



2024 Autumn Meeting

**Remarks of the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration
Vice-President Dr. Daniela De Ridder,
to the Standing Committee**

(2 October 2024, Dublin)

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,

Since I last reported to you in Bucharest, the Committee has carried out its first visit to a Partner for Co-operation: Morocco.

My deepest appreciation goes to the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Morocco, to the Members of the Delegation and to their staff for hosting the Committee and for putting together an excellent programme despite the short time frame for the visit.

I would also like to thank my fellow Committee members for their engagement.

I would like to share with you some key takeaways.

We chose Morocco in recognition of the fact that it is the only country in the MENA region which has sought to enact significant migration and asylum reform since 2013.

Meeting with a wide range of stakeholders in Rabat on 19 September, our delegation of nine members learned about the country's migration policies and how these are designed to address its unique strategic position at the heart of migration flows between Europe, Africa and the

Middle East, making it a country of emigration, transit and – increasingly – a destination country.

The officials we encountered emphasized their responsibility to prevent irregular migration towards Europe.

The issue of how sustainable returns can be enhanced - both from Europe to Morocco as well as from Morocco to countries of origin - was also high on the agenda.

What struck me in particular was that Moroccan officials have a positive approach to migration, focussing on the positive contributions of **international mobility**, rather than on its negative aspects.

For example, they are devising programmes to address ‘brain drain’ and boost circular migration through a national strategy for professional international mobility and support for entrepreneurship.

Visiting the port of Tanger MED created in 2007 we heard how this gigantic hub for global trade and investment has played a crucial role in providing local opportunities with the creation of 110,000 jobs since its establishment.

The Moroccan authorities have been making significant efforts to regularise the status of nearly 50,000 migrants and refugees in Morocco in two separate waves in 2014 and 2017.

As parliamentarians, we took note of the fact that the necessary legislative framework is not yet in place. This would represent a significant step in enhancing access to asylum and improving asylum procedures for persons in need of protection, in particular for vulnerable groups.

It was heart-warming to learn more about the work of the “*Fondation Orient-Occident*” with vulnerable refugees, in the absence of a national reception system.

We will meet later today to discuss in greater detail our observations from the Morocco visit and to discussing upcoming activities which I hope will include a mission to Spain and the Canary Islands which have again been experiencing a spike in arrivals as a result of stricter

controls along the Mediterranean routes. Countless others have perished at sea.

These tragedies further serve to underline the need to promote **safe and regular pathways for migration**, as emphasized in our resolution adopted in Bucharest last July.

The Committee will also discuss how it can address the impact of the escalation of the situation in the Middle East and anticipated refugee flows.

I would like to conclude by reiterating three key messages:

- (1) We cannot continue to let a handful of countries bear responsibility for irregular migration. Solidarity, co-operation and co-ordination should be the key guiding principles in addressing irregular migration.
- (2) We need to seriously boost international efforts to address the root causes of migration such as conflict, persecution, and also increasingly, the impacts of climate change.
- (3) Finally, we need to **reframe the migration issue**, adopting a positive approach that emphasizes the contributions and opportunities of **international mobility**. This is essential for encouraging constructive discussions about migration.

Thank you for your attention.