

Speech by the Director-General for Legislation, International Affairs and Immigration of the Ministry of Justice at the IOM Workshop on Managing Return Migration, 21 April 2008

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

- I would like to thank the International Organisation for Migration for giving me the opportunity to speak today about the Dutch policy on return.
- The Dutch government is pleased to see that the subject of this years International Dialogue on Migration is “Return” and the focus of this particular workshop is on Managing Return Migration.
- In this Session (Session I) of today’s meeting we will talk about Return Migration in the Framework of Comprehensive Migration Management.
- Return as an integral part of Migration. Migration as an integral part of many other government policies.
- In the paper it is mentioned that return migration is rarely approached in a holistic manner.
- I will explain that in the Netherlands we are giving it our best efforts to approach this issue in a holistic manner.
- Let me start by saying that the Netherlands views migration as a very positive phenomenon which has greatly contributed to the economic and cultural development of the Netherlands.
- But also our political development: our State Secretary of Justice, Ms Albayrak, herself is a migrant.

- The Netherlands promotes orderly and regulated migration. At the same time we also seek to combat the smuggling of human beings, human trafficking and illegal immigration.
- This we can of course only achieve if we work together with important partners and as countries together.
- I will sketch the outline of Dutch policy, the challenges facing us and what we hope to achieve.
- The Netherlands considers migration and return in the broader perspective of its foreign policy, specifically that for development co-operation, economic and other policies.
- Migration and development is still a relatively new policy field. In 2004 the Netherlands became an international frontrunner when it published a policy document on this topic. It was one of the first countries – if not the first country – in the world to do so.
- At international level the issue came up in 2006 when the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development was held. This Dialogue led to the Global Forum on Migration and Development, held in Brussels last year, which will have a follow-up in Manila in October of this year. The Netherlands strongly and actively supports this international dialogue and will continue to do so in the future.
- The new government took office just over a year ago, and a number of important measures affecting migration have since been taken, while some further major changes are in the pipeline
- The State Secretary of Justice will, in collaboration with her colleague, the Minister for Development Cooperation, Mr Koenders, within the next

coming months issue a new policy document on migration and development. This document will discuss how migration and development policy can help strengthen the positive contribution of migration to development and vice versa, and how the negative aspects of migration can be minimised.

- National coordination may not always be easy, but the result is rewarding.
- I think all governments are facing challenges with migration though perhaps the exact difficulties will be different in every country. In any case we are all facing the same issues. This is why the Netherlands wants to support other countries in this context. We view solidarity, partnership, ownership and burden-sharing as essential aspects of the joint management of migration flows.
- From this point of view, I feel it is of the utmost importance that the Netherlands contributes and supports other countries, and developing countries with whom we have a development relationship in particular.
- Migration can have a small but essential potential for development. But if this potential is to be realised, it will depend in part on the political and economic parameters and on the capacity to put migration on the right track.
- The Netherlands wants to contribute to this process. Aspects which will have our particular attention include promoting circular migration, removing perceived practical obstacles to international remittances, contributing to capacity building, and promoting return on a permanent basis. And of course resettlement is of the utmost importance; a sign of solidarity.
- There are interesting developments regarding the admission policy to the Netherlands, but I would like to focus on today's important topic: return in relation to migration and development policy.

- If immigration policy is to be effective, it must include an effective policy on return. If migrants who are not or no longer entitled to a residence permit do not return to their own countries, it is the end of any immigration policy. And even worse, it will ultimately cause public support for an open and tolerant society to evaporate. This is something we must prevent at all odds. In this respect, I hope we all have the same interests.
- I am well aware that return is a troublesome issue. People often do not want to go back, which is in itself understandable. Sometimes they have very few prospects in their country of origin; they may be concerned that they will have problems adjusting when they are back; they are often ashamed of being unable to stay in Europe, especially if their families have heavily invested in their travel.
- Our policy is aimed at removing these obstacles. We encourage voluntary departure and wherever possible we support return on a permanent basis. Together with our colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we have developed several programmes to facilitate and stimulate voluntary return.
- For example, individuals can make use of the basic assisted voluntary return programme financed by the Ministry of Justice. IOM can assist the voluntary return of migrants via this programme.
- The Dutch government also has a reintegration programme, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is also implemented by IOM.
- The main objective of the project is to stimulate and facilitate voluntary departure from the Netherlands for a target group of (ex-)asylum seekers and to enhance the chances for reintegration in the country of origin or resettlement in a third country.
- At this moment the Dutch government is evaluating its reintegration policy and is developing a new policy on reintegration, which consists of

- a broader scope to develop reintegration programs in countries of origin from a more strategic approach.
- The new reintegration programme will also contain the possibility to obtain a more substantial contribution in kind for returnees in stead of a financial reintegration grant. This contribution in kind is for instance for education, housing, jobfinding and setting up small businesses. We want this to meet local needs. It will give the possibility to a more tailormade approach.
 - There will also be more possibilities for special projects for facilitating specific groups, like unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking in selected countries that cooperate with return.
 - Two paradoxes to conclude:
 - Succesfull return policy is essential for regular migration flows to continue. If return fails, the regular migration market in the end will close more and more.
 - We want voluntary return, but to have succesfull voluntary returns, we need to be succesfull on forced returns.
 - Thank you very much for your attention and the Netherlands is looking forward to successfull cooperation with other states and with IOM.