

EEF.IO/15/09
20 May 2009

ENGLISH only



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Delivered at the Seventeenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

**“Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and
environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE
region”**

18-20 May 2009

Athens, Greece

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address you at the 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. The topic of today – “Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region” - combines many challenging economic, environmental and security issues. At this point, I would like to thank the government of Greece not only for their warm hospitality, but also for its choice of the 2009 OSCE Economic Dimension theme.

The importance of this topic – migration - for the OSCE as well the UN ECE Member states is amply manifested by the fact, that the OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension already discussed the subjects of demography and migration during Slovenia’s Chairmanship-in-Office in 2005. OSCE as a key regional politico-security organisation is indeed well-placed to deal with this subject.

Four years ago, at the opening of the OSCE Economic Forum, the then UNECE Executive Secretary said: *“Europe is in the midst of a situation without parallel in demographic history. Fertility is well below replacement level, populations are rapidly ageing, and most countries face imminent or anticipated population decrease. If we add the intensifying and diversifying migration flows, it becomes clear that population trends could pose serious challenges to the security and economic stability in the UNECE region.”*

On one side, one could say that fundamentally and structurally, not much has changed since 2005. Unfavourable long-term demographic trends have continued to run their course. In the UNECE region, many nations are ageing. Long-term population projections consistently forecast some European countries to experience substantial decreases in working age populations notably in some professions and qualifications. In economic terms, fewer workers imply a lower aggregate output. This, in turn, points to reduced standards of living in Europe. At the same time, a higher number of retirees drawing old age benefits and pensions is expected to exert additional pressures on the currently tight fiscal frameworks. Regulated economic migration is called upon to be a part of solutions to at least some of these challenges, is a positive factor of economic and social stability and growth. All that has a direct bearing on migration policies of UNECE states.

On the other hand, there are factors and developments that strongly influence migration policies and patterns. Some of them do it rather temporarily although with lasting consequences, like the current global economic crisis. Others have a profound systemic effect and complex implications (including security ones), like climate change. Unfortunately, still there is not sufficient attention to these factors with regard to migration policies as of yet.

Migration appears to have grown and become more diverse, but – at the same time - it is today perceived as a more pressing policy issue. Migration has been firmly placed, partly due to Greece’s Chairmanship-in-Office, to the forefront of national and

international agendas, and I hope, the current financial crisis will not affect that – migration should also here be a part of the solution.

The United Nations has played a constructive role addressing various dimensions of international migration. The UN has focused on the collection, analysis and dissemination of information concerning the levels, trends and national policies.

Despite the considerable effort, accurate and up-to-date information on international migration is still lacking: long-term consistent and reliable time series of stock and flow data of migrants across countries are not available; neither are the statistics on irregular migration and on the situation of undocumented migrants. More effort should be made to improve international migration statistics. I am pleased to note that the OSCE and the International Migration Organization will propose tomorrow a number of projects to begin to rectify this unfavourable situation.

From among key features of effective migration policy I would like to mention but two. The first is a requirement to consider the impacts of migration on the economic and social development of all the countries involved. In other words, an effective migration policy will pay equal attention to both the receiving and sending countries. Even more controversial is the topic of unregulated, illicit migration with an underlying mixture of humanitarian, human rights, political, economic and social issues. Many UNECE countries like Greece can tell stories about the challenges of this increasing problem. Therefore, migration and migration policies explicitly recognize the need for an internationally co-ordinated approach. The second feature is to assign more weight to the design of sustainable, long-term solutions, taking into account also regional and global dimensions of the problem and its linkages to e.g. global warming. I am glad to notice, that some countries, but also their groupings, like EU, already work in this direction and show leadership.

In this context, an ideal, inter-temporal migration policy should balance human rights, human capital requirements and integration concerns. It should ensure future migration to be beneficial for individual migrants, their children as well as the receiving, transit (notably first contact/destination) and sending countries. It should be firmly based on basic human rights and freedoms, humanitarian values and norms, principles and commitments. This is indeed a challenge, notably in the times of the crisis, when a good number of countries is closing the doors to migrants, adopting restrictive, even draconian laws often coupled with increasing manifestations of xenophobia, racism and anti-immigration sentiments. In the OSCE area this is valid both for developed countries as well as for countries of the CIS region.

In the receiving countries, immigration policies have to be linked to integration policies. However, as you all know, finding the right balance between plurality of culture, respect for the rule of law and human rights considerations poses a tremendous challenge.

In the countries of origin, the composition of migrant flows also affect change: emigration exacerbates the process of ageing as those who leave are young; emigrants are also taxpayers and contributors to the social security system – their departures

accentuate the fiscal difficulties in the countries of origin; and in the modern knowledge-based economy those who leave cause a "brain drain" by depleting the domestic human capital base.

Migrants also send their earnings back home. These remittances are an increasingly important source of income in many economies. For some UNECE countries, remittances are the largest type of international financial inflow. The migrant labour and their ability to transfer funds safely and efficiently home raise a number of policy issues. The most basic – which is yet to be achieved by statistical agencies - is to ensure the accuracy of official estimates for flows.

This Forum, in some sense, represents a closure of the successful Chairmanship by the government of Greece in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. Looking forward, notably from the perspective of future UNECE - OSCE co-operation, I would like to welcome the first OSCE Chairmanship by a Central Asian country: Kazakhstan.

A significant part of UNECE's technical co-operation activities is focused on Central Asia - a region of great strategic importance. This year, the UN Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia will be strengthened by the opening of a Regional Office located in Central Asia and managed jointly by the UNECE and UNESCAP. The countries of Central Asia face serious challenges such as landlocked geographical location and economic and environmental effects of sharing water resources. The in-depth knowledge and understanding of these challenges will allow the government of Kazakhstan to identify those areas, where the combination of international legal instruments and in-house expertise of the UNECE with the strong OSCE focus on the security aspects of economic and environmental problems are most needed and promise the greatest value added.

I am very pleased that the government of Kazakhstan is considering "promoting good governance in border management and facilitation of international transport" as the key elements of the OSCE Economic Dimension theme for 2010. I believe that "border management and international transport" would be an excellent choice as it could naturally build upon a recent transport theme of the Belgian chairmanship. In 2006, the UNECE extensively contributed and it would be ready to do so in 2010.

Kazakhstan is - and will become even more so in the future - a key transit country in Central Asia linking Europe and Asia. Transport and transit at the UNECE are considered to be priority areas. The UNECE administers 57 international legal instruments in the area of transport. They provide the foundation for transport infrastructure development, transit and border crossing facilitation in the road, rail and inland water sectors.

International transport facilitates regional and economic integration. It also frequently necessitates the use of modern technologies. The UNECE has been a key promoter of regional co-operation and integration as well as innovation in the CIS region through its Divisions of Transport and of Economic Co-operation and Integration.

Kazakhstan is an important member of UN Economic Commission for Europe. The UNECE, in turn, has extensive experience in the area of developing Euro-Asian Transport Links and has been actively promoting the Euro-Asian harmonization of transport investments. The recent meeting of Transport Ministers hosted by the UNECE in Geneva re-affirmed the importance of building Euro-Asian inland transport bridges.

Kazakhstan is also a landlocked country, located in the landlocked region of Central Asia. The UNECE has been actively engaged in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action – a UN program to assist landlocked countries in overcoming their geographic challenges. The United Nations has been particularly concerned with lack of adequate transport infrastructure and cumbersome customs procedures. To this end, the United Nations’ Almaty Programme of Action - a global partnership, which includes the OSCE - recommends simplification, harmonization and standardization of rules and processes.

In this context, the UNECE International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods offers a solid framework to reduce the duration and number of border controls. As you may know, the OSCE together with the UNECE has organized a number of successful border crossing facilitation events. In this spirit, the UNECE looks forward to continuing this productive co-operation and to finalizing a joint “Handbook of Best Practices at Borders”.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the OSCE on establishing a Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe which is expected to provide training programs to high level officials from customs, border and transport administrations in the OSCE region. Training sessions and capacity-building will include a variety of trade and transport aspects of border management. The UNECE is keenly interested in contributing as an affiliate.

In addition to co-operation in the economic dimension, the UNECE has solid links with the OSCE in the area of the environment.

As you may know, the UNECE manages five environmental conventions. Four of the five focus on regional or transboundary co-operation. Based on these conventions, many UNECE-OSCE projects have been developed to assist member countries in enhancing their transboundary relations and management of shared natural resources.

Presently, the joint work is proceeding in the regions such as South Caucasus to develop co-operation on the Kura river; in Eastern Europe, on the Dniester river, including the involvement of the Transdniester region; and, in Central Asia, to extend water co-operation, building on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz co-operation model of the Chu and Talas rivers.

The OSCE is also very actively supporting the implementation of the UNECE Aarhus Convention through the establishment of so-called Aarhus Centres. There are currently nine countries engaged – or due to become engaged – in running Aarhus Centres (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan). These Centres play an important role in promoting environmental awareness and in supporting greater public involvement in environmental decision-making. When functioning effectively, they can serve as a valuable interface not only between ministries of environment and civil society but also between the international processes under the Convention and the people on the ground whose rights it seeks to protect.

In closing, UNECE member States welcome co-operation with the OSCE and indeed with other partners, like EU, CIS, IOM or regional development banks. UNECE-OSCE cooperation is an excellent example of a complementary partnership - a partnership that exemplifies the link between security and economic/environmental dimensions. As UNECE Executive Secretary I will do all that I can to continue to strengthen this co-operation which, in the end, benefits all UNECE and OSCE member and participating States.