and career opportunities and to increase their standard of living. But it is less the difference in income level and more the lack of opportunities which, apart from conflicts, make people leave their countries. It is a living phenomenon, a process in which migrants make significant economic contributions to societies both in countries of destination and in countries of origin. Bearing in mind that migration will continue to grow, political will is needed to understand it as a solution, not as a problem. As migration is clearly a cross-dimensional issue, with strong bearing on security, economics and the human dimension, the OSCE represents one of the very natural choices for the discussion on the subject and related affirmative action in all three dimensions.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Deputy Minister,  
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As already highlighted in the very topical discussions and suggestions made at the First Preparatory Seminar in Trieste, migration as one of the 21st century ultimate strategic issues is far from being a zero-sum game. The demands of an increasingly globalizing and integrated world economy combined with rather gloomy demographic forecasts indicate that migration is to remain a key element of any future sustainable solution. Thus, large-scale economic migration in the OSCE area seems inevitable. The standard of living in many OSCE countries of destination would deteriorate significantly without migrants; some economic activities and entire industries would even seriously suffer without them.

However, for some OSCE countries of destination, a shrinking population does not represent the only challenge, and one which cannot be solved by immigration alone. Further, it appears that people in many OSCE countries of destination tend to accept the fact that their societies will depopulate and subsequently become less competitive, rather than embracing or agreeing to the inflow of migrants. Meanwhile, other OSCE participating States and the OSCE areas are experiencing strong population growth, oversupply of labour and swift migratory pressures. The sum of these factors constitutes them as countries of origin.

Turning to some security aspects of migration, while acknowledging that some migrants are economically very successful in countries of destination, it should also be noted that the bulk of migrants have dangerous and difficult jobs others are not ready to take. Even more, significant numbers are not being employed, making them dependent on the welfare system of the country of destination. If the ultimate goal of any OSCE country of destination is migration-integration, concerted efforts should be made to bring these people into the fold of the legal labour market of countries of destination. Illegal migrants do not pay taxes but they often have access to public services, including health and education systems. There is, hopefully, a possible role for the OSCE to call upon countries of destination to act bravely and consider the option of giving work permits to all illegal migrants who can prove they have jobs in the country. In so doing, illegal migrants would be co-opted and enabled to contribute fully to the welfare of the country of destination. It is of the utmost importance that the OSCE engage in providing channels for legal migration and assist in actions aimed at the reduction of irregular migration.

In migration-integration efforts, the socio-cultural dimension should not be underestimated either. Bearing in mind that the percentage of foreign-born legal residents in some OSCE countries of destination is as high as 35 to 40 per cent, we all need to become more multi-cultural. A volatile chemistry among natives and migrants must be cultivated in order to foster social and political stability. In this respect the OSCE could be active in providing a range of instruments and approaches to ease the integration of migrants.

Regular migration flows in the OSCE countries of destination are often managed in an overly bureaucratic manner. Subsequently, irregular migration is stimulated and the economic and social promise of legal immigration and integration cannot be realized. That is why the private sector too must have a word in the development of adequate migration management practices. Businesses are driven by growth and profit. If employers in countries of destination lack the personnel they need on the legal labour market, the gap is either filled by the illegal labour force or operations are moved elsewhere in the world to locations where cheaper labour is abundant.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Deputy Minister,  
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There exists a potentially beneficial relationship between migration and sustainable development. As a consequence of migration, not only countries of destination, but countries of origin too can gain. Countries of origin can benefit through reduction of unemployment, remittances and skills transfer. Migration policies of countries of origin, if properly designed, can therefore alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment.

On the other hand, the movement of skilled migrants from countries of origin to countries of destination can represent a significant loss for countries providing migrants. To offer certain compensation, countries of destination should, apart from granting development aid, consider investing more substantially in the educational systems of the countries of origin.

A possible role for the OSCE is to offer countries of origin training aimed at balancing the "brain-drain" and "brain-gain" effects among countries of origin and countries of destination. The OSCE could also help countries of origin in the development and implementation of targeted reintegration programmes enabling the return of emigrants who have acquired knowledge and capital abroad that can be harnessed to contribute to economic growth back home.

Remittances represent an important "push factor" for the purchasing power of the national economy of the country of origin. For this reason, one of the OSCE tasks could be to encourage their formal transfer. Specifically, the OSCE could provide some assistance in the development of standards for the international transfer of remittances in order to reduce high illegal transfer costs, avoid money laundering and remittances going to illegal activities.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Deputy Minister,  
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

No country in the OSCE region is, nor needs to be alone in facing the challenges of managing migration. Thirty years ago the Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE provided a solid starting point for the development of co-operation in migration management among the participating States. A wide array of the OSCE commitments relating to migration adopted since the Helsinki Final Act are enabling participating States to develop comprehensive, coherent, co-operative and co-ordinated partnership in managing migration within the OSCE. Further development of migration management best practices combined with improved legal frameworks should be seen as an essential part of nation-building and good governance in each and every OSCE participating State. In this context, the OSCE in co-operation with other relevant international organizations may consider offering its support in drafting national migration laws in those participating States lacking adequate resources, infrastructure or expertise.

In the past decade, unprecedented progress has been made in respect to the free movement of people and the development of best migration management practices. There are now great expectations that the European Commission's forthcoming Green Paper on Legal Migration will present a vital further step forward in more effective migration management practices. Equally important are other regional initiatives, such as the Budapest Process, CIS Conference and the Intergovernmental Consultations. We also need to take full advantage of other global initiatives, including the Global Commission on International Migration, the Berne Initiative and International Labour Organisation. We rely on the expertise of International Organization for Migration, International Center for Migration Policy Development and UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Through permanent change in their dynamics and character, migratory movements have been progressively challenging the OSCE participating States. In managing these truly important challenges, we need to act responsibly and find appropriate *modus operandi* for cooperation among existing agencies. If we are really concerned with constructing a more integrated and coherent migration management we should concentrate sincerely on the wiring and plumbing of the key actors in the field. Only in this way can we hope for effective synergies and the subsequent encouraging results. In this sense, the Chairmanship is convinced the Seminar will yield useful suggestions.

Thank you.