



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Introductory Remarks
by the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities
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**First Preparatory Conference
For The Seventeenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum**

Prague, 16 - 17 October 2008

**“Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental
policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region”**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome all of you to the First Preparatory Conference to the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum. I also wish to express my warmest thanks to our Czech hosts and to the OSCE Prague Office for all the efforts they have put into the preparations of this Conference.

I would also like to thank the incoming Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE for the co-operation and support provided during the preparations for this meeting.

Furthermore, let me to express my gratitude to all the high-ranking guests and participants for joining us here in Prague to take part in our deliberations. I am particularly pleased about the considerable participation from partner international organizations, NGOs and representatives of the business and academic community, who joined us at this Conference. We look forward to continuing the productive co-operation with all the stakeholders, and we would like to reiterate our conviction that achieving concrete results is only possible through further co-operation and joint action.

My warmest thanks and appreciation also go to our colleagues in the OSCE field presences for their tireless efforts and the valuable contribution they bring each year to the Economic and Environmental Forum process. They play an important part by identifying local needs, working closely with their host countries, and developing and implementing follow-up activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The incoming Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE proposed "Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies to the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region" as the theme of the 17th EEF. The chosen theme could not have been more pertinent, given the security challenges stemming from the surge in migratory flows and the increasing urgency to find adequate migration policy responses. A comprehensive approach is needed to better address the opportunities as well as deal with the challenges of international migration more effectively.

Throughout the 17th EEF process, we will underline the importance of good governance in migration policies, as well as the need for enhanced co-operation between destination, transit, and origin countries, both bilaterally and at the regional level. The goal will be to foster comprehensive, effective, and secure migration management approaches that will enhance the developmental impact of migration and avert the potential negative consequences of ineffective migration management.

In line with the increased complexity of migration management, the OSCE has to address migration in a more comprehensive manner, utilizing its cross-dimensional character, which looks at migration management from a political, economic, environmental and human rights perspective.

In this endeavour, we can build on the dialogue established under the Slovenian Chairmanship in 2005 when the 13th Economic Forum process discussed "Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE Area". As you know, based on that Forum's recommendations, the Decision Nr. 2/05, on Migration, was adopted at the Ljubljana Ministerial Council Meeting in December 2005.

Inter alia, that decision recognizes that all States should adopt effective national frameworks in order to manage migration, and underlines that migration is inherently a transnational issue requiring co-operation between States. It also acknowledges that the OSCE could contribute in this context, by facilitating dialogue and co-operation between countries of origin, transit and destination in the OSCE area, as well as the OSCE Partners for Co-operation, and by working in synergy with international bodies having a specific focus on migration.

Let me also remind you that subsequently my Office developed together with the IOM and the ILO a "Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and Destination", which was issued in May 2006. The Handbook was later translated into Russian, in its CIS version. A Mediterranean edition was produced in 2007 in Arabic and English and launched at a seminar in Rabat.

The Handbook emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to successfully addressing labour migration management and serves as an outstanding example of OSCE's efforts to facilitate governments' work to improve their policies in this field through the exchange of information, best-practices, dialogue and consultation. Also, the Handbook contributed to building stronger partnerships between the OSCE, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Office (ILO). I am confident that this partnership will continued also in the context of next year's Forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now briefly refer to the substance and the proceedings of this First Preparatory Conference to the 17th Economic and Environmental Forum

This Conference, which is the start of the preparatory process, will focus on a number of key issues related to improved migration management, namely improving the channels for legal migration and reducing illegal migration and combating the illegal activities associated with it.

Effective migration management, including good governance and bilateral and regional co-operation in the field, are key prerequisites for achieving our common goals. The combination of comprehensive policy instruments and control mechanisms is another key element in effectively addressing these challenges. It is clear that a comprehensive and cross-dimensional approach, reflecting the spirit and substance of the OSCE principles and perspectives, is the most adequate response to such challenges.

I hope you found useful the supporting documents we have circulated ahead of the meeting, the Agenda as well as the Background Issues document that has been prepared by the IOM in close co-operation with my Office. The document aims at identifying the key issues expected to be covered under each topic and thereby should serve as helpful guidance to delegations, experts and other participants in their preparation for the discussions of the Conference

Session I will deal with the migration context and trends in the OSCE region. In this session we shall focus on the linkages with economic development, environmental degradation and security. The fundamental issues highlighted here should facilitate the discussions that will follow later during the Conference.

Session II will deal with the management of legal migration, focusing on the labour market balances in countries of origin and destination; in this context, the discrepancies between policies targeted at high-skilled and low-skilled labour migrants will be an important issue.

Session III - Protection of migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination, including gender aspects - will highlight the legal commitments of participating States, the national and international norms and standards applying to migration management, including, *inter alia*, the regulation of employment agencies and combating illegal recruitment practices and exploitative working conditions.

Session IV will deal with circular migration and return policies, emphasizing once more the importance of enhanced co-operation and dialogue between origin and destination countries.

Session V - Border management co-operation to facilitate labour mobility and combat illegal migration - will be a helpful addition to the cross-dimensional approach to migration management, addressing this indispensable aspect of good migration management through inter-agency co-operation between the relevant authorities of participating States.

Session VI will focus on combating criminal networks, smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings. We should try to identify ways to tackle such challenges and address the negative outcomes of ineffective migration management.

Finally, Session VII - Prospects for closer inter-state and regional co-operation to develop comprehensive, effective and secure migration management approaches - will discuss the lessons learned and opportunities for regional as well as international co-operation leading to successful migration management approaches.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I encourage you to use these two days efficiently, to engage in a genuine free flowing and action oriented dialogue. I am looking forward to hearing our distinguished keynote speakers and then the comments and interventions from the floor. I am looking forward to an interactive and enriching dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.