



United States Mission to the OSCE

Part 2 of the 17th EEF May 18 – 19, Athens, Greece Opening Remarks

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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please check against delivery

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman

For most countries in the OSCE region, migration is a significant domestic and foreign policy matter. It is a multi-dimensional issue, linked to social and economic issues such as development, changing demographics, public health, trade, labor, national and global security, human rights, social cohesion, and the family. It involves both national sovereignty and concerns for individual freedoms. Migration issues that pose challenges for states include ensuring adequate access to asylum systems, detecting immigration fraud, enforcing deportations, and combating smuggling and trafficking in persons, to name just a few.

The United States seeks to advance effective migration management policies, which include respecting the human rights of migrants, offering access to protection for refugees and asylum seekers, opposing uncontrolled and illegal migration, supporting counter-trafficking efforts, and encouraging the rapid integration of legal immigrants.

We believe that one of the most practical ways to advance effective and humane migration policies is through regional migration dialogues. Regional dialogues focus on information exchange and practical solutions to problems of common interest. They often allow for more open, informal discussion than do broader multilateral settings. In these forums, member states identify areas for cooperation and develop migration strategies that are humane and stress orderly, authorized movements of individuals. Our experience has been that regional approaches allow governments to discuss priority issues, build consensus, and undertake joint initiatives to improve migration management and the situation of migrants in their regions.

We recognize the powerful role that remittances can play for families of migrants and countries of origin. In 2007 remittances from the United States to developing countries were estimated at around \$250 billion, more than twice the amount of official development

assistance provided globally to developing nations. The United States is committed to lowering the transaction costs. Between 2000 and 2004, transaction costs were halved from 15% to 7.5% for remittances sent from the United States. And in 2008, the cost of remittances from the United States dropped further, from 7.5 percent to 4.5 percent, according to the World Bank. Remittances can have an important multiplier effect on local economies. The United States believes that remittances are private funds and should not be subject to specific or discriminatory taxation or controlled by governments. Government policies, however, can be implemented to create an environment conducive for asset building, entrepreneurship, and investment.

We are concerned about the impact of the global financial crisis. OSCE participating states should take measures to ensure that this crisis does not result in amplification of destabilizing forces. We agree with the ILO's assessment that areas for intervention might include taking extra measures to uphold decent work conditions and protection of migrant workers – along with vulnerable national workers — in migrant employment countries; and resolutely repressing xenophobic violence and explicitly discouraging nationalist anti-migrant and anti-trade discourse. We have read with great interest the paper detailing potential OSCE contribution and follow-up ideas, and look forward to an exchange of ideas on these points.

Additional Points:

- We thank the OCEEA for the Concept Note on Conclusions and the Way Forward (EEF.GAL/6/09) which we reviewed with much interest.
- The United States views the OSCE as a highly effective and appropriate forum for discussion of migration related issues of particular interest to member countries.
- We actively participate in the HDIM where many such migration-related discussions are taking place.
- By way of general comment on the Concept Note, we recommend further discussion among members to further refine the field of specific migration-related issues which would benefit from the OCEEA's expertise. Such topic could include: the gender dimension of remittances, the world economic crisis, impact of social remittances on development, facilitating investments of returning migrants, and circular labor migration, to name a few.
- We also recommend that member discussions be compiled as “recommendations for further consideration” rather than ‘conclusions’ as these are complex issues that would benefit from further deliberations.