

The 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

Part 2 / Athens, 18-20 May 2009

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

**Concluding Statement by Ambassador Nikolaos KALANTZIANOS
Head of the Greek OSCE Chairmanship Task Force**

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This session marks an important moment within this Forum cycle and I am pleased and honoured to present, on behalf of the Greek Chairmanship, the summary conclusions and policy recommendations drawn from the discussions.

I would like to recall the intense preparatory process for the Athens Forum, the two preparatory Conferences in Prague (October 2008) and Tirana (March 2009) and the first part of the Forum in Vienna (January 2009). These meetings, and the wealth of ideas and suggestions they generated, were indeed extremely useful.

I would like to express my warmest thanks to all those who contributed in this process – the participating States, our Partners for Cooperation, our partner International Organizations, other stakeholders representing the civil society, the business and the academic community, the OSCE Secretariat and in particular the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the OSCE Field Presences and the OSCE Institutions.

During these days in Athens we focussed again on various issues related to migration management. We have been inspired by speakers’ presentations and we had an active, forward looking and action oriented debate.

The Chairmanship’s perception is that the preparatory work as well as this Forum meeting has been solid and fruitful. Many follow-up recommendations enjoy a high level of support. There is a lot of potential for concrete action as well as for political agreement on a number of issues. Of course, this will require our continued and reinforced collective efforts. The Greek Chairmanship stands ready to facilitate this.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to say a few words on the main conclusions of the Forum and on the way ahead.

We started our discussions with a review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the area of migration. We heart that significant progress has been made by OSCE participating States in the area of developing effective national and international legal frameworks as well as optimising the benefit of migration, but that further work is still needed, for example, in strengthening and implementing national migration policy frameworks and strengthening

regional dialogues. I would like to thank the International Labour Office for preparing this high quality report and say that we are considering to publish it after the Forum.

First and foremost, the Forum emphasized the need to strengthen co-operation among the participating States – countries of origin, transit and destination – in order to ensure a coherent and integrated approach to migration management in this region. Similarly, the beneficial co-operation between Governments and International Organizations has been underlined, as well as the importance of involving all stakeholders including the private sector and civil society organizations. Such co-operation should address various issues, from making enhancing the benefits of legal migration to tackling the smuggling of migrants by criminal networks. The Forum contributed to this multi-stakeholder dialogue but more remains to be done. It is importance to continue and intensify our co-operation and exchange information, lessons learned, effective practices and know-how. I think that an initial conclusion that we can draw at the end of this Forum is that the OSCE has an important role and can enhance its function as a platform for dialogue among the participating States and other key players in the area of migration. The OSCE can and should help to create and maintain a political momentum.

Secondly, discussions during the Forum repetitively touched upon the close link between economic development and migration. It should not be forgotten that the migration phenomenon in general is an engine of global growth and economic and social well-being both for countries of origin and destination as well as for migrants themselves. We should spare no effort to stimulate this positive relationship, in particular in the context of the current economic downturn. More should be done, and better coordination is needed to improve and facilitate the transfer of remittances as well as the effective investments by migrants. I would encourage the OSCE, together with partner organizations, and involving the Governments as well as the private sector, to continue to work in this regard. On the other hand, the root causes of migration need to be tackled jointly by origin and destination countries, among others, through the promotion of economic growth and good governance, employment creation, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights. Improved socio-economic conditions and opportunities in countries of origin encourage voluntary return and make reintegration support programmes easier to implement with success. This is yet another area where the OSCE should strengthen its role.

Thirdly, the rights of migrants and their protection, including the gender aspects, were other important elements touched upon during our deliberations. The protection of the human rights of migrants, especially for the most vulnerable groups such as children, women and undocumented migrants, should be prioritized in the overall migration management process. This implies responsibilities particularly for the countries of destination but also for transit and origin countries. Required amendments based on the provisions of international instruments should be increasingly introduced into national legislations.

Another important and topical issues discussed during the Forum relates to the inter-dependencies between migration and environmental factors. It was stressed that there are still research, policy and operational gaps concerning the links between environmental degradation and migration. Mapping out the links between climate change and migration is yet another area which remains insufficiently explored. The existing gaps must be bridged by taking a comprehensive, proactive, and co-operative approach and the OSCE is well placed to stimulate this. In this regard we very much welcome the co-operation between the OSCE, IOM and the UN University.

At last but not at least I would like to stress the importance of providing capacity building on migration related issues as an essential tool for effective policy implementation. Whether we talk about improving national inter-agency co-ordination or strengthening regional co-operation, about pre-departure orientation and training or reintegration assistance, about policy formulation or institution building, etc., it is evident that strengthening capacities is needed in many countries, both of origin and of destination. Providing capacity-building is an area in which the OSCE, particularly in its economic and environmental dimension, has accumulated over the years lots of relevant experience. The OSCE, together with relevant partner organizations, should continue to provide assistance to its participating States who wish to develop and implement more effective migration policies. A good example in this regard is the new IOM-OSCE project on the Development of Practical Training Material on Labour Migration Management, also supported by the ILO and the Council of Europe, which builds upon the OSCE-IOM-ILO Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies, a publication which since its launch in 2006 has proven to be a very useful tool.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have come to the end of the 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum process. Many useful recommendations for the OSCE were put forward and I have tried to briefly refer to some.

In order to keep the momentum, adequate follow-up activities shall follow the discussions, findings and recommendations of the Forum. The Chairmanship would like to take this opportunity to encourage the Office of the Co-ordinator and the field missions to continue their valuable work and continue to develop implement follow-up activities. In order to provide for an effective implementation and practical results the OSCE's capacity and institutional expertise should be effectively linked with other key international players in these fields. There are already a number of positive developments and a number of proposals have been formulated. We are on the right track.

Many of the Forum's recommendations deserve further attention from the participating States and they can serve as a starting point for a political decision. We are confident that discussions on the OSCE role regarding migration management will continue in Vienna, in the framework of the Economic and Environmental Committee, of the Permanent Council as well, and hope that migration will also be high on the agenda of the Ministerial Council at the end of the year.

Now that the 17th Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum is drawing to a close, I should like to mention that preparatory steps by the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship are already well under way. The Greek Chairmanship has followed closely the consultations conducted by Kazakhstan on the theme proposed for the 18th Meeting of the Forum, which is expected to address issues related to promoting good governance at border crossings, improving security of land transportation and facilitation of international transport by road and railways. This continuity in the discussions, building further on previous Forums, will contribute to focusing the work of the OSCE in the economic and environmental dimension and increasing its effectiveness. We hope for a prompt decision on the theme, dates and organizational modalities for the 18th Meeting of the Forum, which will allow it to be well prepared. I wish our Kazakh friends every success in the noble task awaiting them.

I would like to thank all the participants in the Meeting for their contributions to its success. I thank the keynote speakers, moderators, commentators and rapporteurs, the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and his Office, the OSCE Conference Services and the interpreters.

I hereby declare the 17th Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum closed.

Thank you for your participation.