

Distinguished/dear ladies and gentlemen,

I am very grateful to the IOM General Directorate for giving me the opportunity of contributing in the debate on return migration phenomenon. This topic is very relevant being intimately linked with the final outcome of each migrant's life plan. The civil society is my background, and my collaboration with the Italian government on migration issues have been very intense; all that made my work particularly focused on human and economic issues related to migration.

In the last years Italy has become the destination of big migration flows. After more than one-century migration the peninsula changed into a receiving and transit country for migrants proceeding from different parts of the world. Italy geographical characteristics, the nature of its economic system and social organization made it a real bridge on the Mediterranean sea. This bridge connects continents and peoples. Nowadays Italy is one of the crucial points of migration flows in Europe and in the whole Western World. Italy, both from government side and civil society local communities has become aware of this phenomenon preparing itself in order to provide consistent responses to the different and developing forms of migration. We have passed from the emergency of Eighties to an attempt of planning migration flows. The latter, even-though affected by contradictions and difficulties, has marked last decade policies. Migration to Italy gave evidence of some resources of our society previously considered of less relevance. These resources are the efforts of local communities for integration and rationalization of migrants' presence; and above all show a lively civil society made of private, religious and non-religious organizations. Civil society action was very useful, not only defending migrants' rights but also creating integration spaces, chances of cultural promotion and vocational training. The Italian civil society was as well a spur to the Government policy suggesting practical solutions. It has constantly presented real migrants' interests. The requests of civil society's organizations have been always heard –even-though with different intensity- by the various governments ruling the country, and this is a merit for the latter. These organizations were considered trustworthy interlocutors; their suggestions were taken into account when drafting laws and cooperation has been fostered as much as possible. All that contributed to progressively harmonize European migration policies. This extremely complex harmonization is still in progress and searching for a final settlement.

On the base of this experience I would like to focus on some aspects –though limited - of return migrations.

A major problem, for migrants staying for a long time in destination countries, is that of pension funds. This is a relevant aspect, above all for the people who willingly decide to close their

migration experience and go back to their home country after several years. These migrants have contributed together with their employers to store resources that are supposed to be given back at the end of working years in the form of old-age or retirement pensions. These funds, if considered alone, are not enough to give title to a pension, in other cases they produce poor allowances. These funds should thus be jointed with other contributions paid by migrants in their own country or in other countries where they have worked. This need gives rise to produce very complex files that are difficult to be controlled from afar. In addition to that pension laws in the various countries are not always ready to manage this situation. That is why an increasing harmonization of pension systems is needed in order to provide migrants with resources that are recognized to them as indefeasible rights.

Similar problems arise on the issue of savings made by migrants for their possible return to countries of origin. Financial flows proceeding from migrant's labor often become remittances to their own families. Often migrants have available funds thanks to the increased integration and these funds are used to buy real estate or plots in their home country. These purchases represent the material achievement of the social upgrading any migration plan aims at. But such economic activities are not always facilitated by bank laws. Migrants, from the perspective of credit providers, are not ideal debtors. They have no properties and undergo high social mobility, they are not always able to find external guarantees for credit. At the same time they cannot do without credit to implement their migration plan. In this sense bank laws should make a long-sighted effort getting a major understanding of migrant's profile that differs from local people who apply for loans. Major flexibility of banks may also contribute to reduce the penetration of illegal activities such as usury, at times quite spread in migrants environment.

Different is the nature of the deep link among vocational training, labor opportunities and return migration. We synthetically affirm that generic migrant has not always a professional qualification to be used in the receiving country or has no qualification at all. The country of arrival could meet expenses related to vocational training of a migrant enabling him/her to perform his/her activity during a fixed term. At the end of the term migrant's return should be fostered by means of a salary subsidies policy, the latter should be decreasing in terms of amount and limited in time. Some pocket money should be included for the first difficulties to be faced when back home. All that with the guarantee that the migrant is placed in labor market in the position he has been trained for. These initiatives may even face an emerging problem in countries with high degree of emigration - the phenomenon of brain drain. Countries of origin could be given back of subjects able to contribute in specific areas of labor market where a good degree of specialization is required.

The issue of seasonal migrations is similar. They represent an important resource for receiving countries in first-level economic sectors affected by chronic lack of workers. A boost to seasonal migration is a source of stabilization of economies, especially at a regional level, within the framework of economic relationships taking into account different society needs. A strong regularization of these flows can reduce illegal activities and illicit worker trade. It requires a joint effort of governments focusing on the needs of the countries of origin and the opportunities that arise in the receiving countries.

These various aspects –just some – of return migration issue require some initiatives at a general level to improve life conditions of migrants and major certainties for countries of arrival.

Inter-governmental agreements should be more implemented and deal at the same level with migrants life itineraries. An effort should be made in compliance with the different state laws to foster joint governance of these phenomena. Opening legal and transparent migration channels contributes to reduce illegal space and illicit trade of human beings. IOM can provide a relevant contribution giving support to all governments who decide to undertake this way. This organization has an heritage of experience at the service of the international community.

Strengthening legal channels of emigration gives rise to a growth of rights for the people involved. To this aim joint action is to be intensified to reduce illegal migration. As for the case of various areas, this initiative should involve all rings of the migration chain through a joint cooperation of all involved governments.

A higher stability of state migration laws seems to be more and more necessary in order to be a certain and ineludible reference point. Uncertainty often resulting from variables of domestic political order, is a fertile soil for illegal activities. Stability has to go together with the development of law provisions in accordance with changing conditions of migration flows. An effective response is at the base of correct migration flows where compliance with the law can go together with inalienable rights of human beings.

Thanks for your attention