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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”

*Regional co-operation towards a comprehensive approach to migration*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the OSCE organisers for inviting the Council of Europe to this important preparatory meeting for the 17<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum to be held in Athens later this year. This is another example of good and long lasting co-operation between our organisations, especially taking into account that for both of them managing migration is a priority. Organising such an event provides a unique opportunity to discuss problems related to migration on a regional basis between all involved countries, eastern and western countries, countries of origin, transit and destination.

We are all conscious that migration remains still one of the major challenges for the contemporary world. Maybe even more now in the time of the global financial and economic crisis. Migration is not a phenomenon fixed for ever. It is a very complex thing, changing rapidly and adapting quickly to new economic, social, political and environmental conditions.

On the whole, as Chairperson in Office of the OSCE, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyanis stressed, addressing recently the OSCE Permanent Council In Vienna, migration is a comprehensive security issue. We fully share this view and are convinced that as such migration needs constant observation.

If we look at migration from a global view we see that migration is a very positive factor contributing to the economic, social and cultural development. This migration is most welcomed. But, migration can have also a reverse side. This often happens when migration is outside national controls, when organised crime is involved in migration processes. This dark side of migration should be strongly combated.

As migration affects countries and people across borders it becomes a phenomenon of an international dimension. There is no country in the world that could manage migration without co-operation with other countries.

To cope with migration, to keep its positive impact on people and countries, we need to establish a genuine and effective co-

operation between all involved stakeholders. It would help also to deal with negative aspects of migration.

In the Council of Europe we strongly 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, even of those who are irregular, to be treated with dignity and not as criminals who need to be subjected to criminal sanctions. Promoting this approach does not mean that the Council of Europe encourages irregular migration. Not at all. We just want everybody to understand that irregular migrants are first and foremost human beings and should be treated first and foremost as such.

Today in the Council of Europe, when we are speaking about migration, the key word is an integrated approach. 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.

Despite existing differences between member states and/or non member states countries of origin, the conference showed the positives of migration and considerable synergy and consistency. It was underlined that to enhance the benefits of migration, countries should be more pro-active.

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 will be published before the Summer and available to all of you.

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 the Council of Europe member states should work together in the management of economic migration.

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

What exactly did Ministers mean by this integrated approach?

The key elements 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).

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

- Firstly, 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;

- Secondly, 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;

- Thirdly, 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.

Implementation of this integrated policy framework by Council of Europe member states will be a major contribution to effectively governing migration, and to securing the economic, social and cultural development of states.

Last but not least, in the Council of Europe we firmly believe that the day when the OSCE starts discussions on the future of security in Europe, migration, which is a comprehensive security issue, should be put high on the agenda of such discussions. And the Council of Europe stands ready, if need be, to further share its relevant expertise and co-operate with the OSCE.