



HDIM.DEL/424/08
8 October 2008

**HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
(29 September-10 October 2008)**

Working Session 11: Humanitarian Issues and Other Commitments

**Statement by Ambassador Yusuf Buluç
Permanent Representative of Turkey**

Migrant Workers, the Integration of Legal Migrants

Mr. Moderator,

The debate on migration is a complex one. It is first and foremost about human beings who have inalienable rights. It is also about economies which need workforce on the cheap to sustain development and production. More recently, it is also about security, identity and values. A sound immigration and integration policy should take into account all of these dimensions.

The political context in which immigration and integration policies are being formulated has become increasingly hostile towards a rights-based approach. Rather, migrants are selectively granted such status on the basis of the scale and measure of their potential contributions to the economies. Not too different, in substance, from an economic asset or commodity.

All migrants, irrespective of their qualifications, contribute to the societies they live in. Take the Turks living in Western Europe since early 1960s. The number of companies established by Turkish entrepreneurs in Western Europe has risen to approximately 140.000. These enterprises are providing jobs for 640.000 employees. Obviously, these opportunities for employment are offered to all, not excluded to those of Turkish origin.

It may be convenient to ignore these contributions for those whose agenda is anti-immigrant. However, those who care for inclusive societies based on respect for diversity need to remind the mainstream society of the social and economic value of these contributions.

Integration is a catchword nowadays. For most migrants, it means participation. They are not prepared to achieve this state of existence at the expense of severing their ties to their motherlands, mother tongues and cultures. It also means abiding by the rules of the society they chose to live in. It would be of highly questionable worth and utility if integration policies are devised without thorough consultation with migrant communities.

The newly enacted regulations that pose barriers to naturalization undermine the efforts made for integration.

Furthermore, making the citizenship of the receiving country a prerequisite for the exercise of political right as elector or candidate in local elections discourages ownership and integration.

The immigration laws recently adopted in some West European countries within the context of the newly developed integration policies contain provisions that annul the rights obtained through the Turkey-EU Association Agreement and those stemming from international law. This is notwithstanding that we have aligned ourselves with the statement made by the European Union.

These new laws are a source concern because they result in disregard for some of the immigrants' basic rights such as family unification. We believe that it is important for citizens to have and improve the knowledge of local languages. However, to impose this as a precondition for family unification is incompatible with human rights standards. Besides, the language proficiency test applied exclusively to the immigrants coming from a select group of countries which includes Turkey, in our view, is indisputably discriminatory.

Let me elaborate further. Scientific research has revealed that the success of the migrants' children in learning destination countries' languages will largely be determined by their command of mother-tongue. Mother-tongue education at school is a factor in favor of integration, not against it. Therefore, we urge the countries concerned to provide facility and incentive for mother tongue education rather than restricting and abolishing it.

Earlier this year, the Economist argued that, despite a growing backlash, the boom in migration has been mostly good for both sending and recipient countries. The receiving countries would be at fault if they took this data to vindicate the propriety of their policies.

Recommendation to the participating States:

The OSCE participating States should sign and ratify the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, one of the major international human rights instruments. Unfortunately, there are only 6 OSCE participating States which have already done so. The club of signatories should not remain so exclusive.

Thank you.