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**Session IV – Providing services for migrants**

**Statement delivered by the Albanian Delegation  
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Let me express from the very start the great importance and full attention the Albanian Government dedicates to migration and all the aspects that are connected with it. Migration could be a natural development and a helpful factor of integration in both big and small countries. But to Albania, which maintains a very high level of emigration fluxes, it takes on an extraordinary importance. Fifteen years ago we were the most isolated country in Europe; now almost one third of the population has emigrated. The greater numbers of these emigrants are youngsters who constitute at the same time an active labor force.

What became evident in front of this reality was the urgent need to put together and implement politics in that regard that enable the transformation of emigration from a numerical financial potential into an active partner for decision-taking and for the development and integration of the country. The National Strategy for the Migration and the relevant Action Plan drafted and adopted by the Albanian Government, the European Commission and IOM, mark a new and indispensable phase in the treatment of migration issues.

Until recently, the Albanian emigrants in the world have been viewed by the state and society as sources of financing because of the high incomes that were acquired through the assistance they provided to their families and their investments in the homeland. Lately, we started to observe with optimism that the society, the executive, the media and the politics have corrected the stance. Now the emigrants are considered more and more the way they really are: valuable and undivided human resources of the society. The first students have received their degrees abroad and have returned home. Others are nearing the end of their studies and our indications tell us that they are waiting to see clear signs of opportunities to return, to integrate and implement their knowledge in the homeland. The emigrants of the early '90s are already returning with concrete investments projects; political forces are directing more and more their hopes to our emigrated and qualified intellectual elite in the Western countries.

These positive developments, although still fragile, deserve to be read and appreciated with the right importance in order to transform them into a general social tendency. The efforts hitherto have left a lot to be desired and that is why it is necessary for the policies of migration in general to undergo a fundamental change. Time is gone when the state and its institutions did not do anything more other than counting the ships full of emigrants when they were sailing away. Today's level of emigration requires the state to take upon itself more responsibilities in order for every Albanian emigrant in the world to be present in its attention. This is a constitutional obligation and a national necessity.

Going back to the policies of migration, and here we come to the core of the topic of this session, we think that more work should be done with the host states, especially with our neighbors, Greece and Italy, for the transformation of our migrating communities into active cooperation, development and integration factors, by transforming them into real bridges of communication through a smooth and honest effort for their genuine integration with as little problems as possible. The democratic standards of these countries have already provided positive results in the more and more dignifying treatment and integration of the emigrants. But more needs to be done still.

However, there are problems to be solved which should be taken into consideration and where not only the contribution of the Albanian state, but also of the host states and international organisms would be needed. Their contribution must consist in concrete projects and initiatives, which should not allow for the emigrants to fall prey of racist behavior, violence and differentiation. Children of emigrants should be truly helped to enjoy real conditions and opportunities to learn the mother tongue through organized schools and courses and to learn geography, history and culture of their country of origin; recognition should be given of their working years; health insurance and pensions should be guaranteed to the emigrants, too. They should enjoy the opportunities to have at any time legal consulting guaranteed by the international conventions, they should be treated in a dignifying way at the border crossings and not be left to feel threatened by the political ups and downs between countries. Every society has people who respect the law, but also people who break it. Even the category of the convicts for various crimes should be part of the care in order not to have anymore repetitions of false or double standard court processes.

More specifically, emigration in Albania is regulated by the 2003 Labor Migration Act that amended the 1995 Migration Act. It legally defines the government's responsibilities with regard to migration and emigrants: information, assistance, facilitating their integration into the receiving countries labor market, social and human services system, and promoting the return of migrant's social, human, and financial capital.

In a wider sense, Albania's current migration policies are aimed at discouraging real and potential migration flows by creating employment opportunities. One path to accomplishing this is creating new jobs in the country. Another is extending channels of legal migration through signing seasonal employment agreements with neighboring countries, especially Greece and Italy, and other EU states. Policies to discourage illegal emigration include informing and assisting potential emigrants with regard to legal migration opportunities, as well as encouraging decentralized co-operation between the local authorities of inter-border areas. Albanian authorities are also engaged in facilitating the entry, installment into the labor market, legal regulation, and social integration of Albanian emigrants in receiving countries and ensure compliance with international conventions on labor and migration.

Finally, we would like to greet the Slovenian Chairmanship of the OSCE for the initiative to have the 13<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum agenda dedicated to this highly sensitive and important issue.

Thank you.