

Statement

by H. E. Mr. Cristian David, minister-delegate for Romanians abroad

Mr. Chairperson,

I congratulate IOM for its initiative to organize the first Diaspora Conference at Ministerial level. This essentially recognizes the increasing relevance of the topic. It illustrates the awareness of the need to better shape up policies to employ the valuable contributions that diaspora communities can make both in countries of origin and residence.

I view this conference as a remarkable opportunity to work together to tackle the topical issue of migration at large, and specifically in preparation for the upcoming relevant discussions: the UN High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the ongoing deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda. These two-day debates should be result-oriented. Our aim must be to substantially contribute to the larger policy setting framework, through concrete proposals for means to maximizing the positive impact of diaspora engagement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In our era of unprecedented mobility, migration is increasingly recognized as an enabling factor for sustainable development. The current year (2013) presents critical prospects to generate a visionary approach, with better articulated links between migration and development. To this end, we need a comprehensive approach, placing the various stakeholders - ministries, agencies, local authorities, diaspora associations - in mutually reinforcing positions, through cooperation and coordination. We need a multi-dimensional approach that addresses the many forms, causes and consequences of human mobility from the economic, social and environmental perspectives. We need to instill the topic of “mobility and diaspora communities” into national development strategies, and to this end, we have to further work towards effective migration governance as a prerequisite to secure the benefits of migration and development.

Diasporas can play a key role as bridge builders between countries of residence and origin. This is already a commonly recognized fact. However, for this to take place, one key pre-request is the integration of migrants into host societies, by making good use of their human, social, economic and cultural capital in a way that links communities.

We deem it as a common responsibility, fundamental task of good governance, to develop a creative approach towards one of the most complex phenomena of the contemporary world: migration and population dynamics. Latest years illustrated

that migration has multidimensional implications, with direct consequences for fields like security, development, workforce, social policies, health, education. Although migration impacts differently the origin and destination country, it does generate a common responsibility to tackle the process.

It is a task for good governance to transform a common challenge (mobility of workforce and the resulting migratory flows) in an opportunity for modernization and development. Communities living abroad are a vital and sustainable resource for their home country, with potential for becoming vectors for national modernisation of their homeland, but also with the role of connecting origin and destination countries.

Mr. Chairperson,

I am a firm believer in the concept that says one way of “curbing migration is to allow for more”. The key to progress in this field is global governance of migration, founded on principles of good governance.

Promoting migration and development through diaspora engagement can be a win-win situation, should the necessary conditions be in place. Migrants win through higher wages and more life opportunities. They respond to the demand for labour in receiving states and bring down unemployment rates in sending states. The brain drain effect should be stemmed by encouraging migrants to be engaged both in the countries of origin and destination through remittances, investments, knowledge transfers and “soft diplomacy”.

We are currently working on shaping up such a policy framework in Romania.

In 2012, **the Romanian Government** decided to create the portfolio of Minister-delegate for Romanians abroad, within the structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was the first step to illustrate the determination to adapt our institutional and political framework to current realities – namely a structural transformation embedded in the EU membership and the fundamental concept of mobility of people. Furthermore, a national strategy has been adopted in the field, and it aims to build a mutual beneficial partnership with Romanian communities abroad.

As regards the role of governments everywhere, we firmly believe that the public authorities play a crucial role in **combating xenophobia, racism and intolerance** towards migrants and foreigners. The debate on immigration should be based on facts and not on myths or stereotypes.

Strengthening **the protection of human rights of migrants** is a key element in any migration strategy. Governments have the responsibility to ensure access to basic social security guarantees for migrants and to enact integration policies. The irregular migrants are more likely to be victimized by unscrupulous employers, traffickers and smugglers.

We would also like to highlight the poor working conditions for many migrant workers which have often been overlooked in the larger debate on migration.

Furthermore, the local authorities have important competencies in this field from receiving newcomers to fostering social inclusion. Governments need to ensure the proper training of civil servants to enhance the protection of human rights of migrants.

Not least, we would like to highlight the problem of **migrant children**, as one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Especially when unaccompanied, these children are exposed to the risk of economic and sexual exploitation, abuse and violence. Governments need to do a better job in elaborating and enforcing child-sensitive migration policies.

In this context, we should not forget that children left behind by parents who work abroad are also affected by migration. Romania is striving to tackle this phenomenon, by improving the monitoring and reporting mechanisms, building the capacity of public social assistance services and raising awareness on the negative effects of parental absence on children.

To conclude, Mr. Chairperson,

We are heartened by the examples of good practices shared by the participants to this Conference, aimed at better harnessing the resources of transnational communities.

We would like to encourage IOM to further develop and promote the conceptual framework on enabling, engaging and empowering diaspora communities by taking into account the results of this meeting.

In the wake of the next generation development agenda, we need to better prepare ourselves for the paradigm shift in addressing migration from the challenges to the opportunities it offers.