



EF.IO/9/05
23 May 2005

IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

ENGLISH only

OSCE Economic Forum

Prague

23 May 2005

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much for the invitation to address the OSCE Economic Forum this afternoon. IOM has worked very closely with the OSCE Secretariat and the Slovenian Chairman in Office in the lead up to this Forum, and a number of my colleagues will be participating actively in the debates over the next several days. Throughout this interaction, what has become clear is that we and the OSCE share the recognition that migration is a key variable for future growth, stability and prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are living in an era of rapid change, and the nature and patterns of human mobility are no exception. The combined effects of the redrawing of large parts of the world political map and the forces of globalization have redefined international migration, and certainly made it a factor to be reckoned with in every corner of the globe. The economic and developmental aspects of migration, together with their social and political consequences, have come to the fore.

International migration is increasing year by year. Roughly one in every 35 persons is a migrant. The current estimate of the number of international migrants is 185 million, that is, some 3 percent of the world's population, nearly half of whom are women. Internal migration and displacement add additional dimensions of major importance inside countries large and small..

Aging and shrinking populations in much of the developed world stand in sharp contrast to growing populations in much of the developing world. Migrant remittances, skills and investments are the mainstay of many national economies. Personal aspirations are increasingly linked to employment or other opportunities abroad.

Governments in labour-receiving states want to ensure that economic immigration does not undermine local salaries and conditions. Those in labour-supplying states want to ensure that overseas employment does not undermine their own economies – while welcoming the contribution that their overseas workers' remittances provide.

How can these interests be aligned in safer, more flexible and more equitable ways? And how can we ensure that it is not smuggling rings that do the matching for us, for want of adequate and predictable governmental mechanisms?

There are no simple answers to these questions, any more than there are one-size-fits-all solutions. But the path to solutions starts with acceptance that these are questions on the table *today* – not tomorrow. Ignoring or postponing them will have a price -- a price measured in higher labour costs, lower outputs or decreased competitiveness. A price measured also in increased irregular migration pressures with their inherent implications for social marginalization, potential rights abuses and undermining of state sovereignty.

Achieving the right balance requires better understanding of migration needs and trends, coherent policy formulation across government, active public diplomacy and serious investment of effort and resources in building the capacity to implement policy effectively. Finding new mechanisms to ensure orderly flows of labour migrants is particularly crucial, for without them there will be little chance to address and stem irregular migration.

IOM is working hard to assist governments and civil society in every part of the globe on a broad range of migration management challenges. As a result, our membership and budget are expanding rapidly. We have over 220 offices all over the world. This growth is the direct consequence of the new attention being given to all aspects of migration.

There are few regions of the world where these migration challenges have been greater over the past decade than Europe. Let me quickly survey some important recent developments in European migration management.

- Migration will be a principal focus of European Council activities over the coming year. IOM will work closely with the British and Austrian Presidencies to enlarge the area of consensus and produce important new statements of policy, especially as regards the European Neighborhood policy.
- The EU has produced a Green Paper on Economic Migration that marks a first step towards harmonization of labour market practices within the Union territory and beyond. Labour migration is a hugely important growth area everywhere.
- The EU has set up both a European Migration Network and a European Integration Network, each with National Contact Points and with the aim to include all relevant sectors and actors in the promotion of policy and good practice.
- The current EU accession and candidate countries, along with the rest of the Western Balkans are increasingly guided by EU *acquis* and principles. In the former Yugoslavia, the broad migration agenda is addressed in various fora, such as the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, or the MARRI Regional Forum within the South-East European Cooperation Process.
- There is considerable movement on migration management in the countries of the CIS. Large-scale population relocations continue among the newly independent states. Capacity building is still required. Intra-CIS labour migration flows remain important. The CIS experiences major irregular flows from East, South and Southwest Asia.
- IOM will sponsor a workshop for the CIS this summer to examine the application of biometrics to travel and identity documents. Many other initiatives are under way in the context of the EU's European Neighbourhood policy and the Soderkoping Process.

- In March this year, IOM launch a pilot data-sharing mechanism for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, comparable in some ways to the IGC for Western Europe. Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine are the first participants. Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation have expressed interest in joining soon.
- All parts of Europe confront the need to work against the trafficking of human beings for sexual or other exploitation. This is an area where IOM and the OSCE continue to cooperate effectively, but much remains to be done.
- The SECI Crime Centre in Bucharest has an important role to play in the law-enforcement aspects of migration management.
- Large-scale migration flows impact public health in many ways. IOM has established a strong cooperative link with the new European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in Stockholm.

To complement all these developments, of which I have given only a brief sample, IOM and our partners have developed a range of programmes aimed at:

- supporting governments with their legislative and structural reform;
- building capacity in such areas as border management, labour migration, micro credit, information dissemination, data sharing and counter trafficking;
- facilitating regional dialogues such as among CIS countries, in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, among the Western Mediterranean Five Plus Five and others;
- enhancing civil society's ability to act as interlocutors for governments and to advocate effectively on behalf of migrants; and
- assisting individual migrants either to migrate or to return home.

In a globalizing world, migration increases healthy international contacts. There is a corresponding requirement to counter irregular or unwanted flows and ensure state security. Effective border management and the development of secure passports, visas and data bases, including the use of biometrics in the issuing system, contribute significantly to countering organised crime and terrorism, but at the same time facilitate legitimate travel. It is of capital importance that such systems should be widely compatible. It would make little sense to divide the OSCE into competing biometric intelligibility zones.

Over the past decade, and throughout the OSCE region, IOM has been heavily involved on all sides of the migration equation – development, facilitation, control and emergency management. You have our commitment to remain engaged for as long as our technical assistance or operational support are needed and desired.

Ladies and gentlemen,

From these remarks and those of the other distinguished speakers on this podium today, a picture emerges of considerable progress -- progress first in identifying areas for improvement, and progress as well in working seriously toward making those improvements happen. Individual governments and institutions have worked hard to get where we are today.

Regional dialogues, such as the one we are engaged in today, play a key part in helping governments work together. I congratulate the OSCE for the strong interest it has shown in all aspects of migration management.

Dealing effectively with International migration requires, by definition, strong cross-border cooperation. Given the cross-cutting nature of migration, it also requires strong inter-institutional cooperation. There is ample evidence of what joining forces can achieve in the way of tangible progress toward systems which facilitate mobility for economic and social development, and hinder mobility for illegitimate purposes. We are not yet at the end of that road, but conferences like this one demonstrate that with continued commitment to partnership and cooperation, we can continue to advance, knowing we are on the right road.