

**STATEMENT**

ENGLISH only

**by**  
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**at**  
**17<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum – Part 1**

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**Opening Session**

**Benefits from legal migration for countries of origin**

Mme. Moderator,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to participate in this event. I would like to begin with expressing congratulations to the Greek Chairmanship and wish all the best for the future activities. I am confident that today's meeting will allow us to plan effective ways of cooperation to such interdependent and interrelated area as migration (the Prague preparatory meeting has already identified some priorities).

In recent years the issue of migration has endured significant changes occurring under the influence of political, economic and legal factors, thus requiring special attention. In this context, the focus on the issues of migration by the 17<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum is absolutely justified.

Mme. Moderator,

Armenia's migration policy is based on a balanced and coordinated approach, aimed at establishing a unified migration strategy and strengthening the legislative basis for migration management in the country. In 2004 the "Concept Paper on State Regulation of Population Migration" was adopted. I would like to stress that since 2004 the statistics on migration has shown a positive balance with the growing number of returnees who left Armenia in the beginning of the 1990s seeking jobs abroad due to enduring economic hardships.

Among the new waves of reforms in this field I would like to mention the introduction of the System of Electronic Passports and Identification Cards with Biometric Parameters by 2010. The Government proceeds with its border management reform through the establishment of a common Border Management System with the inclusion of all border crossing points. We would like to express our appreciation to the US Government and IOM for the assistance in the completion of the BMIS projects. The Training Centre of the Border Guards Troops was established and extensive training programmes have been organized for border guards and police on legislation, human rights, examination of identity, travel documents and fraud detection, counter smuggling and counter-trafficking. We have also made amendments and improvements in the procedures of granting entry visas, thus addressing concerns relating to the so-called "risk countries".

Mme. Moderator,

Armenia prioritizes signing of bilateral readmission agreements with the EU countries and sees the link between readmission and visa facilitation as further perspective. In this context, I would like to underline that Armenia stresses the importance of providing support for the reintegration of persons being returned to the country of origin. If readmitted without any support for

reintegration in their home country, there is nothing that prevents migrants from trying to re-enter an EU member state again. Creating opportunities and providing support to the returnees for the successful reintegration will not only contribute to combating illegal migration but also help in reduction of poverty in the countries of origin that most often become driving force for illegal movements.

Another very important aspect is the protection of the rights of migrants. Many migrants have no information on their rights and duties both in sending and host country. Taking into account the above mentioned a Migrant Support Unit was established at the Migration Agency of Armenia, which also operates online.

In order to raise the public awareness on threats of illegal migration and the benefits of legal labour migration, within the AENEAS Programme a Migration Resource Centre was established in Armenia. The Centre provides information about legal migration opportunities, laws and labour codes of different countries, warns about risks of illegal migration and trafficking as well as produces and disseminates various thematic materials, booklets, and advertising.

Mme. Moderator,

Addressing the root causes that force people to leave their home country should be viewed as one of the main tools for the significant improvement of the situation in the area of migration. It should include measures to promote productive employment and decent work and, more generally, to improve the economic and social conditions as they may contribute to the reduction of incentives for illegal migration. Using the potential of legal migration, in particular through the regulated/circular migration schemes, quota based projects, strengthening the cooperation at bilateral and regional levels and concluding labour agreements is among priorities of Armenia's migration policy. We strongly believe that by fostering circular migration we could create temporary work opportunities helping to address labour needs not only in the countries of origin but also in the receiving countries.

Mme. Moderator,

We welcome the continuous dialogue with the European countries on migration issues. Since 2001 Armenia is involved in the inter-regional migration and asylum management dialogue (the "Cluster" Process) between the sending and transit countries of the South Caucasus and the receiving EU Member States. The Cluster Process mechanisms and policies to reduce irregular migration are being promoted, while simultaneously strengthening the South Caucasus institutional capacity and the systems to promote legal migration and sustainable return and reintegration practices and policies. The other framework for cooperation is the European Neighborhood Policy which also reflects priorities in the field of migration: more specifically, it aims to reduce illegal immigration through the effective migration management. Within this framework as well as on the basis of the EU Global Approach to Migration, Armenia continues dialogue with the European Union. The last exchange of views between Armenia and the EU was in December last year when during the visit of the EU migration mission to Armenia issues pertaining to the new EU legislation on legal migration, readmission and return issues assistance for the reintegration of returnees, respect for their human rights, border management and regional cooperation were discussed in detail. The Armenian delegation expressed its interest in the concept of Mobility Partnership with the aim to better manage migration flows, fight illegal migration, facilitate access to the EU labour markets, introduce mechanisms to facilitate circular migration and improve visa issuing procedure through visa facilitation agreements for specific categories of citizens.

Mme. Moderator,

In order to have a clear idea of migration processes one should reveal objectively the dual nature of their impact both on the source and destination countries, and reflect on the correlation of the two. There are many examples when the countries with different political and economic systems cooperate because the presence of a large number of migrants influences the relations between these countries. Armenia is presently developing a sound policy that should address these issues, reduce the number of illegal migrants and promote legal channels for migration. In order to achieve this goal we are ready and open for further cooperation.

Thank you.