

**THE 99TH SESSION OF THE IOM COUNCIL,
INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE AND MIGRATION PANEL:
“MIGRATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE”
(SPEAKING NOTES OF AMBASSADOR ŞAKİR FAKILİ)**

Mr. Director General,
Lord Mayor of Geneva,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I would like to thank the distinguished Director General of the International Organisation of Migration, Mr. William Lacy Swing, for giving me this opportunity.
- Turkey has been at the crossroads of massive migration flows throughout the centuries. Immigration continued after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey with the arrival of thousands of people especially from the Balkans.
 - As a country which has benefitted from migration as a catalyst for social change and development, Turkey has always been a safe haven for migrants and asylum-seekers. Socially, almost all immigrations have resulted in successful integration thanks to the openness, hospitality and tolerance of our people.
 - Just to give a few examples, Sephardic Jews, who were expelled from their home in the late 15th century and people from Eastern Europe were welcomed to the Ottoman Empire. In 1930s and 40s, dozens of Jewish scientists and intellectuals who had to leave Europe also found shelter in Turkey. A large number of them were provided with posts in Turkish universities. Their contributions to our enlightenment were unforgettable. Another example from the recent past is the sheltering of 500.000 Iraqis during the first Gulf War.

- Starting in the 1960s, upon the demand of some European countries, thousands of Turks were accepted to Western Europe as “guest workers”.
- During their initial years, these workers were received warmly but had to be accommodated with only few integration projects. Host countries saw them as mere employees and the new-comers themselves had planned to return after a few years’ earnings. As one European sociologist once said to describe their first years, “We have asked for workers, but only human beings came.” As years passed by, they chose to stay for longer times.
- Luckily, their second and third generations have become much more successful in integration. A large number of them even became entrepreneurs who employed people also from the host countries.
- After almost two decades, it was possible to see an increasing number of successful migrants who became politicians, academicians, authors and artists who started to play an active role in the host countries.
- Many have obtained host-country citizenship which facilitated their promotion to higher echelons. Unfortunately, starting in the 1980s, mainly due to economic crises and the end of the Cold War, Western public has started to witness discriminations, racist attacks, rejections and xenophobia against the Turkish communities. This unfavourable climate left behind lasting traces and big social traumas.
- Turkish governments have always urged their smooth accommodation. We have encouraged them to learn the local language. We have believed that a well-integrated Turkish community will serve best to the interests of both sides.
- We have also seen them as a social, cultural and economic bridge between the host countries and Turkey. Sometimes they were disappointed for not being able to easily find the same openness, hospitality and tolerance that they enjoy in Turkey.

- Despite this environment, Turkey continued with perseverance to support the well-being of the migrant Turks living abroad.
- In this framework, we strongly believe that teaching the young Turkish migrants their mother language and keeping them associated with their home culture are vitally important in having a healthy and decent community. Maintaining a good command of the Turkish language is also vital for learning the host country's language. This scientifically tested guideline is the reason why we have sent and paid hundreds of Turkish teachers to the host countries.
- We are assured that helping people in keeping their identities and roots is important in bringing about and preserving a community with integrity which can easily harmonize with the host country.
- We believe that preserving cultural and social characteristics of origin countries adds greatly to a successful multicultural life as well.
- Individual stories are also important. Throughout the process of integration it is necessary to emphasize successful stories rather than failures.
- Taken the present difficulties at some European countries, we are tirelessly asking them to work together to achieve an accomplished integration. In this regard, we are continuously urging our compatriots living abroad to participate actively in the social and cultural life which we believe is the key factor for integration.
- There are also reverse migrations to Turkey. Turkish Governments have taken steps to accommodate with various incentives those migrants who choose to return to Turkey. Such people usually find themselves in a relatively better place than they had when they left the country. Steps have been taken to help their soft landing and adaptation back in Turkey. In recent years, some Turkish businessmen began to choose their CEOs from among the elite Turkish diaspora in the EU.

- We are confident that open societies with an established understanding of tolerance have historically created successful civilizations.
- Policymakers should seek ways to go beyond the simple concept of "addressing the rights of migrants" to ultimately granting all migrants an equal access to all economic, social, cultural and political rights that their own citizens enjoy.
- For achieving migrant-friendly communities, we put a special emphasis on collaborating with the NGOs, believing that they could play a vital role in the process.
- Migration in general has, due to the effects of globalization, developed into a challenge in the global agenda. Today, just like many other countries, Turkey also faces the multiple challenges of migration both as a transit and a destination country.
- Turkey has attached importance to a peaceful inclusion of immigrants and asylum-seekers into its social, economic and cultural life. They find in our country an atmosphere of understanding, acceptance, tolerance and solidarity among the Turkish people. To give a short example, we have recently abolished residence fees for asylum-seekers.
- Being a party to the International and European Conventions on rights and legal status of migrant workers' and family members, Turkey pays a special attention to the safety, human rights and dignity of the migrants, while implementing policies related to migration management. In this framework, Turkey has pioneered the establishment of a WG on the Silk Routes Region within the Budapest Process. The objective is to contribute to better management of migration flows through the Silk Routes Region.
- In addition, we are currently preparing a new legislation on foreigners, migration and asylum matters which will also help us to ease and simplify

the procedures of migration management. The new legislation will also harmonize our system with the EU.

- In order to better address the root causes and social aspects of migration, it would be useful to generate an international dialogue on development like the one which was once called the North-South dialogue. In this sense, it can be stressed that origin countries need more development assistance, more support on technology, financial transfers and more aid in capacity building.
- Thank you.