****

**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**The Secretariat**

**International Migrants Day - 2017: History of Migration**

*15 December 2017, at 16:00, auditorium P-4*

Dear Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to join the previous speakers in thanking Dmitryo for inviting the Organization for Security and Cooperation to this event to mark the 2017 International Migrants Day.

I represent today the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, whose mandate focuses particularly on the economic aspects of related to migration governance.

Indeed, international migration has been an issue of concern for the OSCE since its establishment. The size, features and trends of migration flows in the OSCE area have changed considerably and in unforeseen ways since 1975, when the Helsinki Final Act was adopted and the first commitments on migration agreed at the founding of the “Helsinki Process”. The OSCE forward-looking commitments[[1]](#footnote-1) aim at promoting a comprehensive, cross-dimensional and co-ordinated policy approach to migration governance, engaging not only governments but also social and private-sector partners as well as civil society. Border control, national security and migrants’ integration, discouraging irregular migration while seeking to promote and protect the human rights of all workers – both nationals and foreigners -, are not easy interests to be reconciled. Particularly in times of increasing inter-dependence and of growing human mobility, the OSCE platform of dialogue continues offering the opportunity to exchange views and build confidence among countries of origin, transit and destination of migration flows.

In this context, the OSCE has focused a particular attention on migrant women, considering that an increasing percentage – almost 50 percent – of the current estimated 250 million international migrants is composed by female. Migration is an empowering experience as long as it is managed profitably both for the individuals and the concerned States. The OCEEA, together with its international partners, the ILO and IOM, has extensively engaged in promoting a better understanding of the specific needs and aspirations of women migrants. Female labour force represents an incredible source of development for both countries of origin and destination of migration flows. However, it is important to acknowledge that female migrants are often confronted with gender-specific disadvantages in the migration process and in their employment due to different factors, such as stereotyped labour roles for men and women, lack of policies addressing female migrant workers’ specific needs and limited legal channels available to them. They are also often working in sectors not fully covered by labour legislation, such as domestic work. This makes them particularly vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation and, in the worst cases, to fall victim to human trafficking and labour exploitation.

Indeed, there is a strong need to address effective management of migrant workforce with a pragmatic, evidence-based approach, trying to strip down demagogical attitudes. There is a strong need to offer a new vision of migration management that is economically and socially profitable for both States and individuals. There is a strong need to bridge the gap between perception and reality when dealing with migration governance.

On Monday 18 December, to mark the 2017 International Migrants Day, the OSCE will host an event, co-organized with IOM, to discuss exactly the widening gap between perception and reality in the representation of migration and migrants. This is an emerging concern about negative stereotypes and misconceptions that can undermine social cohesion.

To further support our engagement towards policies that are planned on solid grounds and not fears, in 2015 the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities published a report titled “*Towards evidence-based migration policies*”. The report was the result of a joint effort with IOM to promote more effective and harmonized data collection systems in three Central Asian countries and the Russian Federation. It would be interesting to replicate and sale up such initiative.

For the future, the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities is planning to further reinforce its engagement in view of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Priority areas will include: brain drain, particularly of young people; return migration, an expert meeting in Vienna will discuss practices on how to make return a success story; the perspective of local authorities: we are planning a survey among “welcoming and inclusive cities” in the OSCE region in order to better understand the “secret” of their success. The Russian Federation will be included in the survey thanks to the involvement of RIAC; labour migration throughout its cycle: we will organize a regional workshop in Central Asia to understand the state of the art of labour mobility as well as the final meeting of the 2-year project funded by the European Union for the socio-economic inclusion of migrants in 6 Member States in order to share the experiences carried out and the lessons learned from this exercise carried out in close cooperation with trade unions and associations of employers.

Last but not least, together with IOM and ILO we have developed a programme to update and upgrade the tools to promote legal pathways of migration. Funding permitting, the programme will be implemented next year with a special focus on migration for education purposes.

Allow to conclude by quoting the OSCE Secretary General Ambassador Thomas Greminger. It is true that speeches do not solve problems, but it is also true that words can inspire a change. We have the responsibility to pursue a positive agenda on migration governance. The way we depict migration bears political consequences. Indeed, words matter. As a platform for dialogue and co-operation, the OSCE feels the responsibility to promote consensus over the principles contained in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

I believe that today this event in Moscow is yet another occasion to reflect on migration looking at the past to learn from mistakes and improve the way ahead.

I do thank you for your attention.

1. See *inter alia*: OSCE Ministerial Council in Maastricht, December 2003, Decision No. 4/03, *Tolerance and Non-discrimination* (MC.DEC/4/03); Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension adopted by the Ministerial Council in Maastricht, December 2003, (MC(11).JOUR/2); OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia, December 2004, Decision No. 12/04, *Tolerance and Non-discrimination* (MC.DEC/12/04); Ministerial Council Decision in Ljubljana, Decision No. 2/05, *Migration* (MD.DEC/2/05); OSCE Fourteenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, Ministerial Statement on Migration (MC.DOC/6/06); OSCE Ministerial Decision in Athens, December 2009, Decision No. 5/09 *Migration Management* (MC.DEC/5/09). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)