



STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

IOM COUNCIL, 88th SESSION

GENERAL DEBATE

2 December 2004

Mr. Chairman,

In the period leading to its accession to the European Union this year, the Czech Republic developed an asylum and migration policy focusing strongly on achieving full compliance with the criteria required for membership in the organization. Subsequently, she has concentrated on the development and strengthening of four priority areas in partnership with the IOM.

These priority areas are:

First, Better Management of Migration Flows - Further Support of Labour Migration and Intensified combat against Illegal Immigration

Once a transit country, the Czech Republic is now principally a destination for economic migrants. Such a shift in migratory trends needs to be reflected in appropriate immigration and integration policies. Consequently, the Government has set up a five-year pilot project aimed at attracting qualified foreign workers who might like to move to the Czech Republic with their families. At the same time, we have continued implementation of the goals laid down by *the Action Plan* approved in February 2004, which defines further action to be taken

with a view to combatting illegal migration. It should be however pointed out that illegal migration has reached the lowest level in the last 15 years.

The second priority area is **the European Union and Intensified Cooperation with its Member States**

The main priorities are to make use of development potential provided by membership in the EU and integration in the Schengen area, mainly in the context of further development towards common immigration and asylum policies within the framework of the recently approved Hague Programme.

The third priority area is **Intensified Dialogue with Third Countries on migration, especially with Wider Europe countries and Main Countries of Origin**

The Czech Republic will further develop and strengthen its cooperation with those countries that most significantly influence the migration situation on its territory and within the region of Central Europe. Moreover, we also intend to share our experience and offer our assistance to these countries in their efforts to develop advanced immigration systems.

Finally, **the area of Integration**

The principal tasks of the *Strategy of Integration of Foreigners in the Czech Republic* include the adoption of conceptual and practical measures towards further approximation of the legal status of long term immigrants to the legal status of citizens. and towards the systematic protection of the access of foreigners to fundamental rights and freedoms as well as towards the application of principles of equal access and equal opportunities. High priority will be given to integration in the drafting of new legislation on immigration.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to briefly outline the projects which focus, besides the situation in the Czech Republic, on the principal source and transit countries of migration to the Czech Republic and the EU. The projects prepared by the Czech Government, in cooperation with the Prague office of the IOM and its other missions in countries involved, were successfully carried out

in 2003 and 2004. Although the projects were exclusively financed by the country's national budget, their positive impact has gone much further.

Several projects were jointly carried out with the IOM in the framework of official development assistance focusing on information campaigns and free counselling on the situation in the Czech Republic, voluntary returns including reintegration, population stabilization through strengthening of economic self-sufficiency and sharing the experience to support migration management development in transit countries.

The IOM has been involved in the implementation of a pilot project aimed at the active selection of qualified foreign workers and in the implementation of the Czech Republic's integration policy.

To conclude, Central Europe is facing migratory flows not as large as those in Asia or Africa but which are steady and constant. We believe that the IOM will bear this in mind by paying adequate attention to the European region when dealing with migration issues, taking into account particularly the need of new EU member states that have a responsibility to secure the EU area of justice, freedom and security.

The existing cooperation between the Czech Republic and the IOM, namely its Prague office, is considered as being very successful and enjoys the full support of the Government. It is our hope that the instrumental role played by the IOM in addressing migration issues in the priority areas could be developed even further by increasing the operational capacity of the Prague office. The Czech Government is able and willing to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of more projects similar to those which have had positive impact throughout the Central Europe region and beyond. And it is our wish that the IOM will be able to continue being the most effective partner in their implementation.

Thank you.