



**Statement by
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THE MIGRATION-SECURITY NEXUS IN THE OSCE REGION

**The 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum Part 2
“Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental
policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region”**

Athens, Greece, 18 - 20 May 2009

Your Excellency, Ms. Dora Bakayannis,
Minister of Foreign Affairs;
Your Excellency, Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, OSCE Secretary-General;
Your Excellency, Mr. Goran Svilanovic, Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental
Activities;
Your Excellency, Mr. Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;
Friends and Colleagues,

Introduction:

It is an honor to participate in the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum of the
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

It is also a distinct privilege to be here in Athens, Greece — a country that throughout
human history has been a cross roads for migration. It is no surprise then that Greece in
1951, was among the founding members of the International Organization for Migration, or
that Greece has hosted an IOM office since then. I would therefore like to thank the Greek
Chairmanship for Greece’s unfailing support of IOM over the years, and for this splendid
opportunity afforded me of being here today.

In deciding to make the theme of these three days — "migration management and its
linkages with economic, social and environmental policies" — the Greek Chairmanship made
a courageous choice. I say this because there are few contemporary issues that stimulate as
much passionate debate, nationally and internationally, as migration.

In recent years, the International Community has come to acknowledge that migration
is a potentially beneficial feature of our modern world. Migration, when responsibly
managed, can be an important element, even catalyst, in economic and social development.

Home to more than 90 million migrants — almost half of the total number of migrants
world-wide — the OSCE region — from Vladivostok, Russia to Vancouver, Canada — is an
origin, transit, and destination place for migrants. This in my view is the OSCE region’s
strength in addressing migration management in a comprehensive manner.



Far too little attention has been paid to migrants' contribution to economic development. It is, therefore, timely and laudable that the Greek Chair of this year's Economic and Environmental Forum has chosen to highlight the link between migration and security. Madame Minister, the 3rd Global Forum on Migration and Development, which your Government will proudly host in November, will be a further occasion to pursue and promote this new, broader outlook.

With this introduction, I would like to address three key points today:

I. Migration: from Threat to Opportunity

First, migration in the OSCE region and beyond is an inevitable element in the life of Nation States and how we manage migration and migrants will determine whether the impact will be beneficial or not. As such, migration should be viewed as an opportunity and not simply a challenge or threat.

While the communications revolution may have launched today's movement of people, it is current demographic and economic trends that will insure a continuing flow of people across borders in an ever more complex migration picture:

- Demographically, most industrialized nations are characterized by aging populations and dramatically declining birthrates, amounting to longer-term negative population growth.
- Combine this with the persistent North-South economic divide –which the global financial crisis will only make worse – and the result is a North increasingly in need of labour – and a South with more and more excess labour – most of which South-South migration will not be able to absorb (even though South-South migration is almost as large as South-North migration.)

Migration is thus a major reality in our lives. The basic factors driving migration – demographics and economics – can be expected to grow in their complexity and are unlikely to ebb.

The migration challenge therefore demands responsible policy decisions, on the part of us all —namely — how can we, working closely together, as partners, manage migration in a manner that best serves the national interests of host and home country and the migrants themselves?

I am convinced that our deliberations at this Conference will help provide some of the answers we urgently need — answers for a world in which migration is overwhelmingly about labor mobility in response to the growing demands of ageing, more affluent societies.

According to IOM's 2008 World Migration Report, nearly all migration today is related, in some manner, or another, to labor. That migrants filled nearly two-thirds of all new jobs in European OECD countries in the period 1995-2003 underscores this point.

A greater focus on migrants' social and economic contribution to host countries — at the same time one stems the flow of irregular migrants — is therefore a key element in the management of migration.



Irregular migration in its most corrosive forms — human smuggling and trafficking — is intrinsically linked to transnational organized crime. Moreover, irregular migration fuels informal economies and human rights abuses, undermines social cohesion, and too often leads to discrimination and xenophobia against migrants.

The OSCE has already accumulated much experience promoting tolerance and addressing discrimination. The continued challenge will be to reduce irregular migration without stifling legitimate and needed movements, and without imposing serious constraints on personal rights and liberties of migrants. Our challenge is to strike a balance between facilitating legal migration, on the one hand, while stemming irregular migration, on the other hand — all the while ensuring protection of the human rights of both, irrespective of their status.

For its part, IOM stands ready to assist the OSCE and its Member States – many of whom we count among IOM members – to develop migration profiles to generate an accurate account of migration.

One such example of our work is the development of profiles in the context of the Black Sea Consultative Process on Migration Management. These migration profiles are helping to promote better understanding of migration dynamics at the regional level.

II: The Global Economic Crisis and Migration

My second point is that times of crisis demand greater solidarity between source and destination countries. Migrants are part of the solution, not the problem, in overcoming the current global recession.

Many of the high-income countries in the OSCE region have been affected seriously by the economic and financial crisis. Labour markets have been hard hit, with mass layoffs in construction and textile industries – traditional employers of migrants.

Migration corridors are also affected. We are seeing substantial declines in remittances — forecast by the World Bank to fall as much as nine percent in 2009 — a prediction that does not bode well for developing countries in the OSCE region where remittances constitute a substantial share of GDP.

To put it in perspective, globally, migrants' annual remittances of some \$300 billion are twice as large as Official Development Aid (ODA) and nearly two-thirds that of total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in developing countries.

It is for this reason that World Bank President, Robert B. Zoellick has called on developed countries to dedicate 0.7% of their economic stimulus packages to a “Vulnerability Fund” for those developing countries hardest hit by the global economic recession.

The global economic and financial crisis is already leading some Governments to think about migration in counter-cyclical terms. That is to say, the tendency is to harden attitudes towards migrants and send them home whereas legal migrants will be needed if our economies are to recover.



Structural fundamentals, including demographic and economic disparities, remain unchanged. What is needed is greater solidarity between countries of origin and countries of destination.

We must all work together to maintain and strengthen the consensus achieved in harnessing the benefits of migration. This is one of the lessons-learned from the 1997 Asian financial crisis: the importance of keeping markets open to migrants at all skill levels in order to stimulate economic recovery.

III. Climate Change Impacts on Human Mobility

The financial crisis is, however, not the only global challenge that we face.

A World Bank official¹ has reminded us that the combination of the recession and climate change could produce an unprecedented decline in food production and, in turn, significant pressures on migration.

In this regard, it was observed, for example, that African agricultural production could be reduced as much as 30 percent as droughts and floods become more common.

In Bangladesh, for example, food harvests would suffer a 25 percent loss as only a 1.5 meter sea level rise inundates 15 percent of total land surface.

Finally, melting glaciers in the Himalayas and Andes could seriously affect availability and reliability of water needed to grow food for increasing populations.

This brings me to my third point, namely, that climate change poses a serious challenge to population movements. If well-managed, however, migration is likely to form part of a comprehensive adaptation strategy.

We do not yet have reliable data on the numbers of persons displaced by climate change, but we do have migration management tools that can be configured to benefit countries of origin and destination and migrants themselves. For example, one immediate, short-term measure could be a circular labour migration scheme to assist populations vulnerable to environmental degradation. A longer-term approach may require integration models such as we are seeing in Japan and other Asian countries.

Clearly, more research is needed to examine the links between environmental, social and political crises in order to be prepared in the future. This is the thinking that went into the OSCE, IOM and United Nations University (UNU) contribution to the EU sponsored two-year research programme on Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios (EACH-FOR).

Conclusion: IOM – OSCE Cooperation

In closing, I would like to conclude my remarks by emphasizing the value that IOM attaches to cooperation and partnership.

¹ Richard Newfarmer, currently the Special Representative of the World Bank to the WTO and UN in Geneva.



I am delighted that OSCE and IOM have a Memorandum of Understanding signed 8 years ago in 2001 by my predecessor, Mr. Brunson McKinley, and with Mr. Ján Kubiš, former OSCE Secretary-General.

Our two organizations have established [and I quote from our MoU] a "practical, pragmatic and result-oriented close cooperation"² [end of quote], based on a shared belief that managing the mobility of people in the region in a humane and orderly way is an essential component of the integration, stability, security and development of the OSCE region.

Genuine partnership is what is needed if we are to succeed in our goal of developing comprehensive, fair, flexible and effective migration management systems — systems that contribute to the well-being and prosperity of people and societies.

Partnerships are the basis for reaping the benefits of migration and for mitigating the impact of the current financial crisis and of global climate change.

Our goal at IOM is to help governments to develop such systems. You have my commitment that IOM will continue to work closely with the OSCE and its Member States. Together we can manage the migration process to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region.

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² Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation between the OSCE Secretariat and the IOM, 30 August 2001.