



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

*Joint Session of the Three General Committees
(Vienna, 23 February 2018)*

Dear President,

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for this opportunity to address you all on behalf of the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, and to open the floor for a debate on the Committee's work and the broader issues which we seek to address.

I will not elaborate on our recent activities as you will have received short reports on our recent missions to Italy and Belgium. I would, however, like to warmly thank my dear colleagues Guglielmo Picchi, Marietta Tidei and Nahima Lanjri, as well as their staff for putting together intensive and thought-provoking programmes. I also look forward to the upcoming visit to Sweden upon invitation by Margareta Cederfelt to further debate issues related to integration and unaccompanied minors.

Let me rather use my time to present a snapshot of where we stand in terms of developing a **coherent, shared and responsible governance of migration and refugee flows** and where urgent action is needed.

As Committee members heard earlier this month in Brussels, and without wishing to downplay the tragedies that take place on a daily basis at sea and on land, **Europe is no longer facing a migration 'crisis'**. Last year, irregular arrivals to the EU dropped by about 60 per cent; about 200,000 persons crossed the Mediterranean, with about 70 per cent arriving in Italy and the remainder divided between Greece, Cyprus and Spain.

We should by now be capable of dealing with these flows in a coherent, orderly and dignified manner. Yet, we continue to experience a self-made political crisis due to our inability to agree upon a common approach based on **solidarity and shared responsibility**.

It is vital to agree on **common procedures and criteria in a number of critical areas, starting with asylum** in order to prevent 'asylum shopping'.

Another area which would greatly benefit from a consistent approach is that of **returns and so-called 'safe countries'**. There are about one million third country nationals in the EU whose asylum applications have been turned down. We must establish a clear link between asylum and return procedures in order to **reduce the incentives for irregular migration. Voluntary return programmes** which include support for reintegration should be prioritised. They are more dignified and also more sustainable.

We also need to become more effective in **differentiating between persons genuinely in need of international protection and economic migrants** so that States can dedicate their limited resources to the most vulnerable.

The lack of a cohesive approach is also visible in the case of **unaccompanied minors** who are sometimes given multiples identities due to different age determination methodologies between countries. Common guidelines are also needed for assessing what their '**best interests**' are.

This is not to say that the **conditions that fuelled the crisis in 2015** have been effectively addressed. In fact, the situation in a number of countries such as Syria and Afghanistan seem to be deteriorating.

Then there is **Libya**, where an estimated half million migrants and refugees are in need of assistance. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Hussein has described the EU's policy of helping Libyan coast guards intercept migrants as "inhuman". However, the EU maintains that it made the right choice as flows across the Central Mediterranean have been reduced. The EU is also contributing to the efforts by UNHCR, IOM and others to assist migrants and refugees in Libya.

Thus far, the number of those 'saved' – **about one thousand** persons either evacuated to a transit facility in Niger or directly to Italy, and **19,000** stranded migrants who have returned voluntarily to their home countries – represents a drop in the ocean.

There is a dire need for a significantly greater number of resettlement places. UNHCR estimates that **1.2 million persons are in need of resettlement globally**. EU Member States have pledged a further 40,000 places thus far for 2018. This is welcome, but it is not enough, especially given the **reduction** in resettlement programmes in 2017, notably in the United States.

We need to invest more in border control in Libya and further upstream, and initiatives aiming to stabilise local communities, e.g. through the **EU Trust Fund for Africa**.

Last November in my address to the Permanent Council, I emphasized the need to engage in serious reflection about our Organization's role in the migration debate – our so-called '**added value**'.

I therefore welcome the initiative by the Italian OSCE Chairmanship to put migration back at the top of the agenda and to open an informal dialogue on how to implement the **Hamburg Ministerial Council decision on the OSCE's role in the governance of large movements of migrants and refugees**. Last July in Minsk the Committee presented a number of recommendations on how to enhance the Organization's institutional capacity to take on this important task. We suggested clarifying the division of responsibilities of each body and establishing a high-level task force on migration, supported by a network of focal points throughout the OSCE, its field missions, Institutions and Partners for Co-operation. I hope that these will be acted upon so that the significant expertise, resources and strengths of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly can be effectively harnessed.

A parliamentary hearing is currently coming to a close at the United Nations in New York as part of the preparatory process for the **global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration** to be adopted at the end of this year. Committee member Alf Dubs will report back on the outcome of the discussions, notably on the role of

parliamentarians in integrating the global compact into national policies as well as in overseeing its implementation.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted in his recent report “Making migration work for all”: “Managing migration is one of the most urgent and profound tests of international cooperation in our time.” Indeed, this is a **global challenge** which must be met with a multilateral and concerted response.

Let us also not lose sight of the **many benefits of migration**, not only for migrants themselves but also for host societies as well as countries of origin and transit. However, in order for these benefits to outweigh the risks, we must work together to develop **coherent, long-term and sustainable migration policies** including measures to **promote integration**, and at the same time expand channels **for controlled, safe and regular migration**.

That is our “**common commitment**”, if we prefer to use these words instead of “shared responsibility” or “moral duty”.

Thank you for your attention.