

**COUNCIL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION**

99th Session

(29 November – 2 December 2010)

Keynote Address by

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Responsible for Home Affairs

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The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change

Mr President,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure to be able to address this 99th meeting of your Council. As European Commissioner responsible for migration issues, I consider it a privilege to have the opportunity to share some of my thoughts and views with such an important audience and at such a crucial phase of building our migration policies.

Next year, the International Organization for Migration will celebrate its 60th birthday. Our world has changed drastically since 1951 but the need for a strong organization like IOM that deals with international migration is greater today than ever before.

There are at least three reasons for this.

First of all because people still move, more than ever before. An estimated 215 million people today live in a country they were not born in. But if one looks at migration in a more comprehensive manner, the number of people concerned is significantly higher. There are over 800 million internally displaced people, bringing the people on the move to a total of 1 billion.

Globalisation is a second reason. Globalisation of businesses demands globalisation of skills and mobility. The constantly increasing global trade and foreign investments make the emerging markets the movers and shakers of global growth. Brazil, Russia, India and China provide good examples for how to benefit from migration and mobility. Highly skilled people in science and technology within the Indian diaspora have facilitated up to a third of all foreign investments in India.

The message is clear: if a country wants to ensure its socio-economic development, it must connect to these realities. Any country that shuts itself off from global developments will have to face the consequences.

But increasing globalisation also implies increasing interdependence. Decisions in one country can have a substantial impact on other countries. That is why dialogue and mutual understanding - also on a regional level - is needed. This is one of the areas where the IOM plays such an important role.

The third, and maybe most important, reason why we need a strong IOM is because IOM strengthens the human face of migration. The man or woman who sets out from one place to another is above all a human being, a man or a woman with aspirations and with the ambition of a better life. All across the world, migrants today are also children, which raise serious concerns and the need to adapt our policies so that we can take better care of this vulnerable group.

But this human face is often lacking in public perception. In the times we live in, migration is not always perceived as an asset, or as the duty of well-functioning societies to welcome and protect people in need. A recent international educational survey shows that children in

developed democratic states hold very negative attitudes towards migrants; and in an increasing number of countries politicians feed off these fears and get elected because of them. Fears of the unknown, of other religions, other habits, other ways of living.

This is also the case in the media. It is striking to see the flow of negative messages related to migration. Most migrants seem to be working in an irregular manner; they are the cause of high unemployment and are a cost to the state. Hardly any positive messages can be found.

History tells us that migrants have been scapegoats far too often. We all know the tragic consequences.

It is therefore all the more important that we together – the IOM, its Member States and organizations – need to counter this trend. And we need to do this much more actively. We need to recognize more openly the social, economic and cultural contributions migrants make to our societies.

So let me be clear about my position. I consider well-managed migration a positive phenomenon; that it can be truly beneficial for everybody involved; that most migrants are a real asset to our societies; that these are people in which we can recognize our own strengths and weaknesses and that they are an integral and important part of our societies.

And let me be clear about my vocabulary too: Illegal migrants do not exist. People may come to the EU and might be required to use irregular ways – for instance when seeking international protection -, but no human being is illegal.

II. The EU Policies on migration

Ladies and gentlemen,

Many parts of our world are confronted with important demographic changes. Most developed countries see their work-force getting older. The median age of the total world population is expected to increase from slightly below 26 years in 2000 to just above 37 years in 2050.

The EU is no exception to these trends. Soon the EU's active population will start falling. The EU population in total will increase by 10 million people in the next 50 years, while the EU workforce will decrease by 50 million. In that calculation, we have already taken into account that the EU will welcome 58 million immigrants during the same period of time.

The EU is confronted with high unemployment but at the same time the number of vacancies in our labour markets is increasing. Looking at the labour needs of tomorrow it is striking how serious the demand for labour will be.

It is expected that the EU economy will soon be seriously hampered by a shortage of labour in the IT technology field: Europe could lack between 400.000 and 700.000 IT professionals by 2015. And in 2020, a shortage of between 1 and 2 million professionals in the health sector is expected.

Addressing unemployment is of course a top priority for the EU. The Europe 2020 Strategy indicates many initiatives to reduce unemployment and meet the EU's labour demands. But even with the best policies, it is most unlikely that all these resources and the skills needed can be found within the EU.

At the same time, there will be an increase in global competition for skills. If Europe is to stand strong and keep its position among the rapidly growing economies on the global market we need to make our labour market more attractive and our societies more welcoming to migrants.

The Stockholm programme, adopted by EU Member States last December, indicates the EU priority actions for the next five years. It has the overall aim of ensuring the safety of our citizens in full respect of their fundamental rights and freedoms. It has also reaffirmed the

need for labour migration.

In the EU construction, it is up to each Member State to decide on the volumes of admission of workers and this will be fully respected.

But the European Commission is convinced that we need to make it more attractive to come and work in the EU and that we have to have a common framework that defines the admission rules and conditions. We need the highly skilled, and the EU Blue Card Directive was therefore adopted in May 2009. We need the low skilled and a draft Directive on seasonal workers was therefore proposed in July this year. We also need to make it easier for international enterprises to transfer personnel across EU borders, and that is why the Commission proposed a Directive on Inter-Corporate Transferees last summer.

But we have to do more. We have to design an innovative policy that addresses the needs of the EU, and that at the same time safeguards the interests of migrants and our partner countries.

Such a policy would need to include a number of different initiatives:

- We need to **improve our labour matching**: The European Union will strengthen its capacity to better anticipate and match labour market needs and skills. As from 2012 the EU will have an **EU skills Panorama**. This data base will contain updated forecasting of skills supply and labour market needs. It will be available online to improve transparency for job seekers and companies.
- We need to **avoid wasting competences and skills** of those present in our societies, sometimes called brain waste. Access to the labour market is a crucial instrument for integration but we need also to ensure that migrant skills are matched better to the jobs for which they are suited.
- Most of us have probably met them – the engineers working as cleaners, or the doctors driving taxis. It is such a waste of skill and competence – for our societies of course, but not least for the engineer or surgeon whose skills are not being recognized.

Therefore the European Commission will invest more in recognition of qualifications and skills.

- We need to be more transparent about the realities of migration. Software developers in Chennai, Tunis or Kiev could be interested to scan foreign markets for the next employment opportunity. At the same time, their fitters, welders or plumbers might be interested to be informed about what conditions to expect abroad
- People have the right and should be able to know about the rules and procedures that apply when moving to an EU Member State. That is why the European Commission will **launch an immigration portal website** next year. It will provide all the relevant information to potential migrants who are considering coming to the EU.
- We will strengthen our efforts to better integrate people. No migration policy is sustainable without serious integration efforts. In order to ensure migrants to really become part of our societies and structures, we need to be much more ambitious. Therefore I will present **proposals to reinforce integration** in 2011.
- We need to improve our possibilities to check who is entering the European territory and do more to **tackle trafficking in human beings**.

One important step in this regard was taken recently, with the reinforcement of the EU external borders agency FRONTEX. Furthermore, the EU is close to agreeing on new anti-trafficking legislation following Commission proposals. And we will soon appoint an EU Anti-trafficking coordinator.

- We will have to do more to **prevent illegal employment**. Governments should be

relentless in fighting the organized crime and reckless employers that profit from migrants through smuggling, trafficking and exploitation. The EU has recently adopted rules that target employers that profit of irregular migrants. The Commission will ensure that these rules will be properly implemented.

- We need to **step up our dialogue and cooperation with partner countries**. The EU has already invested a great deal. At regional level, we will reinforce our cooperation with the countries in our immediate neighbourhood. Two weeks ago, when visiting Tirana and Sarajevo, I was struck by how much our new visa-free regime means, especially to students, who before the end of the year will be able to visit their friends in the EU without going through cumbersome visa procedures.
- We work closely with African countries through the EU-Africa Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment. A new Action Plan for 2011-2013 is expected to be endorsed tomorrow by the leaders at the Africa-EU Summit in Libya. We also work with African and Caribbean countries, and are pleased to see that the ACP Migration Observatory was successfully launched last October. We will also seek to strengthen our dialogue with Asia and Latin America.
- If we want to manage migration to the benefit of all, we need to acknowledge that the world is changing and innovate our policies. The EU is now experimenting with so-called Mobility Partnerships. These partnerships allow to deal with different aspects of migration in one overall and coherent framework. Mobility Partnerships have been agreed with Cape Verde, Moldova, and recently with Georgia. The first experiences are very positive. We might consider exploring such partnerships with other interested countries in the future.
- We will reinforce our policies in important areas such as the linkage between **migration and development** and the ways in which we can further develop **circular migration**.
 - Let me also highlight the need to look more carefully at the interconnection between **climate change and migration**. These are complex issues, but we need to put a policy in place urgently so that we can have a responsible approach to the challenges to come.

In all these areas I will present proposals next year.

Ladies and gentlemen,

III. The EU and the IOM

The European Union is unique, and does not resemble any other form of regional integration. It is the only region in the world where sovereign states have voluntarily chosen to give up a part of their sovereignty and handed it over to a supranational level. We have an internal market in terms of the free movement of capital, goods, services and people. And what started 25 years ago with six EU Member States, has expanded into a much larger Schengen area, with seamless, passport-free travel.

The Lisbon Treaty, that entered into force last December, increased the role of the European Union in the area of migration. The EU will develop a common migration policy. This means that the EU **and** the Member States can taken political initiatives in accordance with their respective competences.

The Lisbon Treaty also establishes the European Union as a legal personality and strengthens its role not least in external relations.

This will also need to be reflected in the relationship between the IOM and the EU in the future. The European Union, both through its Member States and through the Commission and other EU institutions, is one of the biggest partners and contributors to projects

implemented by the IOM.

As a major donor, it should also be able to play a role that is consistent with its contributions in terms of policy and finances.

From the European Commission perspective, we hope to strengthen our strategic cooperation with the IOM and explore the possibilities for an increased partnership.

IV. Global issues

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by identifying some key issues that I believe should be addressed as a matter of priority.

First of all the issue of **brain drain**: The need for labour in many countries will certainly affect others. Although the choice to migrate should be a personal decision, we do not wish to drain countries of competence.

We need to be responsible about this. The EU is already taking measures as part of our development policy; we help countries retain skills and support training and education especially in those labour sectors under strain; we support the WHO guidelines; we work hard to help migrants to generate income, to transfer skills and investments to their countries of origin. We make a serious effort to facilitate remittances.

But we have to recognize that this cannot be addressed by the EU alone. It is a truly global issue and as such should also be addressed at a global level. I therefore call on the international community to put this issue as one of the priorities for the international debate and to consider taking concrete initiatives.

Secondly: we need to **strengthen our evidence-base for our policies**: In order to have a proper dialogue and cooperation, in order to be able to counter unjustified, negative attitudes and emotions, we need more facts and figures.

Migration profiles are an important initiative that should be highlighted in this respect. Thanks to these profiles – or what name you would like to give them – we will get a better understanding of the realities of migration and enables us to assess whether or not our policies are working.

I would strongly encourage the IOM to further develop these profiles. It should be possible to have a global coverage preferably no later than 2015. The Commission will certainly support such an initiative and will work closely with the IOM to make this happen.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We all are committed to make migration work. We all have our own experiences of migration; you come from all corners of the world and bring vast knowledge to the table. While we all see the challenges and the opportunities, our assessments may differ. If our attempts to make sound migration policy are to succeed, we will need to step up and deepen our dialogue.

I believe that this forum, the IOM Council, that brings together so many Member States in the theme of migration, is ideal to bring forward lessons learnt and to share them broadly.

In conclusion, I want to underline that there are not many people today who believe that migration can be managed by governments in isolation. Within this field, no one will succeed by acting on its own. So let us move forward, let us form partnerships for migration, keeping the human dimension in the centre and not losing sight of the evolving economic needs of labour markets and dynamic societies. The European Commission is ready to work with you.

Thank you for your attention.

