



**Remarks by Mr. Filippo Lombardi,
Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration**

*1165th Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
(Vienna, 23 November 2017)*

Dear Chair, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to thank the Chairmanship for the opportunity to address you on behalf of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, which I have had the honour to chair since March 2016. Many thanks also for the introduction by the Chair and the report of the Secretary General, which both mostly correspond to our analysis and views.

Let us start by asking ourselves **what the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly can bring to the migration debate**, our so-called “added value” which I also consider essential. It is vital that we begin by addressing the **root causes of migration**, which include conflicts, poverty, the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. And the OSCE is the right place to do it!

We must indeed strive to move beyond short-term emergency responses towards **long-term and sustainable migration policies** to create the appropriate conditions – in terms of peace, security, the environment, economic development, democracy and human rights – for preventing sudden and uncontrolled migration flows. That is our “**common commitment**”, if we prefer to use these words instead of “shared responsibility” or “moral duty”.

Parliamentarians have the additional duty to go a step further, urging key policy makers at the regional and global levels to honestly assess the political mistakes of the past years, which have resulted in the destabilization of many African and Middle Eastern countries. Only such an honest and responsible approach can lead to solving the crisis we are now facing.

We must also clearly denounce the massive **economic exploitation of migration flows**, which has flourished over the last years in countries of origin, transit and destination. This uncontrolled, mostly illegal and often criminal profiteering, based on human suffering, is one of the most unacceptable aspects of that crisis. The mismanagement of public financial resources is then the final result of this phenomenon.

Finally, we have to provide better conditions in countries of destination so that migrants and refugees can engage in mutually beneficial relationships with their host societies, and contribute to the economic development, peace and stability of the whole OSCE region.

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Our Ad Hoc Committee – which currently consists of some 20 members from 16 OSCE participating States spanning from North America to Europe – has worked intensively for over a year and a half, with field visits in the frontline countries, meetings with key international actors, and exchanges of best practices between its members. I can say that, while remaining true to our different political convictions, we have reached a **significant level of common understanding** on this difficult issue.

While acknowledging also a number of positive effects of migration for both countries of origin and destination, we underline that a **sustainable migration policy** cannot consist in moving millions of people, draining countries of their younger and often better-educated citizens, and creating imbalances in countries of transit and destination, where populist movements easily profit from the discontent of the citizens.

The conclusion is self-explanatory: **balanced, legal, guided migration** can be beneficial for all sides; sudden, illegal and unmanaged migration cannot. It is up to us to choose the way forward!

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Last July, our Committee presented a joint Resolution on “**Ensuring a coherent, shared and responsible governance of migration and refugee flows**” which summarized its main observations and recommendations. It was adopted by the Assembly as part of the 2017 OSCE PA Minsk Declaration.

The Committee has also published a comprehensive **report** containing detailed recommendations on a broad range of topics including relocation, resettlement and return, asylum, unaccompanied minors, addressing root causes, as well as facilitating integration, combating intolerance and xenophobia and enhancing institutional co-operation.

The decision-making process of our Assembly enabled us to vote in favour of controversial concepts such as “shared responsibility” and the “moral duty” to participate in relocation programmes, after an open and frank discussion.

As Parliamentarians, we have a duty to fully understand the issues at play in the migration debate as these are of concern to our constituents and often involve legislative work in our own countries. Therefore we hope that our recommendations will now be implemented at the national level, resulting in better prospects for refugees and migrants in OSCE States, and a more balanced understanding of the question within our national political debates.

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The Resolution also puts forth a number of suggestions on how the OSCE's work in the field of migration could be enhanced, e.g. through:

- the development of an organization-wide response, with clearly identified roles and responsibilities of each body;
- a clearer division of portfolios on migration-related issues within the three dimensions; and
- the establishment of a high-level task force on migration that would meet quarterly and be supported by a network of focal points throughout OSCE bodies, field missions, Institutions as well as Partners for Co-operation.

Our recommendations have been widely distributed and were also presented at high-level events such as the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo and the Valletta conference organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, which will provide a parliamentary perspective in the negotiations on the UN global compacts on migration and refugees.

I wish to stress here the importance of preserving the **distinction between migrants and refugees**. Indeed, a better governance of migration necessitates the application of different legal standards and enforcement mechanisms. A weakening of the distinction could easily weaken the protection granted to refugees by international conventions. This also demands that we prioritize the allocation of limited human and financial resources, while advocating the full respect of human rights for everybody.

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Before concluding, let me once again encourage the OSCE to pursue full implementation of **Hamburg Ministerial Council decision No. 3/16** on the OSCE's Role in the Governance of Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees. Let us increase communication, co-operation and co-ordination within our Organization with the aim of developing a coherent, shared, responsible and secure governance of migration, thus **giving a new cross-dimensional meaning to the work of the OSCE itself**.

Thank you for your attention.