

OSCE PA Autumn Meeting - Session 3
“Improving Human Rights Based Governance of International Migration”
(Skopje, 2 October 2016)

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Madam Chair, dear colleagues,

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration has been actively pursuing its mandate along **three vectors of activities**.

As you might recall, in May the Committee visited **Calais and Dunkirk** upon the initiative of Committee Vice-Chair Alain Neri. The Committee then turned its attention to the management of migration flows along the Central Mediterranean route, notably in Italy, which has become the ‘new front line’ in the migration crisis. Over 130,000 people have arrived so far this year in Italy. The **Central Mediterranean route** continues to be the deadliest: in 2016 (as of 25 September), out of the total of 4,661 deaths recorded worldwide, 3,054 persons had died on the Central Mediterranean route. Unlike on the Eastern Mediterranean route, where Syrians and Afghans make up nearly 75% of arrivals, the nationalities of those arriving in Italy are more diverse, with most arriving from African countries such as Nigeria, Eritrea and the Gambia.

On 7-8 September, a delegation of nine members of the Committee travelled to **Catania**, Sicily, on a field mission organized by Vice-Chair Guglielmo Picchi. We visited the “CARA” Mineo Reception Center for Asylum Seekers and the Pozzallo ‘hotspot’ and met with the Italian authorities as well as a number of representatives from inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. While the authorities seem to be coping fairly well, there

is an obvious and urgent need for more equitable responsibility-sharing. As we say: “Responsibility cannot be defined by geographical proximity to countries of origin”!

The Committee also hopes to be able to investigate conditions along the Eastern Mediterranean route, notably in **Greece and Turkey** – despite the obstacles which it has faced in the past months due to the significant escalation in tensions in the Greek hotspots as well as to the recent events in Turkey – both of which led to the postponement of these missions. Concerning the situation in Greece, let me underline a significant incident that marked this escalation well beyond what was by the media concerning Lesbos: in the refugees center of Diavata (Thessaloniki) a delegation of EPP members of the European Parliament was obstructed to leave the center by refugees protesting for EU policies on migration. The MP’s were left to go only after negotiations with the local authorities. This new kind of threat even for MP’s or other official delegations is an evidence of the **worsening of the situation.**

Let me make one side remark on field visits here: we are aware that, operating as a large Committee and with visits planned in advance, that **we will inevitably have a partial view** and that we will most probably **not witness the worst situations.** Yet we believe that it is important for us to be present, to speak with the various governmental actors and non-governmental actors but also with the people directly affected and to continue to keep the migration issue at the top of the agenda in the OSCE and also in our respective countries.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration works closely with the **OSCE’s “Informal Working Group Focusing on the Issue of Migration and Refugee Flows” (IWG)** and had the opportunity to welcome Amb. Claude Wild to its second meeting here in Skopje on Friday. I have also addressed the Special Permanent Council on migration and refugee flows in Vienna, and briefed them on our work plan. I hope that we can continue to work in synergy and that the Hamburg Ministerial Council will give the OSCE the means to make an impact.

The Committee also plans to travel to **Brussels and Geneva** next month to meet with key international actors, organizations and think-tanks working on the issue of migration for briefings on key aspects of European migration policy and efforts by international organizations to develop more effective strategies of combining humanitarian assistance with development aid. We also aim to identify specific areas in which the Committee can contribute.

We aim to present a final report including well-informed and implementable recommendations at the 2017 Annual Session in Minsk. Already now we can make **six basic observations:**

1. **The legal framework** provided by international conventions and juridical distinctions such as ‘migrant’, ‘refugee’, ‘economic migrant’, ‘asylum seeker’ etc. are no longer adapted to the present-day situation. We need to develop a workable tool for defining a phenomenon which has become global and which is extremely complex and interrelated.
2. We need to accept that the migration crisis is also **a matter of security**. It is a question of human security but also of the internal security of countries and also represents a serious destabilizing risk for certain countries.
3. We also need to ask ourselves what particular **role the OSCE and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly** can play in the larger picture. As parliamentarians, we have a duty to place the migration issue on the national agenda where we can devise strategies of response and ensure that it is not hijacked by extremist elements. It is the task of parliamentarians to inform their constituencies and national Parliaments of what is going on and to prepare them for what is coming.
4. We hear much about existing tool-kits, expertise, sharing of best practices. However, we all know that there is a dire **need for more resources** if we are to step up to the task. Political mandate is necessary. But OSCE participating States also need to

increase the financial means of the Organization so that it can face this most significant challenge.

5. The Ad Hoc Committee on Migration also supports policies aiming at providing **support to neighboring countries hosting refugees** as returns will be easier for these communities. However, until then, they should have access to education and be able to live a dignified life, with possibilities for meaningful occupation. In that sense, we support agreements such as the one concluded between the EU and Turkey and support similar agreements with other countries, provided that European and other countries are willing to play their part in sharing responsibilities.
6. Efforts to dismantle the **criminal networks that profit from the migration crisis** must also be stepped up as there are too many actors benefitting from the vulnerability of migrants, including a few problematic ones (out of the many honest ones) getting subventions and mandates for managing the flows.

Final remark

Migration issues need to get a higher priority on the OSCE and OSCE-PA agendas. The simple fact that we are having an “ad hoc” committee, and the OSCE has an “Informal Working Group” is an evidence that we still consider this questions as temporary, while they are going to accompany us for longer time.

At present, international community is mostly trying to manage the flows of people escaping conflicts, torture, or economic hardship. People who seek either temporary respite or a new home. We nicely speak about “governance of the migration”...

However, it is not sufficient to react! We should not forget to address the root causes of these flows, such as poverty of course, but much more **protracted conflict in which several OSCE participating States have a large share of responsibility.**

But if we speak of shared responsibility, we really need to speak with all who share it. It is therefore regrettable that some delegations are not represented in our meeting here in Skopje, starting from the one of the United States. If I might take the opportunity to express a personal desire, than I'd like to urge the secretary of the US delegation to transmit to his absent honorable MP's our wish to discuss these issues also with them. "Shared responsibility" implies readiness to open and comprehensive dialogue of all participating States also in our Parliamentary Assembly.

I conclude: **the primary duty of the international community must be to combat the causes of these flows**, so that millions of people can continue to live in their own, countries and develop their own economy and society, rather than being forced to leave in dramatic conditions. It's certainly interesting to learn – as we heard yesterday in some reports – that immigration of young males is good for the economy or the birth rate of the hosting countries, and will help funding their future pensions... But the reverse question is: what happens to the countries of origin, left with an ageing and prevalently female population?

Dear colleagues: **it can't be the purpose of a civilized world to empty some countries of their population, thereby overcrowding others with millions of people who were forced to migrate.**

This is our main political responsibility.

Thank you.