

*Address of the Mr Aleksandar Nikolić,  
State Secretary in the Ministry of Interior,  
Republic of Serbia*

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Esteemed Chairperson,  
Director General,  
Your Excellences,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to have this opportunity to address you on behalf of the Republic of Serbia.

**Republic of Serbia aligns with yesterday's statement of the European Union and on this occasion I would like to raise some specific issues.**

The world has changed greatly in the past few years due to dramatic increase in migratory movements. It depends on us how capable we will be to respond to those challenges.

**Partnership and cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration and other partners in this area remain Serbia's priorities and a key to successful development of an efficient mechanism for migration management. Many implemented common projects, as well as the projects in progress, reflect our efficient cooperation.**

In the past two decades Serbia has been facing numerous migration challenges including care provision for refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, internally displaced persons from Kosovo&Metohija, emigration and brain drain, increasing number of readmitted persons and asylum seekers. Thus the main efforts of our state have been directed towards solving the forced migration issues.

**Serbia is among the countries in the world with the highest numbers of the refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants. Actually, we are hosting 66,000 (sixty six thousand) refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and 210,000 (two hundred and ten thousand) IDPs from Kosovo and Metohija.**

Besides, in the last 20 years more than 250.000 (two hundred fifty thousand) refugees have become citizens of Serbia, which represents the biggest integration process in Europe. Unfortunately, having in mind that there are no conditions for sustainable return to Kosovo and Metohija the number of IDP`s in Serbia is not decreasing in spite of engagement of international community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**Serbia is situated on the transit Balkans migration route, in the territory where many migrants come from the African and Asian countries and head towards Europe. That is reflected in increased number of illegal migrants and asylum seekers (in 2008 we recorded 77 expressed intentions to seek asylum, whereas in 2013 we recorded 5.065 (five thousand sixty five), and the number in 2014 is dramatically higher.**

Many of those migrants express their intention to seek asylum, but the greatest number do not stay in our country until the asylum procedure is completed. They continue their migration towards at the desired destinations, mainly in Europe.

**Let aside the potential that migrations have an economic development, we need to invest our efforts into strengthening capacities in migration and asylum management. Regarding human trafficking, our strategy is zero tolerance, especially that the children are very often victims, as well as other vulnerable groups of migrants.**

Dear colleagues,

Significant results from the partnership between Serbia and IOM lies with the adjustment of national policies, strategic management and contributing thereby to confidence strengthening among the states in the region. It was not only the Ministry of the Interior that participated in those joint activities with the IOM, but the whole institutional network of Serbia, such as other ministries, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, Centre for Human Trafficking Victims Protection, Social Care Centres, civil society representatives, as well as many NGO`s.

**Let me assure you that Serbia will remain a reliable partner and that our position and capacities for better migration management will be stronger as we further progress towards the European Union.**

Bearing in mind the number of persons in need for international assistance in the migration process, as well as the current trends, our joint activities will become more significant, but also more challenging.

**Thank you for your attention!**