



Republic of Serbia

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Statement
by
the delegation of the Republic of Serbia

Geneva, 29 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director-General,
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor I want to congratulate you Mr. Chairman as well as other members of the Bureau on ~~your~~^{THEIR} election. Let me also congratulate new members and observers to the Organization. The continuous enlargement of the Organization year by year is a clear sign of the growing need for international cooperation in addressing new challenges in the complex field of migration nowadays.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligned itself with the EU statement so I will give an overview of the situation ~~on~~^{at} the national level with regard to migration. Being a country of origin, transit and destination of migrants, the Republic of Serbia is aware of need for comprehensive approach in tackling migration challenges.

There were several significant developments in last few months. The Serbian Parliament ratified recently the Readmission agreement with the EU that facilitates the organized return of illegal migrants. On November 7 this year Serbia initialed Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, as a step forward towards the EU accession. Furthermore, just recently the National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia passed the Law on Asylum that is harmonized with European and international standards. The Law regulates principles, conditions and procedure for receiving and terminating asylum. The Law will be ready for implementation on 1 April 2008.

The Republic of Serbia is still faced with the problem of large displaced population in the country. The number of refugees, though still big, significantly decreased comparing to mid nineties, namely, from 500,000 people to 100,000 according to the last registration data. This is the result predominantly of local integration as well as their return to the countries of origin. Unfortunately, the number of internally displaced persons from the Province of Kosovo and Metohija, despite the eight years of international presence in the Province, is today almost the same. Out of 230,000 persons that were forced to leave the Province in 1999 only less than 10,000 returned to the Province so far.

In such a situation the return of persons from the EU countries in accordance with aforementioned Readmission agreement will be an additional challenge for our

Government, bearing in mind the need for creating sustainable conditions for their reintegration, particularly related to housing, employment, education etc. To that end we count upon understanding and assistance of the EU countries and relevant international organizations, including IOM, in the implementation of Readmission agreement.

With regard to the issue of labour migrations, let me say that Serbia has significant Diaspora compared to its population-estimated to approximately 4 million people of Serbian origin, living and working mostly in overseas countries (USA, Canada) and Western Europe. Thus, the issue of migration and development is of great importance for us. The benefits that both countries of origin and destination, as well as migrants themselves, can gain should be carefully explored. The remittances from Diaspora to the country of origin should be well managed. The creation of attractive space for investments of Diaspora to the country of origin is also of great importance. Furthermore, as a result of conflicts in the region of former Yugoslavia during nineties a lot of qualified, educated young people migrated to developed countries. To move from brain drain to brain gain, there is a need to create sustainable conditions and employment opportunities on national level in order to attract those young, high-qualified people to return, on permanent or temporary basis, and share their knowledge and skills thus contributing to the development of their country of origin.

Trafficking in human beings is the worst form of illegal migrations today. Due to its geographical position Serbia is also faced with this problem. We recognize that the cross-border cooperation and exchange of information is essential in fighting this phenomenon. To that end, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a Strategy on Integrated Border Management. There is also an ongoing IOM project on capacity building and increased border cooperation between Serbia and Croatia that we consider very useful. In order to counter human trafficking all relevant stakeholders on national level should be aware of the problem and trained to recognize this phenomenon. Having a lot of experience in this field, our Ministry of the Interior recently presented an idea to organize, in cooperation with the IOM, education and training for officials in different ministries and institutions, as well as for the stakeholders on local level. The aim of such project would be to strengthen the capacities for prevention, and provide early assistance to the victims of human trafficking. We have already presented this idea to the IOM field mission in Belgrade. We hope that through the IOM's 1035 Facility this project could be realized in 2008.

Thank you for your attention.